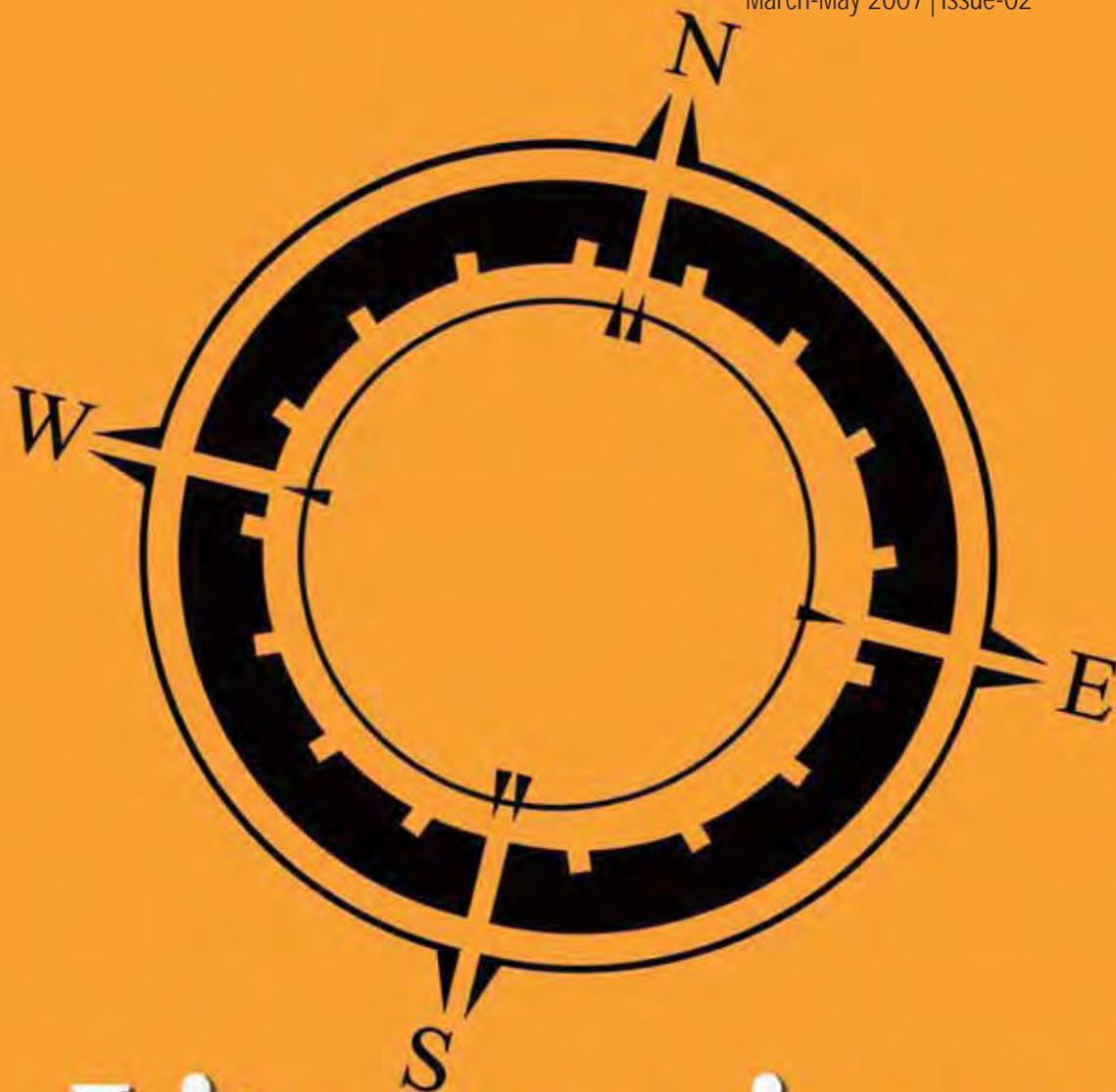


# READ

March-May 2007 | Issue-02

**What  
Kathmandu  
is reading**



**Literary journey**  
**A Rushdie-esque take on**  
**Nepali travel writing**

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# Melamchi Water Supply Project: At a Glance



A view of Sindhu Adit Access Road



Intake Point of Melamchi Water

The main objective of the Melamchi Water supply Project is to solve the chronic water supply shortage in the Kathmandu Valley. The objective will be achieved by the diversion of 170 MLD water from the Melamchi River via 26.5 km long tunnel system to a water system to a water treatment plant and distribution facilities to be constructed in the Kathmandu Valley. The project consists of the following four major components; namely; Infrastructure Development, Social and Environment Support, Institutional Reforms and Implementation.

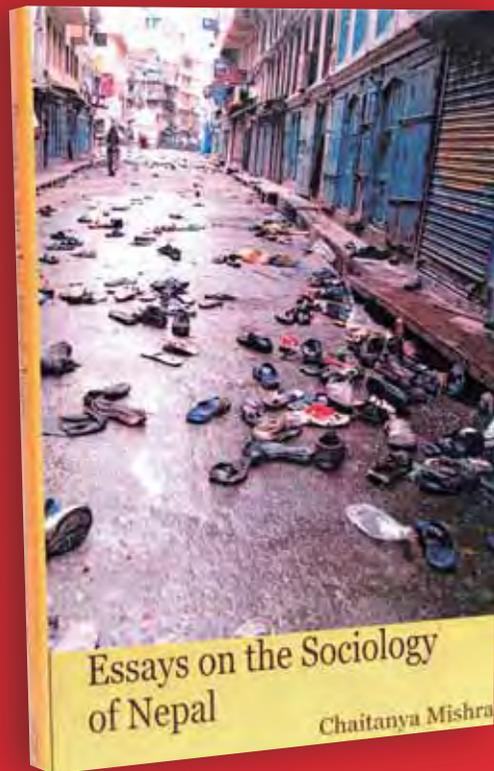
These major components are supplemented by management, social institutional activities including the Social Uplift Program (SUP) for the MDS works, Resettlement Action Plan (RAP), Environmental Management and Monitoring for all the components, and related support activities.

The current activity of the Project are mainly concentrated on construction of the access roads, main access road in the Melamchi Valley, and the preparations for the procurement of the Management contractor (MC), in place of the previously proposed Private Operator of the distribution system. Land acquisition and resettlement programs continue, and the Social Uplift activities have commenced.

The development of the institutional and legislative frame for creation of the regulatory and executive bodies, and the procurement of Management Contract (for the operation and the supply and distribution system) is in progress.

The project is disseminating the information in a regular basis through press, media, and public information centres established at Kathmandu office, and site office in the Melamchi Valley. The detail information could be obtained from the following address:

# THE FIRST BOOK IN ENGLISH BY ARGUABLY THE BEST SOCIOLOGIST IN THE COUNTRY



"Essays on the Sociology of Nepal" brings together, for the first time, essays written over two-and-a-half decades by a leading sociologist in the country, Dr. Chaitanya Mishra. It contains an array of analytical and perceptive essays on underdevelopment, growth of the social sciences, foreign aid, the Maoist insurgency, etc. Some of the essays in the collection are prophetic: for example, the author had correctly predicted that the Maoists would center-stage politics rather than armed struggle and that the privileged as well as the disadvantaged would come together to fight against the king. It also features a hitherto unpublished essay on the April transition, where Dr. Mishra argues that the foundational causes of the transition have to be found in society-wide changes rather than in the actions of the political parties and the Maoists.

The book helps one understand the political, social and economic landscape of Nepal. It should prove indispensable to academics, researchers, social science students, development workers and anyone interested in the undercurrents that shape Nepali politics.

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Rural Education and Development-Nepal (READ-Nepal) was established in 1991 to work in the field of literacy and development. Its mission is to “empower communities by increasing literacy and access to education through the creation, advancement and leveraging of a replicable library-based model.” It has three objectives: (a) education through libraries and literacy, (b) economic growth and (c) social development through community centres. It has helped established 39 community libraries in 35 districts across the country. These libraries have broadened the knowledge base of people, ultimately leading them to better futures.

Over time, the community libraries have turned into a centre for facilitating and implementing community development initiatives. Most of the READ-Nepal-supported projects have become a tele-centre equipped with computer, radio, television, CD or video cassette player, telephone, fax-machine, internet facilities etc. These tele-centres have played an important role in the development of modern information technology in rural areas.

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Read-Nepal supports income generation schemes, establishes community centres and pre-school centres in the premises of community libraries. It has provided over 2 lakh books and numerous reading materials to community libraries.

Volunteerism is the essence of all its endeavours. It has benefited from the services of over 250 Nepali volunteers at its country office and many more at its project sites.

READ-Nepal initiated, and is now working toward the institutional development of, the National Community Library Association (NCLA). The first and the only association of community libraries in Nepal, NCLA is expected to play an important role in the development of community libraries in Nepal.

Read-Nepal has won a number of awards for its contribution to development and education. In 2006 it received the prestigious “Access to Learning Award” from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for providing information and information technology to rural Nepalese.



## Building Literacy and Communities Through Libraries



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**Dear Reader,**

As we wrote in the last issue, we were not entirely satisfied with our introductory effort. We knew we had the potential to do better than that. And we believe that we did better in the next issue—give and take a few editorial lapses—some of which crept in in the last minute, during the layout phase. Some of you readers have complimented us on the quality of our content and raved about the layout. Most reviewers told us that we were doing a good job. Naturally, we were gung-ho.

However, in attempting to bring out a good product, we overshot our budget. And that was gnawing at our minds. To cut down costs, we were seriously contemplating reducing the number of pages and bringing out the magazine in black and white, despite the desire we had expressed in the last editorial to make the future issues of **Read** sleeker and thicker. But then things started to fall in place.

Ashutosh Tiwari, who is with an international financial institute in Bangladesh, decided to make an "anonymous" contribution of five thousand rupees to the magazine (Sorry, Ashutosh, we had to mention your name to corroborate our claim). Sharad Babu Shrestha and Sanjana Shrestha of Rural Education and Development-Nepal came up with an offer of partnership. READ, an organisation that is internationally renowned for its efforts in promoting literacy, doesn't actually fund our magazine. So in essence, we aren't any better financially. But the organisation, whose mantra is sustainability, will, we hope, help us make our venture sustainable in ways we could never have presaged when we started out with loads of enthusiasm, but little planning.

We've been receiving calls from people who want to subscribe to our magazine. Young people have visited our office, asking us how and what to read. Writer Govinda Bartaman wrote about our initiative in Kantipur. Another columnist said she would write about the magazine. The BBC Nepali Service contemplated doing a story on the reading habit. And as if on cue, publishers, book sellers and printers, who were initially very tentative about supporting us, have now rallied behind us.

The support we've received has encouraged us to continue—come what may. Thank you, all. With your support, we believe that we can do our bit to further the cause of reading in Nepal.

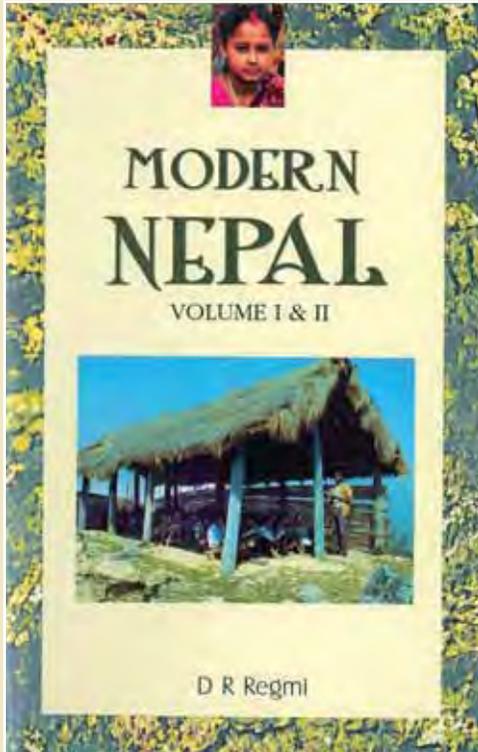
**Read Team**

- Ajit Baral
- Jagannath Lamichhane
- Maheshwor Acharya
- Niraj Bhari
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- Rukesh Shrestha (Photography)
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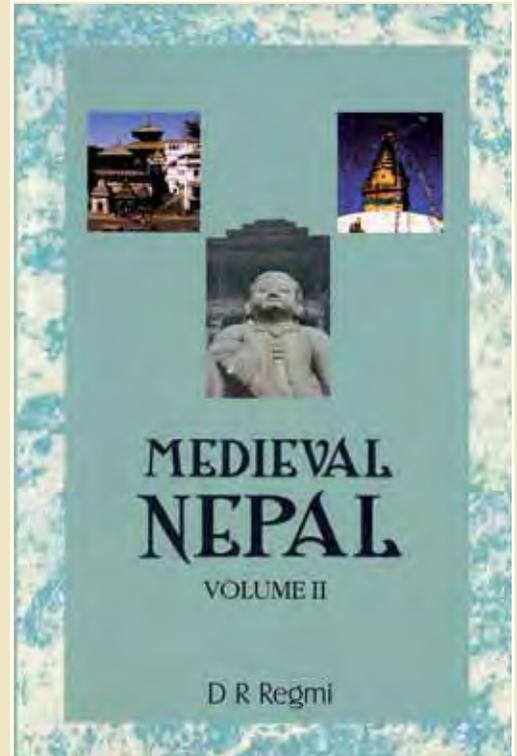
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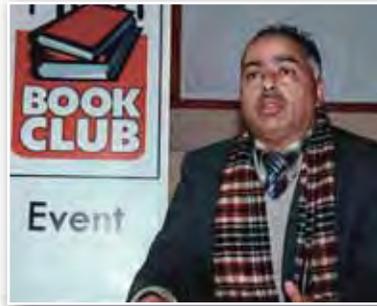
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## Book Club Events

[www.fineprintbookclub.com](http://www.fineprintbookclub.com)

### Sukaraatka Pailaaharu



On Feb 4th the Book Club discussed on the recently published novel "Sukaraatka Paailaharu" by Dr. Govindaraj Bhattarai. Dr. Bhattarai provided the background to the writing of the novel and responded to the queries of the participants. Much of the talk focused on the theoretical part of the novel. Set against the background of the Maoist struggle, the novel charts the journey of Ananta. He comes to Kathmandu from the eastern region of the country to do a master's in English, but fails to complete it, as he gets caught up in the whirlwind of politics. He then tries to go to the gulf through a manpower agency. But the agency cheats on him and he loses the money borrowed from his professor. Despaired, he resorts to reading suicide literatures.

### DVC on editing



The FinePrint Book Club in association with the American Centre organised a digital video conference on editing with David R Godine, publisher and editor of the small but prestigious publishing house David R Godine Inc, on Feb 28th.

Editor and writer Deepak Thapa, who moderated the programme, provided a short sketch of the Nepali editing scene for Godine to base his talk on. Godine then talked about editing in America with reference to his own publishing house. He said that American publishing houses were increasingly outsourcing publishing services to countries like China, Taiwan, India to minimise the cost. He also said that the editorial department have started to play second fiddle to the marketing department. After his presentation, he responded to queries from the participants, which ranged from different layers of editing to finding a publisher.

### Bibliomania: Boon or bane



Instead of discussing on books as usual, the FinePrint Book discussed on the interesting topic bibliomania on Jan 7th 2007. One of the most well read columnist, CK Lal said he won't dwell on the benefits of books as they are evident to all and then went straight into the drawbacks of the excessive obsession with books. He listed down a number of drawbacks, like the problems of storage and cataloguing and socialisation, the tendency to see everything through theoretical perspectives and look for remedies for everything in books. He said every kind of love is positive but if love turns into obsession it becomes destructive. The same is true for books, he said. The thrust of the discussion was: Love the book, but don't be obsessive about it.

# How I came to books

Sujeev Shakya , President, Tara Management and columnist ▲

I started reading early in my life, fascinated by books and libraries. I spent my school years in Kalimpong. The British had left behind a legacy of reading, and reading good newspapers, books and magazines was a way of life there. The people in Kalimpong accorded a high status to people who read: having a set of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" in one's living room then was as prestigious as owning a plasma TV today. I feel fortunate to have been immersed in such a milieu, where reading was highly valued.

In the pre-television days, reading was my sole mode of entertainment. I couldn't afford to buy a Walkman or the "two-in-ones", but I could borrow books. So I would spend evenings and holidays reading books. At that time, the Nepali Bhasa Aandolan was underway, and the search for a Nepali identity had just begun. I was influenced by the movement, and I started reading Nepali books too. My reading of Nepali literature then enriched my understanding of Nepali society and, of course, of human nature. A flurry of Nepali publications came out at that time, which made me want to not only read more but also write.

My uncle who reads and writes extensively guided me through the world of books. We would discuss books, and intellectu-

als would come to our home to hold forth on various topics. These events at home further whetted my desire to read more. I also yearned to associate with the personalities whose names would come up during the discussions. I had already realised by then that I wouldn't get recognition in society without money or knowledge. We didn't have money, so the only option left for me was to gain knowledge—more knowledge—if I were to climb the social ladder. This ambition in me spurred me on to read more.

Later, during my college years in Calcutta, my affinity for libraries and reading actually came to my aid in other ways too. I could go to the libraries to avoid the heat, and reading was also the most economical way of impressing people. When I had no money to go to a movie or a party, I used to always resort to books. I could, however, develop my persona by accumulating knowledge and hoped that my personality would be enticement enough.

Today though, I have come to view the pursuit of reading in a more mature light. I no longer view reading merely as an exercise in whiling away time, as a practice for ensuring my upward mobility or as a way to bulk up my personality. Today, I regard reading as the supreme tool that we have at our disposal for understanding and appreciating this wonder that is life.

**I regard reading as the supreme tool that we have at our disposal for understanding and appreciating this wonder that is life.**



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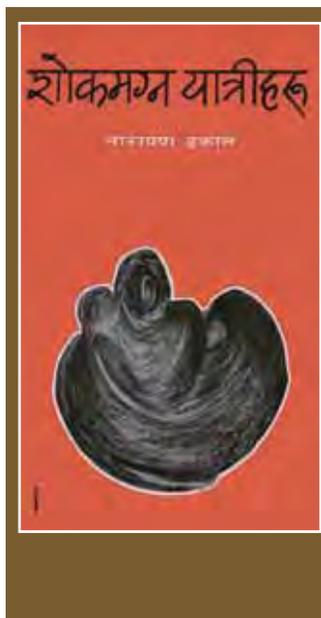
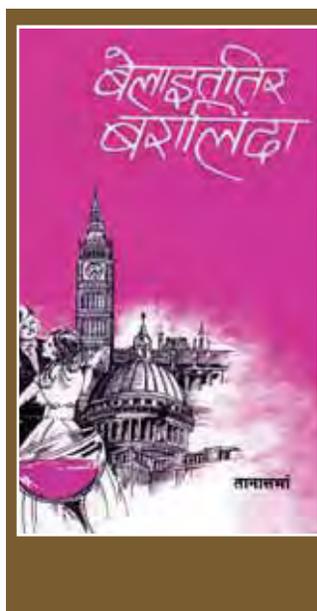
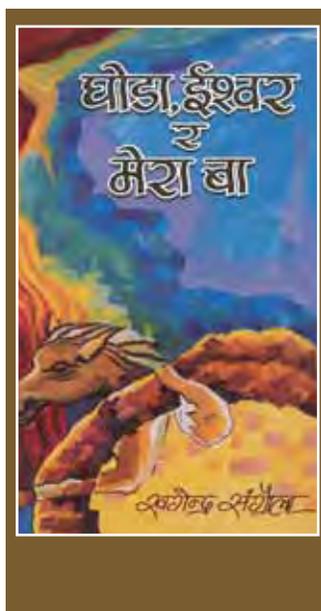
# Damme, this is the Nepali travel writing scene for You

The first two books of travel writing I read were incidentally two of the finest travel writings ever written: "An Area of Darkness" by VS Naipaul and "The Great Railway Bazaar" by Paul Theroux. I came to these books in freakish circumstances.

I ran into "An Area of Darkness" in a library. It had no library stamps on it, which instantly brought out the kleptomaniac in me. I stole it and read it in the comfort of my home. Fortunately, I didn't have to steal "The Great Railway Bazaar". But the circumstance I came to read it isn't any less freakish. My father bought it, but why he bought it beats my imagination. He didn't buy it for himself for I haven't seen him give as much a peek at it. Nor did he buy it for me because he hasn't said that he bought it for me. Not yet. Moreover, he never has bought a book for me. How come he then bought the book!

Now when I look back, I think I was destined to read these books—these books, which hooked me into travel writings. And now I have come to devour all of Naipauls and quite a few Therouxes, and also travel books by Pico Iyer, Amitava Kumar, Pankaj Mishra, William Dalrymple, Ian Buruma, among others. My reading of these fine exponents of travel writing led me to select travel writing as my "favoured" genre for a book of interviews we were planning to work on. And I began by reading Taranath Sharma's "Belayata

■ Ajit Baral



Tira Baralinda", but found the book irritating—in fact, so irritating that I had to belabour to read it. Surprisingly, it is considered as a canonical work and has won the Madan Puraskar, one of the two most prestigious awards given in literature.

If a book hailed as a masterpiece bored me, how will other Nepali travel writings fare? I was curious to know. And I picked up the special travel writing issue of *Samakaleen Sahitya*. Most of the writings in the issue failed to arrest my attention. And reading them, I did not feel any less irritated. I wondered why the writings were exasperating me, but failed to locate the source of my irritation. Evidently, what travel writings I had read I had read for pleasure, and not with the intention of understanding what travel writing is or what it should achieve or be like. So I decided to read as many travel writings by foreigners as I could immediately lay my hand on to find out why Nepali travel writings bored me and read Ma Jian's "Red Dust: A Path Through China"; Pico Iyer's "The Games" (a travel piece included in the book "The Global Soul"); Granta's travel writing special; a *New Yorker* piece, "Fertility Ground", written by a *New Yorker* staff writer, Susan Orlean; and an introduction to an anthology of travel writings, "The Picador Book of Journeys", edited by Robyn Davidson.

After reading them I found that my source of irritation lay in the content and the style of our travel writings.

## Superficial details

Travel writing is not just about jotting down every activity. It's about writing things of note, interest. But most Nepali travel writers go to ridiculous lengths in describing daily, mundane stuffs, as if anything they write would be of some interest to readers. As William Zinsser writes in "On Writing Well", "The essay that records everything you did on your trip will fascinate you because it is your trip...[but not the reader]. The

**Travel writing, VS Naipaul says, is an inquiry into something. And all the good travel writings inquire about one thing or the other. In "The Games", Pico Iyer inquires into not just about the Olympic Games but also its politics. In "Fertility Ground", Susan Orlean inquires about penises that are sketched on houses everywhere in Bhutan as a symbol of fertility. But we rarely find our travel writers examining an idea, a theme**

mere agglomeration of detail is no free pass to the reader's interest. The details must be significant."

In one of his travel pieces in "Belayata Tira", Taranath Sharma writes of his visit to a friend's house for lunch. This is how the piece goes: I took so and so bus at so and so time and got at so and so place. But I got lost and got wet in the rain. The so and so host came looking for me in a car and took me home. She gave me her husband's clothes and asked me to change my wet clothes. We talked over lunch and the daughter showed me her album. Lunch over, I expressed my desire to meet my so and so friend for tea. She ironed my clothes and handed them to me. I put them on and bid the family good bye. Of course, this is a bland description of the piece, but there are no significant details in it to hold the reader's interest.

If pieces by the exponent of *niyatra* are rife with such uninteresting and insignificant details, how could one expect the travel pieces by other Nepali travel writers to be any different? No wonder then that in her review of Govinda Bartaman's "Sohra Sanjharu: Yuddhaka Asarharubich Yatra", author Manjushree Thapa criticises the writer for shockingly chronicling "his drinking of 62 cups of tea and smoking of just as many cigarettes." She adds, "What is shocking is not that he had so much tea or [so many] cigarettes but that he wrote about it in such detail." But not all agree with Thapa. For example, in his well written response to Thapa's

review (*Nepali Times*, 14-20 January, issue 230), Tatsuro Fujikura, a Japanese living in Nepal, questions, "Since when has it become a bad thing to describe mundane aspects of life... in a work of literature?" Yes, I agree, because anything—any small detail or silly conversation—can be significant. But the details have to in some way move the narrative forward and deepen the theme. But in "Sohra Sanjharu" the repeated accounts of authors' drinking tea and smoking cigarettes don't add anything to the narrative and are mere padding. And if recording mundane aspects of life weren't a bad thing, the following paragraph would perhaps have not put me to sleep:

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### Inquiry

Nepali travel writers indulge in loads of insignificant things. I wonder if it is because they don't try to explore anything in their writings.

Travel writing, VS Naipaul says, is an inquiry into something. And all the good travel writings inquire about one thing or the other. In "The Games", Pico

Iyer inquires into not just about the Olympic Games but also its politics. In "Fertility Ground", Susan Orlean inquires about penises that are sketched on houses everywhere in Bhutan as a symbol of fertility. But we rarely find our travel writers examining an idea, a theme.

"Belayata Tira" at best describes the places the writer has visited, but rarely explores a theme. In "Baktaharuko Kuno", Taranath Sharma describes the goings-on in Hyde Park, London, but fails to weave the descriptions into a theme. He could have explored the history of the Speaker's Corner or its importance in providing a democratic public space to vent people's anger or conjectured its fate in a society where people increasingly have little free time.

Similarly, Devendra Bhattarai fails to inquire into a subject or explore an idea in his piece, titled "Chinari", which has one of the best openings in the whole lot of articles included in the special travel writing issue of *Samakaleen Sahitya*. This is how he begins his travel piece:

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A few paragraphs later, he writes about *mana chunne darjellingge bhasa*. He even quotes an advert of a printing press written on a wall:

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k/fgf] df]l lk!6<sup>a</sup> k] 5, hlxn] eg] klq sfd em\$, e/f] nfluof] 5kfo lrl/Rof\$ ð -kñ !(#\_

With this kind of beginning (and his enviable use of language to boot), he could well have gone on to explore the Nepali *bhasa prema* of the Darjeeling people and maybe compare it with how Nepalis themselves view the Nepali *bhasa* and come up with a wonderful travel narrative. But he doesn't probably because he didn't go there to write about the place. If he had, he would have looked out for a theme to weave his travel narrative around.

The fact that most travel writings are not woven around an idea becomes evident even when we look at the titles of the articles included in the special travel writing issues of *Samakaleen Sahitya* and *Madhuparka* (and the articles included in them, one can safely say, are representative of the Nepali travel writings). The travel pieces have titles like "Darjeeling Yatroko Samjhana", "Japaniharuko Hulsangai Hausinda", "Dakshin Americadekhi Bolivia Pugda", "Fuzi Parbat Chheuma Pugda", "Mero Leningrad Yatra". If the pieces were woven around a theme, the writers would have come up with the titles suggestive of the themes that they have tried to inquire into like the *New Yorker* writer Susan Orlean does in the her article mentioned earlier. Orlean's writing is built on an idea—of penises sketched on the houses in Bhutan, images which are believed to be endowed with the power to impregnate even barren women—and she thus comes up with a title that is suggestive of the theme of her piece.

**Moral high ground**

One reason why I could not read "Patal Prabash" was because I found the moral posturing of the author too disconcerting to read. In the book, Taranath Sharma criticises a Nepali couple in America for marrying in a church and not in a *mandir*, another for not wearing a daura surwal. He defines nationalism in parochial terms of culture and clothes and rails against those who marry in a church and don't wear a Nepali dress. Similarly, other Nepali travel writers take the moral high ground and make value judgement on others. Manjul, who is considered one of the better travel writers, in a travel piece published in the travel writing special issue of *Samakaleen Sahitya* tells his minister brother that he should love his birth place:

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lyof] lg t d6ql, clxn] klg t 5 . s]  
u6of] p; n] <l pm d7f] ef0 xf] 76fSs]  
; xlf/ ef0 xf]-xf] t/ dh] p; nf0{ e6g]  
s7f e6g; s3f] 5; dh] e6g] s7f . xfdl  
b6h] Pp6} cdfsf] bw vPsf xf] To; 7]  
h; /L d cfkng] kof/L cdf xS3f] a93f]  
efjhk/nf0{ cdf; /x dfof u5{ d7f] lj rf/df  
p; n] lg To; /L dfof ugK5{ . elfZodf  
efjhk/df 3lg cfpj] d h:t} lgj6wsf/n]  
p; s] af/df dh] gf/bdlg yhhf0{ ; Denj  
cfb/ u/ h:t} ug] sfd ug{ p; n] oTg  
ugK5{-kjh= #%\_ .

Nepali writers are also extremely uncomfortable revealing themselves and they rarely express things that reflect them in poor light. And when it comes to talking about sex, they seem puritanical. In "Belayat Tira", Taranath Sharma talks about a drawn-out relationship with a British girl. But he doesn't write even about kissing her, forget about things done beyond a kiss. Contrast this with Ma Jian. He writes, quite candidly, about his late night binge with his writer friends, his having sex with a series of girls. And for that reason he sounds more earthly and more credible (and more fun to read!). An extract from the book (p. 154):

We crawl into the bushes and sit on a rock. I lift Ding Xue onto my lap and kiss her breasts. Someone wheels a suitcase past and she shrinks back in fear. I whisper, "Don't worry, no one can see us," and stretch my hand up her damp red skirt. She strokes my hair and blows into my ears. The roar of my blood drowns the noise of the traffic. I let go of myself and pound into her. The lamps flicker, everything clenches, and for a moment I forget the litter, the smell of urine, the mosquito. We drip into each other and sink into the ground and I say things to her again and again.

Of course, there are exceptions. For example, Narayan Dhakal, though not a travel writer per se, has tried to touch upon his sexual fantasies, in his collection of travel writings and essays:

To; /ft klg dh] cjwflgs ; kgf  
b75-efjhkN6 Joerbf yxfi kf0of].  
#ffq; f6sf ofqsf sfjhfx, k]h (\* .

Dhakal talks about having an *abaidhanik sapana* twice, but leaves it to the reader to conjecture what he saw in those *sapanas*.

**Diary style**

I am yet to come across a good, western travel writing which is written in diary style. No good writer does that. The one who come closest to writing in diary style is Dervla Murphy. But she doesn't give space to all the things she did during her travel. Nepalis travel writers on the other hand mention virtually every thing—from what they did after waking up in the morning to before going to bed at night. Here is an example from "Sohra Sanjaharu":

#zfv !( ut] zqmef/ xfdl 3/af6 lgl:SPsf  
lyof]. To; lbg laxfg d ^ ah]t/ p7].  
#ofudf cl3Nnf] lbg g}; fdfg 7ls kf/3f]  
lyPf. vu]b]; u]hf / dh] rfalxn rf3af6  
laxfg ; ft ah] uf8l r9g] s7f lyof] .  
To; h] d 7ls ; ft ah] rf3df kL] .  
rfalxn rf3 ; w6h] Jo:t e0; s3f] lyof] .  
/yfg] kl/Irtx; gel6og] e6g] d7f] lj rf/  
lyof] t} e]6Pgg]. t/ Toxf cf0klkgk]  
vu]b] ; u]hf klg cf0ku3f lyPgg] .

af6fvr3f] lgl0t rfxg] r7f6 ; lsg nfu3f]  
lyof] . dh] Ps asf lzv/ lsg]. rfbgl  
/6/66sf] ; bz6 b]vof] t/ p; sf]cgxf/  
; bz6h:tf]lyPg . Psk6s p; n] dnf0{  
g/fd/L e6sofPsf] lyof] To; h] dh] p; nf0{  
b]vg]alQs} ; f0t lauh]fen] u/L csff/  
cgxf/ kmsfP . #ftllf klg tgfaf] Pp6f  
; f] xf] . ; ft ah] k6w] ldg6 u0; ss]  
5, sfxl cf0ku6g]. dgd6f]; dok]t xdf]  
pbf; lgtfaf/]; f]b]dh] r7f6 ; NsfP . ; f9]  
; ftlt/ e]hf le/3f vu]b] cf0ku].

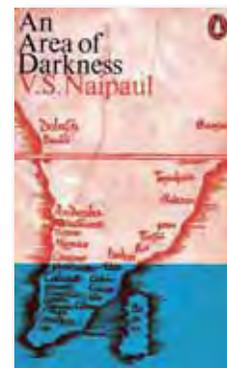
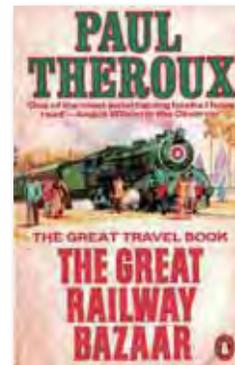
This is probably the most egregious example of a writing done in break-fast-to-bed format. But even when they don't write in typical dairy style, most Nepali travel writers are meticulous about describing most of the activities. As a result most uninteresting details find mention in their writing. This slows the pace of the writing and makes the writing boring.

Another interesting feature is that Nepali travel writers ascribe time to every activity. In a travel piece included in "Belayat Tira", "Devinceko Toki Nagarma Sat Din", Taranath Sharma mentions the time about 30 times. It is extremely exasperating to read that the writer did this at so and so time and that at so and so time. Anyway readers are interested in reading the details, actions, not what the writer did at what time.

**Show, don't tell**

Show, don't tell is the first thing they tell to an aspiring writer. But while reading Nepali travel writing, it seems that our writers don't give a damn to this fundamental rule of writing. Our travel writers just tell and don't allow the readers to feel the mood or the atmosphere of the things described. In Nepali travel writings, local characters really figure in the writing or when they do, they don't do the talking; instead, the writers do all the talking. For example, in an otherwise good travel piece "Kakarbhitta: Made In Japan", Khagendra Sangroula doesn't show the reader, but just rails against, the baneful effect of globalisation:

jfo808n whfwhf kfg] k6sfsf] ; j]ofkl  
u]hfaf/L, cfufsf len]sfdo e]kfx; n]



**Nepali travel writing started in earnest only after 1950, though a few stray accounts of travels, for example, of Junga Bahadur to Great Britain, were written more than 150 years back, as compared to western travel writings which hark back to the days of colonisation when the westerners traveled to the distant shores “to civilise the uncivilised” and wrote about them.**

**Nepali travel writing thus hasn't had enough time to develop itself, hone its craft**

9fs\$]f czfIt c.sf; , ceb| xfxNnf / vnansf] /f0bfof / goff ljZj s]f goff ; :s[t / hljg zhlslf] aQL; } nif0fsf 2kdf l; E]f csf; sf] ; ft] vfg] :f/df 3l6s/x\$]f dlabf ult-rf]hl s] lk5] Sof x\$. (foff ljZj s]f goff ; (bzn)Toxf / fsf/ ?k lnPsf] 5 . afx/sf ulgnf s'f gbVg] / ebbf s'/sf] gSnn ug[ dfq hfg] l8:sf] /s / kksf d7bxf gkfnl ; (tfgx2 Toxf km6fpg' km6fPsf 5g) . lzi6tf / zfnlgtf, nllhfzlnf / ul]otf, do]bf / zfl6tkptf-ol ; a) dfqjlo ; bu]ofx2sf] dfq] Toxf yf\$ xTof ePsf] 5 .

3f]f, OZj / / d]f af -k]h g+(% .

This kind of plain telling sounds sermonising and fails to persuade the reader. If he had written like this

ff6sfx2 jfod08n whfwhf kfg]l/ k6fsk6fs ul/x\$]f lyP . ptf k; ndf sfgsf] hnl km6fpg]l/ alnp8sf] ult rf]hl s]lk5]Sof x] alh/x\$]f lyof] . bf\$fgcuf18 a; } nfd nfd skfn kfn\$]f, sfgdg g; kfg] ul/ d6b] nu]Psf / gSsnl Inef0Hf k]6 / 6f06]gs lknld / :kf0; un{ 'sf kn]bf ePsf uf8f /ft] / ; tnf /usf l6; 6{ nu]Psf s]f]x2 rf]hl s] lk5] Sof x] rf]hl]sf lk5] Sof x) e]b) cuf18 lx]8/x\$]f s]lx2n]0{ lh:sf0x\$]f lyP . o:tf] b]zon] s]lx jifcuf18 ; ld ox]f b]lvb]yof] .

he would have been more persuasive and given readers an opportunity to feel the atmosphere.

In "Red Dust", Ma Jian never seems to put on sermonising airs simply because he doesn't tell nasty things about the Chinese thought police—that too in a book of a travel that he, a former member of a Maoist propaganda department, makes to escape the surveillance of the Chinese thought police who think he is

degenerating Chinese culture. Instead he lets the reader feel the dogmatism and conservatism of post-cultural-revolution China through dialogues and actions. In one place, a man from the District Public Security is threatening Ma Jian:

Wipe that smirk off your face, you smug bastard. You think you're something special with your long hair and denim jeans. Well, you can't get away with that here! If you were such an upstanding citizen, how come we have received so many reports on you? We released you two years ago to give you a chance to prove yourself. But look what I have here: "Long-haired man about forty, visited him twice in his office... A woman was seen sauntering in and out of his house all day." Can you explain why the people have chosen to pick on you in particular?

He answers:

That was my sister they were talking about. She often stays with me. The neighbours must have seen her using the tap in my yard.

And you have the most critical (of the Chinese thought police) statement that you could have—and that that without spewing any venom.

### Flashes of brilliance

Having said all these, I don't want to sound that all Nepali travel writings make a boring read, from beginning to end. Some travel writings keep us engaged by the sheer beauty of the language, even if there is noth-

ing worth knowing about while other writings evoke the scenes wonderfully well. For example:

xfdl ljBf x]f]nlt/ uf8ldf u0/x\$]f 5f] . ; wf] cf0/xg] ; fem cfh klg cfpb\$ . xfdl ; femsf] kf/lles r/0fd 5f] . kx]hf 3fdsf 6q]fx2 x/fpb} u0/x\$]f 5g] . ; femsf] /u; l; dgdf pbf; l knfpb} u0/x\$]f 5 . e]d/]s/Psf]h: tf] cfj fh lgsfn] ; 8sdf uf8l ul8/x\$]f 5 . uf8lleq xfdl ; a]df] 5f] . cf-cf'gf z]bx2 ; l; Psnfk ub] xfdl rkrk ; 8slt/ x]l/x\$]f 5f] . df]g; x2 cf0/x\$]g] / u0/x\$]g] . l/S; fx2 cf0/x\$]g] / u0/x\$]g] . lbg / /fts] of] b]f f]wdf s]g] ult ah\$]f 5g] . uf8ldf ult ahf0/xg] /fhf0{ klg pbf; h:tf] b]yg yfN5' d . ; f]x] ; fem? -k]h !#! .

Here the writer brings out the monotony of the situation wonderfully well, and there is something piquant about the sentences as well. But the flashes of this kind of brilliance hasn't been sustained throughout the book. And inevitably we come across a boring passage made even more boring by over the top description of quotidian details.

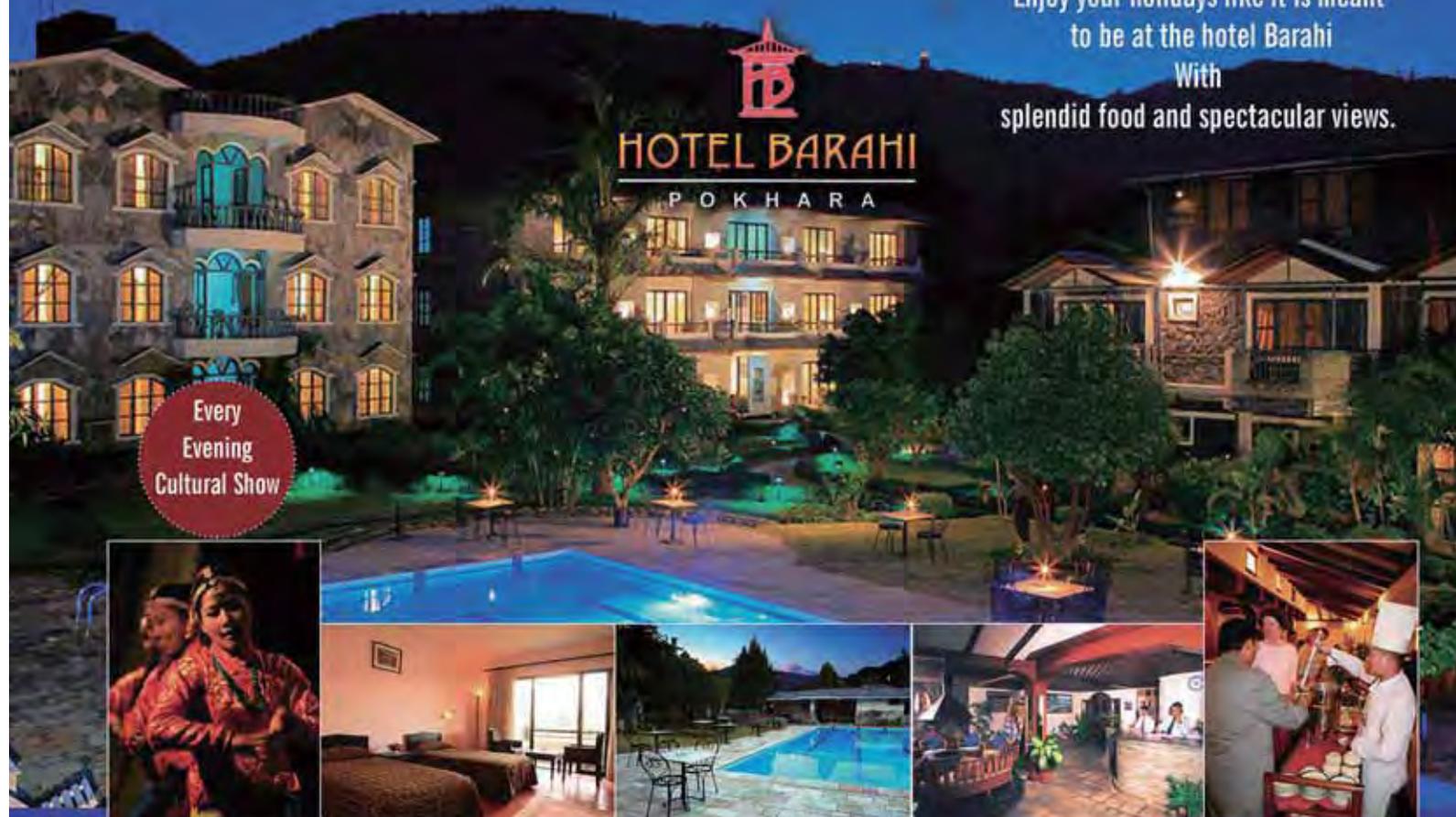
### Conclusion

There are probably two reasons for the weaknesses in Nepali travel writings. First, the relatively short history of Nepali travel writing. Nepali travel writing started in earnest only after 1950, though a few stray accounts of travels, for example, of Junga Bahadur to Great Britain, were written more than 150 years back, as compared to western travel writings which hark back to the days of colonisation when the westerners traveled to the distant shores “to civilise the uncivilised” and

wrote about them. Nepali travel writing thus hasn't had enough time to develop itself, hone its craft. Second, the economics of writing. Writing pays in the west to a certain extent. So western writers can set off on a journey with, of course, royalty money from their previous books or fat advances from the publishers in their purses. Even those struggling young writers who cannot hope to get advance money to finance their travel can hope to embark on a journey to write because of a higher per capital income. No such luck for Nepali travel writers. Any surprise then that most of Nepali travel accounts that are being written are of places the writers have gone to for seminars, conferences or study. Travel writing thus not being the primary agenda, Nepali travel writers hardly apply themselves to the art of observation, note taking and reportage, which is fundamental to the art of travel writing—or any writing for that matter. Also, the craft of research—historical or otherwise—which is also essential to travel writing, is yet to develop fully in Nepal. That's the reason why Nepali travel accounts suffers from the shortcomings that I have described in the essay, and which literally drives me crazy.

*(A slightly different version of this essay was first published in the journal Study in Nepalese History and Society, 11(1). We have left out the reference and some of the examples for want of space. We hope to carry the responses to the essay in the next issue. So any comments are welcome—Read Team)*

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# A man of action

**Rabindra Mishra of BBC Nepali Service fame talks about journalism, poetry, philanthropy, revealing a charming side to his personality**

■ **Ajit Baral**

In his interviews, Rabindra Mishra, the Head of the BBC Nepali Service, can come across as an overbearing host. To many, he sounds pushy, and his voice is a roar. But when we interviewed him when he was in Nepal recently, we discovered a side to his personality that is scarcely discernible over the air-waves.

He got down the taxi in front of the Mandala Book Point, the bookstore where we were to meet, ambled towards us, combing his short-cropped hair and said, "I am sorry, I kept you waiting." He was exactly fifteen minutes late.

He wanted to buy some books at Mandala, so we decided that he should get his shopping done before we did the interview. Inside the bookshop, he scanned the titles in the Nepal section, took out a few books—mostly on the Maoists—and went back to the counter to pay the bill. Madhav Maharajan, the owner of the bookshop, emerged from somewhere and asked the man at the counter to give him a discount.

Mishra said, "You don't really have to," as if it was improper to take a discount.

The discounted bill had come to something around four thousand. Mishra pulled out his wallet and counted the money, thought for a moment and handed one book back to the man at the counter. He handed over all his money except for a five hundred-rupee note and said, a faint smile playing on his face, "I need this to get back home."

Maharjan took a book from the counter table and gave it to him. It was a collection of speeches by Girija Prasad Koirala.

"What is its price?" Mishra asked.

"You don't have to pay for it," Maharjan said. "It's our own publication."

"In that case, inscribe it for me," Mishra said and handed the book back to Maharjan.

Maharjan inscribe the book, beaming.

We then headed for the Delicatessen restaurant on the first floor and talked. The talk, obviously, started with books

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## Chautara

2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> April

**Chautara Hospital**

Local Organizer:

FNJ - Sindhupalchok

## Lahan

5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> April

**Marwadi Sewa Sadan**

Local Organizer:

Ma Durga Bhawani Club

## Ilam

8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> April

**Bal Mandir**

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FNJ - Ilam

## Narayangadh

11<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> April

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## Kathmandu

29<sup>th</sup> April - 5<sup>th</sup> May

**Nepal Art Council,**

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# लडाइँमा जनता

नेपालको युद्धका चित्रहरू १९९६-२००६

लडाइँमा जनता पुस्तकबाट चुनिएका चित्रहरूको

## फोटो प्रदर्शनी यात्रा

## PHOTO EXHIBITION TOUR

30<sup>th</sup> March - 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2007

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"These books, who is it for?" we asked him, unsure if he had bought them all for himself. "I buy books every time I come to Nepal. I had wanted to read some of these books," he said. "Moreover, my wife also needs them for the thesis she is working on."

"When did you come to books?" we asked him. And with that question as the cue, he narrated the events of his life in a series of flashbacks.

Mishra's father, [artist Manuj Babu Mishra], was like most artists—inattentive to his children. So Mishra spent most of his childhood with his uncle. His uncle, a government officer, had been posted in Doti. Mishra left Kathmandu and went to Doti to live with his uncle; he studied there for four years until grade 8. He then went to Darchula, where his uncle was next posted, and studied there for a couple of years. Later, he returned to Kathmandu to take the test exam.

He would have to start college shortly, but he wasn't sure which subject he should choose as his major. His uncle wanted him to study science, but his father didn't want him to study a technical subject like science. His sister, who was studying journalism in Russia, suggested that he study journalism too. And so he enrolled in Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus and studied English and journalism. This is the period when he started to read, but he was not seriously into it. He was discovering other interesting pursuits along the way. For example, he once participated in a campus-level humour competition along with the director Prakash Sayami only to be defeated by Santosh Pant, a competitor from Sarswoti Campus. He started reading seriously only when he was 25.

He used to read whenever he could, but after becoming the Head of the BBC Nepali Service he has little time left for reading. He leaves for office at 8.30 in the morning and returns home at 8.30 at night. "Moreover," he said, "I have to read sitting upright because of a serious back pain, which is not easy."

Mishra's reading includes not only prose but also poetry. In fact, he says he's passionate about poetry and writes poems when he can find the time. When we asked him who his favourite poets were, he said, "I like the poems of Bhupi Sherchan. His poems are sim-



**He thinks words don't bring change; only actions do.**

ple yet so powerful." His eyes lit up behind his glasses, as he proceeded to recite a few lines from the poem "Mero Chowk":

; fB/f] uNnldf d]f] rf] 5 .  
 oxif s] 5] < ; ayf] 5 .  
 c; Vo /f] 5,  
 cg]t ef] 5,  
 c; ld z]f] 5,  
 s]n xif{5],  
 oxif To; d]fy /f] 5 .

; fB/f] uNnldf d]f] rf] 5 .  
 And then from "Bhupi Sherchan":

s]l n]5g]  
 o; f]x]5]  
 lrQ ab]b]  
 clg s]5]  
 kg] n]5g]  
 kg] x]5]  
 nfd] ; f; km]5]  
 s7] /f  
 elk z]rg .

"And of course I like Laxmi Prasad Devkota's poems," Mishra added.

Mishra also draws inspiration from foreign poets. "A Russian poet has influenced me a lot," he said. He waited for a few seconds to recall the name but gave up, saying, "My memory fails me." He loves Maya Angelou's and TS Eliot's poetry. He recited a few lines from Eliot's "The Hollow Men": "We are the hollow men/We are the stuffed men/Leaning together/Headpiece filled..." and let it trailed off.

Mishra joined Nepal Television in 1991. However, he soon got bored reporting about the inaugurations by ministers and the like and quit his job and went to Pakistan to do a Master's in Journalism. He worked at the News International, in Pakistan, for some time and later joined the BBC Nepali Service.

He used to write a popular fortnightly column in Nepal. We asked him why he was not writing the column anymore, and he said, "I am involved with the Help Nepal Network, which together with my fulltime job at the BBC, leaves me little time for other things." The Help Nepal Network is a philanthropic organisation founded by him. It now has branches in 12 countries. The network encourages people to donate money toward good causes in Nepal.

Mishra thinks words don't bring change; only actions do. "More than 95 % of Nepalis are not as fortunate as we are," he said. "We can at least do something for them, but we don't. We don't have the tradition of charity in Nepal. Our educational system doesn't teach us about our responsibility toward society; it only teaches us to fulfil our own aspirations. Every Nepali living abroad can afford to sponsor a child in Nepal and give her a good education, but we don't do that. Instead, we curse Nepal—its bureaucracy and its politics—over rounds of whisky. We need to come out of our shells and think about alternative ways of developing Nepali society. We should speak through our actions."

He talked about the Help Nepal Network so passionately that we were left wondering where his heart mostly lay—in philanthropy or in journalism. No surprise then that he said, "There is a conflict between my passion for journalism and philanthropy. Ten years down the road I am not sure which one will engage me more pleasure."



# A Book Mall

■ Anup Acharya

**With a floor space of 16,000 square feet, Ekta can cram thousands of additional books. But Ekta has deferred to aesthetics on this matter and decided to go with fewer books. Ekta, therefore, looks spacious and its atmosphere doesn't feel oppressive. The floors are well lit and spick clean; the walls are painted sky-blue and emit warmth. It feels good just walking around the floors**

Ekta Books started out in 1982 as a small shop in Thapathali, just opposite the Nepal Rastra Bank gate. Initially named Ekta Books and Stationery, a name that's in the same register as the names of the smaller stationery stores in Kahtmandu, the store has now changed its name to the more imposing Ekta Books. But the name change has been justified by Ekta's growth. Today, Ekta Books occupies a whole building near Prasuti Griha. The building has five floors, three of which house only books.

Ekta reminds one of big book malls in big cities like Bangalore, where one can spend hours browsing through books. Ekta has thousands of books. When asked how many

books there were, Radha Rai, who is in charge of books, said that she wasn't sure about the number. "We have classified books into various genres. Every genre has more than a thousand titles. More than 75,000 titles have been listed on the computer, but thousands of others are yet to be electronically catalogued," she said.

With a floor space of 16,000 square feet, Ekta can cram thousands of additional books. But Ekta has deferred to aesthetics on this matter and decided to go with fewer books. Ekta, therefore, looks spacious and its atmosphere doesn't feel oppressive. The floors are well lit and spick clean; the walls are painted sky-blue

and emit warmth. It feels good just walking around the floors.

On the left-corner of the ground floor is the counter and on the right are stationery items and books that have recently arrived. On the shelves opposite the stairs are national and international magazines like *The Economist*, *Time* and *Himal SouthAsian*.

On the day we visited Ekta, a young child sitting on a stool took out one book of children's stories after another and flipped the pages. Her bespectacled brother was reading "The Secrets of Droon" while the parents were engrossed in scanning the books on the shelves. That was a rare but pleasing sight:



a family coming together to buy books.

On the first floor, a boy in school uniform was reading a book, his shoulder resting against a rack. Hearing us approach, he lifted his eyes from the book, looked at us for a moment and reverted back to reading. On the sofa by the window, a man was reading a book. And all around us were books on science, management, medicine, sociology, yoga and meditation. There were also computer books and a wide collection of dictionaries—French, German, English, Sanskrit etc.—in different sizes and formats. It seemed like an ideal place for students.

The bespectacled boy we had encountered earlier on the ground floor followed us to the second

floor and said to the man manning the counter, "Where do you keep books about aeroplanes?" The man led him to the shelf containing books on aviation. The boy took out a few books, scanned them and put them back on the shelf. Seeing him making a face, we asked, "What books are you looking for?" "Books about aeroplane manufacturing," he said and scampered away. Perhaps he was looking for an illustrated book on aeroplanes, and he ran away seeing text-ridden books. The floor we were on had books on home and interior design, gardening, aircrafts, military science, tourism, forestry, religion, music and sports. It also housed books on the English language, media, literature, philosophy and history. But children's literature took half of

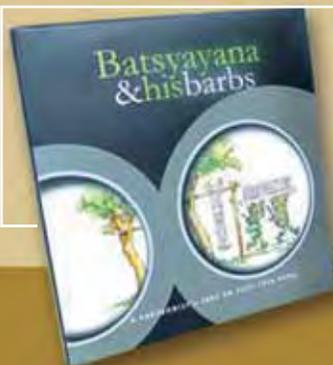
the floor space. In the children's book section we met two Giri sisters of the GEMS School. Their final exams were over, and they had come to buy books to read during the holidays. The younger of the two, Sreeya, 9, said, "We come here before every long vacation."

A little later, we saw some children with their father. The children were pulling out books and showing each other the illustrations in the books. The father let them be and was surfing through the shelves himself. We sidled to him, a pen and notebook in hand, and asked, "These children..." Anticipating our question, he said, "I take my children to bookshops to entertain them." Bookshops as a place of entertainment! Now, that's food

for thought..

Spending time in bookshops can be fun. More so if the bookshop is Ekta. At Ekta, you can amble through its passages and browse over books to your heart's content; you can pull out a book, sit on a stool and read the blurb, or you can relax on the sofa by the window and run through an introduction or read a chapter. If you are a child, you can simply play around. Ekta Books is probably the most reader-friendly bookshop in Kathmandu, and from what we saw in the visitors, Ekta's efforts to ensure reader-satisfaction has been duly appreciated.

*(Ekta Books has branches in Man Bhavan, Kathmandu and in Hetaunda and Pokhara.)*



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In 1987 Augusto Da Polenza and Prof. Ardito Desio founded the Ev-K<sup>2</sup>-CNR Project, paving the way for scientific research at high altitude with the remeasurement of Everest and K2, in collaboration with the Italian National Research Council (CNR). Two years later Ev-K<sup>2</sup>-CNR committee was in an independent, private, non-profit association, for the promotion and development of technological and scientific research in the Hindu-Kush- Karakorum-Himalaya region. Its mission is to provide specialised scientific support aimed at the sustainable development of high altitude remote areas to ensure environmental conservation and quality of life for local populations by furthering scientific knowledge, transferring scientific results applied to sustainable management of mountain regions, pursuing capacity building activities and promoting cooperation in the respect of local cultures and traditions.

Its fields of action are: Medicine and physiology, anthropological sciences, environmental sciences, earth sciences, clean technologies and environmental management system, multidisciplinary projects.

### Anthropological Sciences

The programme comprises the activities of researchers specialised in ethnography of the Himalayas and adjacent areas. The main ethnographic research trends concern religious anthropology, ethno-history, visual and aesthetic anthropology, theatrical anthropology, ethnomusicology and history of regions. A particular field of research is dedicated to Tibetan and Chinese philology.

The research areas pay special attention to direct interventions aimed at preserving local cultures and planning/assisting local development.

The Ev-K<sup>2</sup>-CNR committee in collaboration with the Italian Institute for Africa and Asia (IsIAO, [www.isiao.it](http://www.isiao.it)) produces "Cinnabaris", a journal of oriental studies, on the coordination of Martino Nicoletti, head of the Anthropological Science Sector. Its objective is to publicise studies and research in the fields of anthropology, ethnography, visual anthropology, archaeology, history of religions, philology, and art history of Himalayan civilisations. Vajra Publications, Kathmandu, publishes the journal in English in order to provide avenues for local scholars.

So far two works have been published and several more manuscripts have been proposed for publication. The published works are:

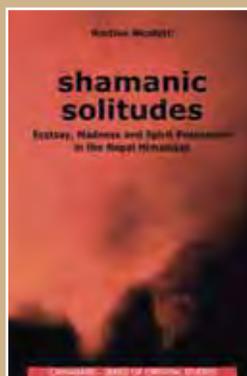
#### The Ancestral Forest



Lost among the high hills of eastern Nepal, which has meant centuries of cultural isolation, the Kulunge Rai ethnic group have tenaciously maintained their religious tradition ever since their ancient origins. Bearing witness to a far-off past of hunting and nomadic life, their myths and legends form a plot and scenario that comprise a multitude of invisible entities: the "hunter-spirits" and the "monkey spirits", the undisputed sovereigns of the forest world; Laladum, the deity who resembles a little girl, the initiator of young shamans from the villages of the area; the Nagi, or ophidiomorphic-spirits, dwelling in the waters, the totem ancestors of the Kulunge Rai group; Molu, a mythical forefather, lost in the woods and transformed into a deity.

A fascinating journey through the oral memory, the sacred geography and religious imaginary of this people. An ideal itinerary that progressively abandons the inhabited world and enters the abysses of the mythical woodlands – the silent witnesses of the group's ancient life style – only to lose itself in the thick of the immense forests that even today surround the settlements of the Kulunge Rai.

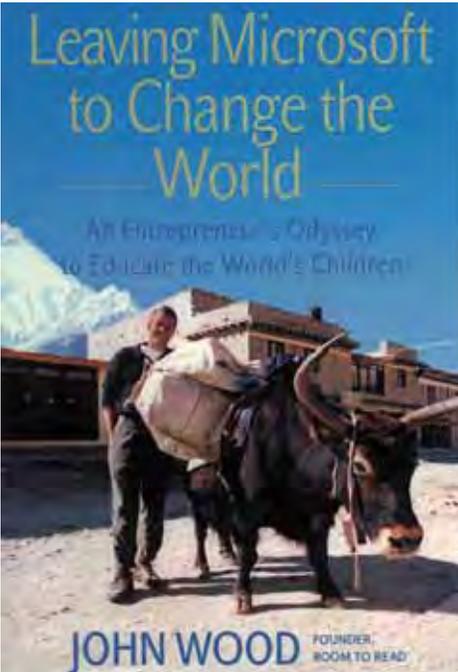
Starting from the cults of domestic deities, the research goes on to analyse the rituals that accompany the souls of the dead and the village farming cults, as a necessary step before dealing with the hunting cults and the hidden paths beaten by Kulunge Rai shamans.



#### Shamanic Solitudes

An itinerary – only apparently circular – furrows the universe of Kulunge Rai shamanism in Nepal. A nomadic religion, generated within the space of a double geography that weaves vivid visionary foreshortenings into the flat web of reality. An extraordinary journey through the principal places composing the universe of shamanic reality: the "call" by the spirits of the wood. The dreams and initiatic visions; the vocational sickness and

flight into the forest – mandatory steps on the path to obtaining powers; the praxis of healing and funerary rituals, centered on the experience of a "magic journey" accomplished by crossing different regions of the cosmos; the body's function and corporeity within the choreutic-musical world of shamanism: a body acting as temple and simulacrum for a divine epiphany. As a frontier between worlds. A vocal and sonorous body capable of starting up the great shamanic machine.



**Part beginner manual for change makers, this book is too subjective to be an assessment of Room to Read's progress**

One evening while flipping through some of the books he had brought with him on his long trek along the Annapurna circuit in 1998, John Wood came across this sentence by the 19th century existentialist philosopher Soren Kierkegaard: "There is nothing with which every man is so afraid as getting to know how enormously much he is capable of doing and becoming." He then got into his sleeping bag and with the quote still fresh in his mind began to reflect on the events of the day. He'd befriended a local teacher who had offered to show him around the school in Bahundanda, and on that day they had set off at dawn and hiked for some hours before reaching the school. The school was full of students, but its library had just four books, that too, discarded by trekkers: an Umberto Eco novel, "Mongolia: Lonely Planet Guide", a Danielle Steele romance and a copy of James Joyce's "Finnegan's Wake". Noting his astonishment, the headmaster had asked him if there was any chance of him coming back some day with more books to add to their collection. Alone that night, inspired, he began to make plans. That's just about how Wood's book "Leaving Microsoft to Change the World: An Entrepreneur's Odyssey to Educate the World's Children" begins.

After the trek, Wood sent out hundreds of emails to friends requesting them to ship their spare books to his parents' home in Colorado. Within a month some 3,000 books arrived. They were forwarded to Kathmandu then to the school in Bahundanda, the books

# From Nepal to the world

■ Shizu Upadhya

travelling the last leg of the journey on the backs of yaks. Wood then returned to his job at Microsoft, the software giant he had joined shortly after graduate school. Head of the China office, and just 35, he had a bright future ahead of him. But something jarred or, rather, several things all at once. Beijing was a crowded, polluted city; his relationship with his girlfriend was falling apart; and he was beginning to wonder if making rich companies richer was all there was to life. But another epiphany, similar to the one he had had in Bahundanda earlier, would help him decide what he should do with his life. In 1999, while travelling to Nepal to open two schools he had raised funds for, Wood realised, "I loved my job, I thought Microsoft was a great company, and I loved working there. But seeing those new schools and seeing the pride of the villagers—it was one of the most amazing moments in my life." By 2000 he had quit his job, relocated to San Francisco and founded a non-profit organisation that eventually became Room to Read.

Unlike Microsoft, his new venture didn't generate revenue and thus didn't draw eager investors. So he approached foundations and wealthy industrialists to finance the new programmes he thought up. He branded his "product" as a simple yet accountable way to make a difference: \$2,000 can build a reading room, he explained, \$8,000 a library; and \$11,000 an entire school. He ensured that each supporter was kept informed of how exactly their money was being spent. What he tried to do was run Room to Read as if it were Microsoft, arguing "Just because a charitable organisation doesn't seek to make a profit, that doesn't mean it shouldn't bring in as much money as it can, and manage that money well. To do any less is to shortchange the organisation's mission." That meant cutting costs: he hired very few staff, retained overheads at 5% of total donations (a figure that later increased to 10%), and resorted to outsourcing fundraising responsibilities, which were shared with volunteer teams that converged first in America, then in cities from Hong Kong to Paris to Vancouver. To raise money, Wood flew around the world giving presentations so persuasive that he once garnered \$1,50,000 in under two minutes. Though he worked 12-hour days, he declined to take a salary, living off savings and the occasional sale of personal stocks.

By the end of its first five years, Room to Read had grown from an organisation that worked with one village in Nepal to an organisation that helped people in several countries around the world. With substantial volunteer contributions from local communities and institutions, Room to Read had built 200 schools, donated more than a million books, established 2,500 bilingual libraries, constructed 50 computer and language rooms and provided 1,800 girls with scholarships through secondary school in Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, Laos, Sri Lanka and South Africa. The winner of numerous awards, Room to Read has now come to be regarded as one of the most exciting non-profit initiatives of recent times.

This saga of Room to Read is what "Leaving Microsoft" is all about. Part memoir, part beginner manual for change makers, this book is too subjective to be an assessment of Room to Read's progress. It doesn't say much about the states of education in different Room to Read countries or what other organisations are accomplishing alongside. And although its central message that non-profits are most effective when they are run as for-profits is important for all those costly, underperforming NGOs out there, the analogy between the two ends, surely, once one looks beyond basic managerial operations to end goals. More intriguing are Wood's moments of introspection revealing glimpses of the person he is. Few people in his position would emulate his career move, and the book doesn't urge its readers to do so. Wood isn't moralistic, and he doesn't hawk his methods as sure-fire strategies for making a successful transition from the corporate world to the philanthropic one. In fact, he even explains how unplanned it's all been. In a conformist world the logic against what Wood does is strong, and he shares the recurring doubts that plagued him before he could finally say, "Given the choice, I would have it no other way." Writing informally and with humour, Wood ends up making his story seem so normal that readers of his book are left wondering, "Since he's done so much, why haven't I?"

*(S. Upadhya is a researcher based in Kathmandu. She enjoys reading travel writing in her spare time)*



# नयाँ कृति परिचय



**रत्न पुस्तक भण्डार**  
 पोष्ट बक्स: ९८, ७१ 'ग' ब्याङ्कमार्ग  
 बागबजार, काठमाडौं- नेपाल  
 टेलिफोन: ९७७-१-४२२३०२६, ४२४२०७७  
 फ्याक्स: ९७७-१-४२४८४२१  
 ई-मेल: [rpb@wlink.com.np](mailto:rpb@wlink.com.np)



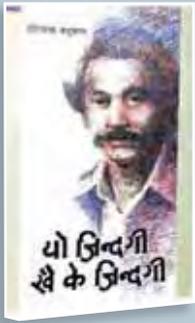
## The book I have loved the most

Sujit Mundul | CEO of Standard Chartered Bank Nepal Limited

I recently read "The Dinosaur Club" by William Hefernan, and I must say that I tremendously enjoyed the book. I'm familiar with the ways of the corporate world—the ambitions of the executives, the seeming lack of morals among the habitants of the upper echelons and the methods employed by companies to remain competitive. In the name of survival, companies often resort to questionable means euphemised by labels like "downsizing" and "streamlining the workforce". In "The Dinosaur Club", the survival game is played not by a corporation but by Jack Fallon, a middle aged executive about to become yet another victim of corporate downsizing.

The novel's basic premise has Jack Fallon's life falling apart: his wife of 25 years is leaving him, and the upper management in his company have decreed that fifty-plus executives like Fallon constitute dead weight, and therefore, must be fired. The legal counsel hired to ensure that the dirty work will be carried out without the company's being dragged through the mud is Samantha Moore. But Fallon will not go quietly; he rallies other fifty-plus executives around him, who create the resistance group "The Dinosaur Club", and they take on the upper management with counter-moves of their own. Along the way, Fallon falls in love with Moore, Moore switches sides, and the Dinosaur Club eventually emerges triumphant.

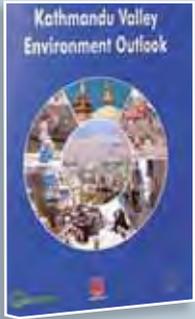
The corporate world is what it is, and one cannot expect wholesale changes in its moral setup. But that world is also peopled by humans who want to believe that they can win the good fight when the corporate monster decides to unleash its terror on them. And for those of us working in the corporate world who would like to continue believing that good can prevail, "The Dinosaur Club" can be considered a modern morality tale that we can refer to in times of doubt.



## Yo Jindagi Khai Ke Jindagi

Author: Haribhakta Katuwal  
Price: Rs. 50  
Publisher: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2007  
Phone: 4242077

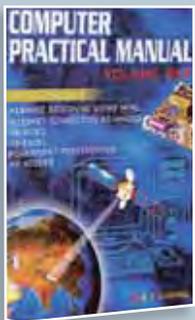
Poet Haribhakta Katuwal is best known for his powerful imageries and expressions. His poems are packed with patriotic feelings. This collection contains 61 of his all time favourite poems. Ratna Pustak Bhandar has reprinted this collection, which was first published 20 years ago, under its tribute to literateurs series.



## Kathmandu Valley Environment Outlook

Price: Rs. 400  
Publisher: ICIMOD, 2007  
Phone: 5003222  
www.icimod.org

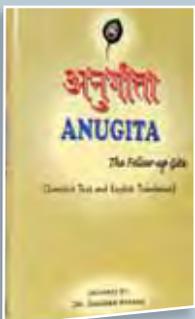
"Kathmandu Valley Environment Outlook" provides a detailed account of the status of the Kathmandu Valley environment highlighting five key environmental issues—air quality and traffic management, un-planned settlement, degradation of water resources, waste management and natural disaster preparedness. The book reviews their statuses, and recommends measures to prevent or minimise negative impacts, providing direct options for management by various levels of government, civil society, the public-private sector and residents.



## Computer Practical Manual Vol I

Price: Rs. 150  
Publisher: Ekta Books, 2007  
Phone: 4245787  
www.ektabooks.com

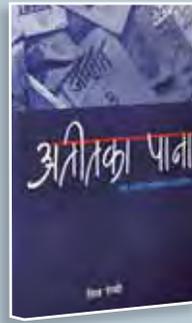
This book contains some special features of MS-Office and chapters on HTML, Email and Internet that will help user to create web pages, free email addresses and chat with friends. The book is specially designed to meet the latest syllabus prescribed by HSEB for Grade XI. It also covers the Diploma courses offered by most computer training institutes. A computer learning manual, it will be very useful for students.



## Anugita: The Follow-up Gita

(Sanskrit Text with English Translation)  
Anchored by-Dr. Jagadish Sharma  
Price-Rs.300 (I.C.)  
Published by-Parimal Publications, New Delhi (2006)  
Mobile: 9841203394

When Arjuna expresses a desire for the repeat recital of Gita, Shree Krishna obliges him with a version known as Anugita. By virtue of its being Shree Krishna's last exhortation, it may subsequently come to be known as his own gita bhasya. Anugita may help deepen the understanding of the actual message Shree Krishna tried to impart to Arjuna when he first recited it and ultimately also help facilitate the settlement of the on-going debate on karma, bhakti and gnana yoga. The book has Foreword by Dr. Karan Singh and Commentary by Madan Mani Dixit. The next edition, due to be out soon, will include Exposition from Atal Bihari Vajpayee.



## Ateetka Pana

Author: Shiva Regmi  
Price: Rs. 175  
Publiser: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2063 vs  
Phone: 4242077

Shiva Regmi has spent years studying the history of Nepali literary magazines. In this book, which is a collection of articles published in different newspapers and magazines, Regmi profiles 50 literary magazines.



## Atlas of the Himalaya

Authors: Zurick D.; Pacheco J.; Shrestha B and Bajracharya B.  
Price: Rs. 1200(HC), 1000 (PB)  
Publisher: ICIMOD, 2005  
Phone: 5003222  
www.icimod.org

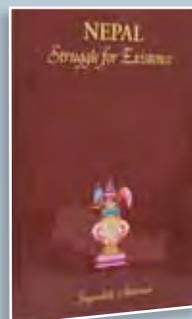
The Himalaya is the source of the great rivers of Asia. The region directly supports some 150 million people, and impacts on 500 million more downstream. This book was prepared to support the understanding of Himalayan geography and development activities in the region. The "Atlas" provides information on the characteristics of physical geography, geology, climate, and natural hazards, as well as sociocultural and historical descriptions. This book is for regional distribution only.



## Business Statistics and Data Management

Author: Dr Hridaya B. Shrestha  
Price: Rs. 425  
Publisher: Ekta Books, 2007  
Phone: 4245787  
www.ektabooks.com

This book is designed especially for BBA and MBS students. It's the popular statistical package SPSS for windows. It will benefit scientists, business people and administrators. It can be used as a crash course on introductory statistics for non-traditional students also.



## Nepal: Struggle for Existence

Author: Jagadish Sharma  
Total pages: 388  
Price: Rs 999  
Publisher: CommInc, Kathmandu, 2006  
www.nepalstruggleforexistence.com.np  
Mobile: 9841203394

The seminal work on Nepal's foreign policy was first published in 1986. The updated edition analyses the events up to the Janaandolan II. The book concludes that a successful movement away from satellite relationship with India to a more independent status is a hallmark for those who continue to struggle for existence as a sovereign nation-state. Situated between the two behemoths, Nepal's challenge is to pursue foreign policy for its survival. The book emphasises that the refinement of bourgeois democracy enhances readability while maintaining a balanced presentation.



## Kaanch Ko Parda

Nepali Televisionma Mahila  
Author: Deepa Gautam  
Price Rs: 125  
Publisher: Martin Chautari, 2007  
Phone: 4240243  
www.martinchautari.org.np

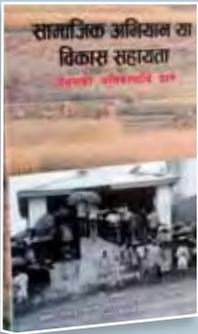
A first of its kind, the book analyses the portrayal of women on Nepali television channels. Bringing the gender perspective to bear on her analysis, she argues that the contents of televisions in Nepal are not women-friendly. The author explores flaws on Nepali televisions and suggests ways to correct them.



## Mass Media in Post-1990 Nepal

Author: Pratyoush Onta  
Price: Rs. 200  
Published by - Martin Chautari, 2006  
Phone: 4240243  
www.martinchautari.org.np

Since 1990 the media in Nepal has recorded spectacular growth, both in terms of quantity and quality. Several factors are responsible for this growth. This book examines those factors and describes the changes in the media in the last fifteen years. It also analyses many micro-facets of the media in Nepal under the assumption that such attention is crucial for making the media a real force for democracy in Nepali society. The book contains 48 short essays.



## Samajik Abiyyan ya Bikas Sahayata

Author: Eiichi Satamafu  
Price: Rs. 200  
Publisher: Martin Chautari, 2006  
Phone: 4240243  
www.martinchautari.org.np

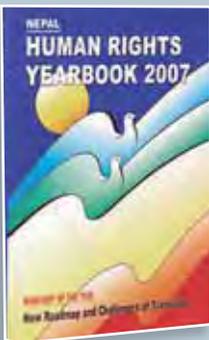
The book is a remarkably honest account of a foreign aid worker. In it, the author Satamafu writes about experience of working in Nepal and his reflections on the experience. It was first written in Japanese. This book is a plea to Nepali readers to explore the possibilities of learning from people from different corners of the world and collaborating with them for building more equitable and just relationships.



## Saharikaran: Jibikako Vivid Aayam

Editors: Bhaskar Gautam, Jagannath Adhikari  
Price: Rs.200  
Publisher: Martin Chautari, 2006  
Phone: 4240243  
www.martinchautari.org.np

It's a compilation of scholarly articles on urbanisation and livelihood. It deals with how the neo-liberal policies actively followed by the state after 1990 have affected urbanisation and different aspects of livelihood. It also emphasises that the state has always considered rural development as the backbone of the economy and overlooked the need to eliminate poverty, and improve the livelihood of the people, in the cities.



## Nepal: Human Rights Year Book 2007

Price: Rs. 500  
Publisher: INSEC, 2007  
Phone: 4278770  
www.inseconline.org

An annual publication of INSEC, the human rights year book documents the instances of human rights violation in the country. The latest yearbook contains two chapters. The first chapter deals with the new roadmap and the challenges of the transition and the second chapter deals with the state and human rights. The annexes provide records of human rights violations that occurred in 2007 in five regions.



## Jana Andolan-II: A Witness Account

Price: Rs. 205  
Publisher: INSEC, 2006  
Phone: 4278770  
www.inseconline.org

It's a document of human rights violations by the king's government during the April movement. Here people share what they witnessed during the 19-day movement. The book is out of print, but readers can read the book at the central and regional libraries of INSEC



## New Paradigm in Global Security: Civil: Military Relation in Nepal

Author: Dr Prem Singh Basnyat  
Price: Rs 295  
Publisher: Bhrikuti Academic Publications, 2004  
Phone: 4256036, 4220660  
Mail- readbpmb@wlink.com.np

This book contains articles related to the different levels of security including the challenges to national security and the importance of the civil-military relationship. It touches on the difference among national, international, regional, corporate and global security, substate and transstate actors, and the changing paradigm of security.



## Nepalma Maobadi Sasastra Dwanda: Karan, Ashar ra Samadhanka Prayasharu

Author: Bishnuraj Upreti  
Price: Rs 395  
Publisher: Bhrikuti Academic Publications, 2006  
Phone: 4256036, 4220660  
Mail- readbpmb@wlink.com.np

The book describes the concepts of conflict, the rise of the CPN (Maoist) and the impact of its armed struggle on natural resources. It prescribes measures to peace building. It is a valuable record of a situation existing in a violence-ridden country. It is a historical document for the study of the arm conflict initiated by the CPN (Maoist).



## Doing social development through business

**Through an NGO called ALL, he has created opportunities for the neediest people of Nepal for learning & livelihood.**

**P**aul Kavanagh, Irish businessman, loves to read spiritual writers like Deepak Chopra and Paulo Coelho. He also likes to read Charles Handy, a management guru with a socialist heart. It is Charles Handy, he says, who inspired him to earn a lot and invest in social development.

He is a capitalist. But he says, "I am spending or at least hoping to spend some of my money for a reason. I make lots of money from one hand and give some of it back from another. It's a great motivational factor to know what you are doing has a value." And what he has been doing in Nepal has a value.

Through an NGO called Access to Learning and Livelihood (ALL), he has created opportunities for the neediest people of Nepal for learning and livelihood. What ALL do is provide scholarships to children from disadvantaged backgrounds at

local private boarding schools but the interesting thing about it is, it invests in the social sector the way one invest in business. That is, it uses the business model in social development. He says, "Schools usually don't charge the third or the fourth student from the same family. That is, they give a discount. What we do is place 60 students for five years at a school, but at a 50 per cent discount."

ALL also helps schools build infrastructures. He says, "Some of the schools have good faculty but poor infrastructure. In such cases, we build infrastructures but demand the free placement of certain students for certain years in return." That way, schools can have better facilities, a larger class size, great educational environment and ALL can provide quality education to needy children.

ALL has already partnered with a local school in Duakot, Bhaktapur. And the response, Paul says, has been great. Initially he was not sure if placing 60 students from the disadvantaged community at an English boarding school dominated by high-caste and middle- and upper-class students would not disturb the school. But, he says, students have integrated very well. "Now that it has worked here, we can be sure it will work elsewhere," he says. ALL is thinking of extending its support to other areas.

## Q&amp;A

**Ameet Dhakal**  
News Editor, The Kathmandu Post



Chandra Shrestha/Kart

### How much and when he reads

On average, I read for about two, three hours a day, but I don't have a fix time for reading. I enjoy reading before going to bed and before leaving for office. Because of the recent changes in my life and routine, I try to reach office early and

spend first two hours (before my colleagues arrive) on reading.

### Books he reads

I am mostly a non-fiction reader. Books on politics and economics interest me a lot. Of late, I have been reading books on democratic transitions. Almost any books that deal with the age-old debate of socialism vs liberalism interest me.

I read fictions only when they are recommended by someone or when they become acclaimed. But I must confess that reading fiction is more fun and relaxing than reading non-fiction.

### Importance of reading

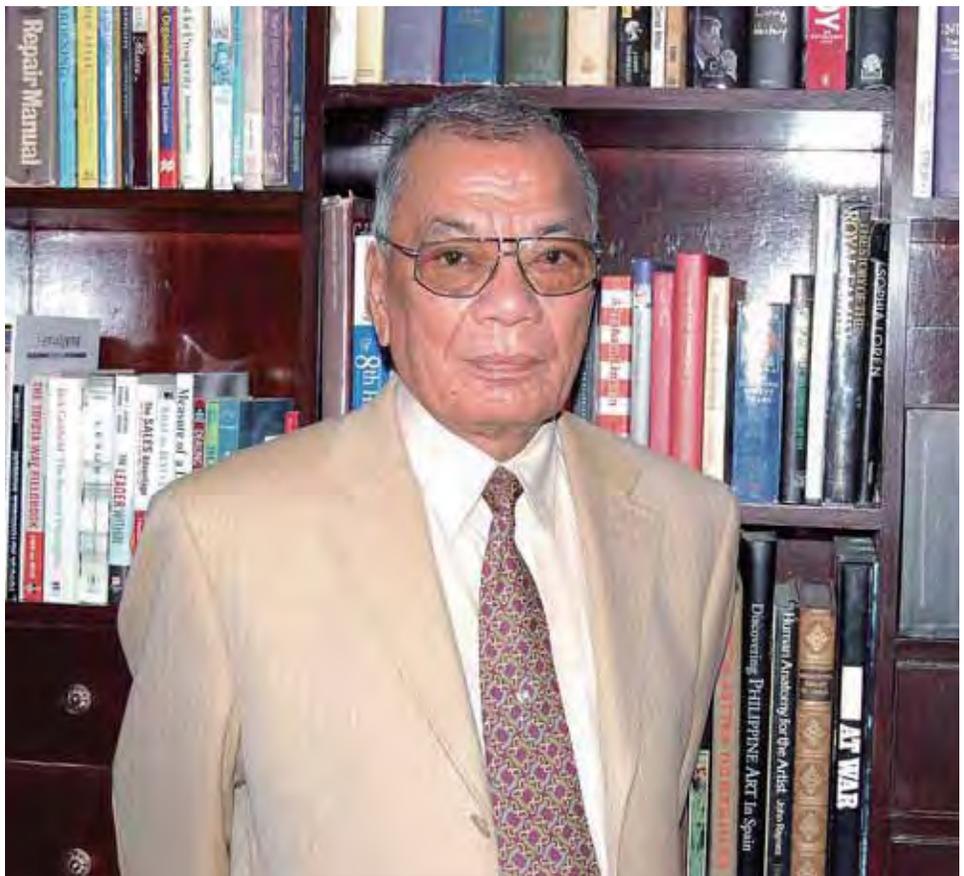
I read because not reading is painful and nightmarish. Of course, I read for other mundane and utilitarian reasons as well—it's the only way to keep you grounded in the world you live in. Reading also brings a lot of joy in your life and helps you be less lonely.

### Recommended books

Let me mention three fiction works that I have enjoyed reading the most: "One Hundred Years of Solitude" [by Gabriel G. Marquez], "The Alchemist" [by Paulo Coelho] and "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" [by Robert M. Pirsig]. Of the three, "The Alchemist" is the easiest to read, even though all of them take you on life-philosophy and are most likely to change the way you view life. But I have a caution: It's your consciousness that brings meaning to the words in the books; they don't have a meaning of their own. So reading in itself is a test of who you are.

### Blogs as a substitute for books

I don't read blogs much. So it will be unfair to compare books with blogs. Yet, I can share my general impression. I don't think blogs are as serious as books are. Since blogging is a recent phenomenon, it still has to pass a test of authentication and depth. Who knows, ten years down the line, I may have something else to say about blogs. But for now, I don't see blogs even as a replacement for newspapers, let alone books.



Reader's Room | Vijaya Gajananda Vaidya

When Vijaya Gajananda Vaidya, Chairman of Vaidya's Organisation of Industries and Trading Houses, left his job at the Asia Economic Society in the United States and returned to Nepal, he had only \$ 700 in his pocket. He was only 26, but he was ready to conquer the world of business—and conquered he has. In a little over four decades, he has created a small business empire. No wonder he is so busy. But he does make time for reading, a habit that he acquired when he had to go underground for political reasons. He was 14 or 15 at that time.

Before leaving for office at 8 am he reads the *Hindu* and the *International Herald Tribune*. The old issues of both newspapers are piled on one side of his black desk in his study. Beside the desk is a shelf lined with books like "Kissinger: The Price of Power" by Seymour M. Hersh, "Business at the Speed of Light" by Bill Gates and scores of biographies. On the rack on the other side of his study are an assortment of books—"My Name is Red" by Orhan Pamuk and "Travelling with Che Guevera", etc. There are also books on Nepal and urban development, books he is reading to prepare a paper that he will present at a seminar in China. He buys at least 7 to 8 books on his foreign visits. These books in his study, he says, are not even one-tenth of what he owns.

He reads for at least 2 hours on weekdays and longer on Saturdays and when he is free. He loves to read biographies and autobiographies of successful people: John F Kennedy, Jawaharlal Nehru, Abraham Lincoln. He loves reading Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's books and has read most of his work. He, however, doesn't read Nepali books. That, he says, is a sad thing, because he's a Nepali after all.

When not reading, he writes articles for publications. He is currently working on his autobiography.

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## What Kathmandu is reading?



**Narayan Dhakal**  
Writer

One of my friends had sent me an essay by Orhan Pamuk's "My Father's Suitcase" via email. I liked the essay. So I picked his novel, "My Name is Red". However, I gave up reading it after a few chapters because I found it complicated. I had a similar experience while reading Marquez's "One Hundred Years of Solitude". I will read the Orhan book again sometime later and see if I can follow it, like I did "One Hundred Years of Solitude" in a second read.

I am busy rewriting my novel and trying to read as little as possible. At the moment I am just going through some of the portions of a novel I had read years ago and liked: "Sult" [Hunger] by Knut Hansun.



**Rajendra Pradhan**  
Anthropologist

I usually read several books at a time—on different topics and in bits and pieces. Of late, I have been reading books on collective violence, for example, Rene Girard's "Violence and the Sacred", which attempts to link religion and violence. I am also reading a set of four books by Eric Hobsbawm—"The Age of Revolution", "The Age of Capital", "The Age of Empire" and "The Age of Extremes"—and a book on social exclusion and inclusion, "Inclusive Citizenship". Edited by Naila Kabeer, the book discusses how people perceive and experience citizenship depending on their social situation.



**Priyanka Karki**  
VJ and Model

I had read "The Notebook", a novel by Nicholas Sparks, some time back and found it very inspiring. When I was in Pokhara for work recently I chanced upon another novel by the same writer, "The Wedding". It is a romantic love story. I am half way through it and finding it interesting.

I don't get time to read in the morning and the afternoon. But I read at least something before going to bed. I cannot usually sleep without reading a few pages. I like to read books (I don't care if they are fiction or non-fiction) which boost morale.



**Ashmina Ranjit**  
Artist

I usually read two or three books at a time, bit by bit. But I am not a serious reader and I don't read cover to cover. I am at the moment reading three books: "Uttar Aadhunik Aina", "Women, Art and Society" and "Fifty Contemporary Thinkers". The first is a book of theories, which I picked up to learn about the recent trends in literary theories, but I found it obscure. The second is about the works of women artists. The third, as is evident from the title, is about the 20th century thinkers. I am a few chapters into it. In between I am reading "The Greatness Guide" to lighten myself up.

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## Pitamber Sharma

A phd in regional planning, Pitamber Sharma taught Geography at Tribhuvan University for 27 years. He now works for different organisations as consultant. He is the author of "Urbanisation in Nepal" and editor of "Tourism and Development". His many articles on urbanisation, hill development, regional planning and tourism have been published in magazines and books.

**When did you start to read?**

I started reading out of my own interest when I was perhaps in grade five.

**Which is your favourite children book?**

"The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

**Which books are you reading at present?**

"The Argumentative Indian" by Amartya Sen.

**What kind of books do you usually read?**

All kinds, but mostly the social sciences, history and literature.

**On average how many books do you read a month?**

When I am relatively free I read one or two books a month. One would be a serious book on the social sciences or history/philosophy such as Joseph Stiglitz's "Globalisation and Its Discontents" or Samuel Huntington's "The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order" and the other would be a novel such as Dan Brown's "Da Vinci Code" or Robert Waller's "Bridges of Madison County" or even Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist".

**Which books have influenced you the most?**

Many books have influenced me and it won't be fair to cite one. "Red Star Over China" by Edgar Snow. "The Great Transformation" by Karl Polanyi. "A Study of History" by Arnold Toynbee. "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" by Thomas Kuhn. "The Wretched of the Earth" by Frantz Fanon. "The Age of Extremes" by Eric Hobsbawm. "Poverty and Famines" by Amartya Sen. The list can go on.

**Which is your favourite international writer?**

There is no favourite as such.

**Which is your favourite Nepali writer?**

Poet Gopal Prasad Rimal.

**Which Nepali social science book would you make a mandatory reading?**

"A Study in Nepali Economic History: 1768-1846" and "An Economic History of Nepal: 1846-1901" by Mahesh Chandra Regmi.

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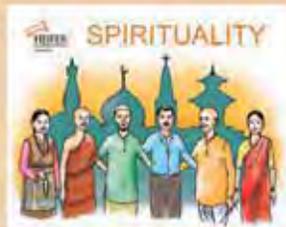
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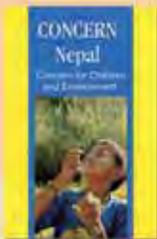
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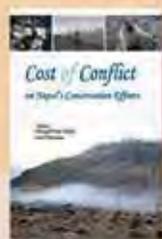
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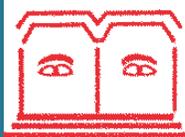
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