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THE NEPALI WAY

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pg. 36

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Hajurba ra Hajurma/ The Forgotten Hajra/ People of Khumbu

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# Editorial

SEPTEMBER 2016 • Issue 178



## When you don't know what to write

*Sometimes, I keep staring at the blank page for hours, sometimes; I keep erasing what I write.*

Some of my writer friends say - it's easier to write after you have completed your first paragraph. But on most days, I am complaining about what I write. It's not easy to satisfy yourself that easily with your own writing. Writing is a critical process, a process that pushes us to the limit of losing our mind on most days. The fear of being disapproved, ordinary, indifferent is quite overwhelming.

As writers, we always want to know if someone has read our piece. We are always collecting ideas; we are always chasing words and metaphors. But sometimes, the mind's block is something you cannot refuse. It's a serious disease that sometimes takes toll for days and then for weeks. And then when the deadline is dangling, we submit our assignments vainly: adding to it, "I am clueless about what I have written."

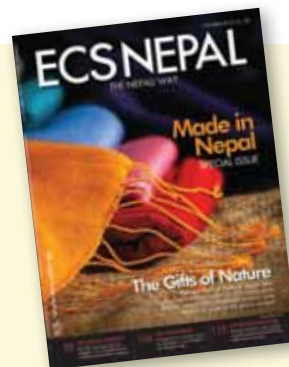
There are days when I have wished to wear the minds of other writers because I am not comfortable with my own words; days when I am cranky and moody because I have not been able to write for

weeks. And there are days, when I am trying to encourage people to write saying, "it's the most wonderful experience, just ink your thoughts on paper." As humans, I guess we are all a hypocrite. We lie to ourselves easily.

Most of us have scathed ourselves in the process and for the best reasons, sometimes giving up becomes easier. This issue of ECS Nepal for most of our contributing writers has been about fighting their writer's block. While we are still unsure about what we have written, we also know writing will never satisfy us, there's always something to improve and peck at. So, help us refigure ourselves by sending us your feedbacks this time to [thenepaliway.ecs@gmail.com](mailto:thenepaliway.ecs@gmail.com). We will be waiting for your letters to fix our crucified hearts.

We hope you enjoy reading what we have put together after an epidemic of writer's block here at ECS \*wink\*.

**Srizu Bajracharya**  
Sub-editor



## FromTheVault

December 2013

Nepali/Dhaka topi has been adorning Nepali heads for generations. A cloth cap that Nepali men wear on their heads is perhaps the most recognizable feature that sets a Nepali man apart from all others. Read the feature, Put a Cap on It,

to discover more about the Dhaka topi as a part of Nepali culture. It also talks about the oldest Dhaka topi shop of Nimal Tuladhar in Ason. Of course, the December 2013 issue of ECS NEPAL is not only that. The feature, Yatra for the Bull,

talks about the writer's experience on her Dipankha Yatra, while Dance of the Deities is about the dance of Astamatika performed in Patan. All over, this 'Made in Nepal' December 2013 issue is worth going through once again.

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**36** Feature

**Hajurba ra Hajurma**

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**ON THE COVER**

Hamro Hajumas  
Photo: Amar Danuwar Rai



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# ECS NEPAL

THE NEPALI WAY

[ SEPTEMBER 2016 ]

### Nepal Africa Film Festival

**Where:** Russian culture centre  
**When:** September, 7 -9  
**What's Happening:** The Nepal Africa Film Festival (NAFF) will venerate the diversity which is so abundantly prevalent throughout the African continent. The festival will teach us about African "ubuntu", and celebrate the continents resilience to move forward.

### Fruit wine enzymes making

**When:** September, 3  
**Where:** Bliss raw cafe and garden  
**What's Happening:** Fruit wine enzymes making

### QC awards 2016 national poetry slam, (Spoken word Nepal)

**When:** September,  
**Where:** Rastriya Sabha Griha  
**What's Happening:** The first ever National Poetry Slam in Nepal. Eight teams from eight different districts in Nepal will compete for the National Title.

### DIMA open marathon

**When:** September, 17  
**Where:** Kamaladi PragmaPratishtan  
**What's Happening:** Take part in this marathon which will test your fitness levels. All the funds which will be raised will be going to the flood victims of southern Nepal. Let's run for a good cause.

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				1	2	3
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	



INDRAJATRA

### Newari Voyé

**Where:** Durbar square  
**When:** IndraJatra  
**What's Happening:** Social Tours is organizing a Newari bhoj on the occasion of Yanya. The Voyé is set to take place right amidst all the Jatra action, along the path where the rath is going to be escorted along.

### Trek To South Kanchenjunga Base Camp

**Where:** Kanchenjunga Basecamp  
**When:** September, 22  
**What's Happening:** Trek To South Kanchenjunga Base Camp, Nepal Excursion Treks

### Godavari Running Festival

**Where:** St. Xaviers Godavari  
**When:** September, 24  
**What's Happening:** Basecamp outdoor lifestyle brings you a challenging obstacle race, so come and test your strength, stamina and teamwork, as you run and gun your way through.

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Courtesy: Tim Temple

Hindsight

# Remembering the Deceased

📷 NIRMAL SHRESTHA



The term 'Newar' does not just define an ethnicity, but also a culture. Newars observe various festivals (jstras) throughout the year, among which Gai Jatra is a fundamental one. Gai Jatra falls one day after Guni Punhi (Janai Purnima or Raksha Bandhan). In Nepali Bhasa, Gai Jatra is known as Saparu. Although it is an essential festival of the Newars, nowadays, it is also observed by other ethnicities in some places. Basically, 'jatra' is understood to be a special celebration observed in temples of gods and goddesses on certain specific days. Gai Jatra is celebrated not to commemorate any happy or joyous event, but rather in sorrowful times, in remembrance of the deceased.

Death is an inevitable event, and one has to accept it as a normal process. At such a time, patience is essential, and after all, what is life and the universe? is the message given on this day. A cow is taken out in procession to the palace, accompanied by musical bands and other pomp, in memory of the deceased. This custom can be said to be the cultural tradition of monitoring the number of deceased in a given year. There is a legend behind Gai Jatra. After the death of a Malla king's son, it was decided to console the depressed queen's spirits by arranging for a procession of gaily decorated cows in memory of the deceased, accompanied by music and ceremony, by all who had lost a family member during the year.



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# Viewfinder

Nepal through **your** eyes



**Photographer**

Shuvechchhya Pradhan

**Profile:** Shuvechchhya Pradhan likes to introduce herself as a dreamer and a wanderer. An enthusiast of heritage, history, and old houses, she loves to travel, and write, as well as relate and collect stories of ordinary people. She is also a big fan of Nepali chiya.

**Caption:** The holy Pragma Panimita is recited by gurjus during the sacred month of Gunla. The book has the teachings of Lord Buddha, and is one of the most important scripts in Buddhism. There are four important ones, written in gold, located at Bhagwan Bahal, Kwa Bahal, Itum Bahal, and Pinganani in Maru. Pictured here is the one at Kwa Bahal.

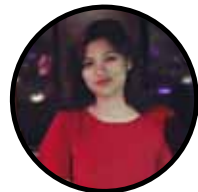


**Photographer**

Shweta Shakya

**Profile:** Architecture student. Occasionally writes, travels, and takes photographs to keep her sanity.

**Caption:** Unconditional Friendship.



**Photographer**

Pramik Maharjan

**Profile:** He loves photography, and he has been sincerely dedicating more than a year to it. Clicking natural photos or street photography is his theme. He currently takes photos at Tik e' jhya Chhen.

**Caption:** For the early birds.



Tell us about the things you have seen and the places you have been to. Send us your clicks that depict any dimension of the Nepali way and we might publish them in this section. Direct your entries to [thenepaliway.ecs@gmail.com](mailto:thenepaliway.ecs@gmail.com) with your name, a short biography, your profile picture and the description of the photograph you've sent in.

# Living In Nepal

THINGS TO DO • FOOD • FESTIVAL WATCH • CULTURE

Patan is famous for its heritages and its beautiful architecture but it is also famous for the chips found in Pimbahal. The lip smacking chips which are offered in various flavours are an explosion in your mouth buds. You can munch these heavenly chips offered by the shopkeeper who has been making them for 18 years, and enjoy the beauty of Patan Durbar Square which is quite close to the particular shop. While doing so, you are sure to feel nostalgic as the taste of the chips will take you back to the carefree days where munching down on them would be the only goal in life.



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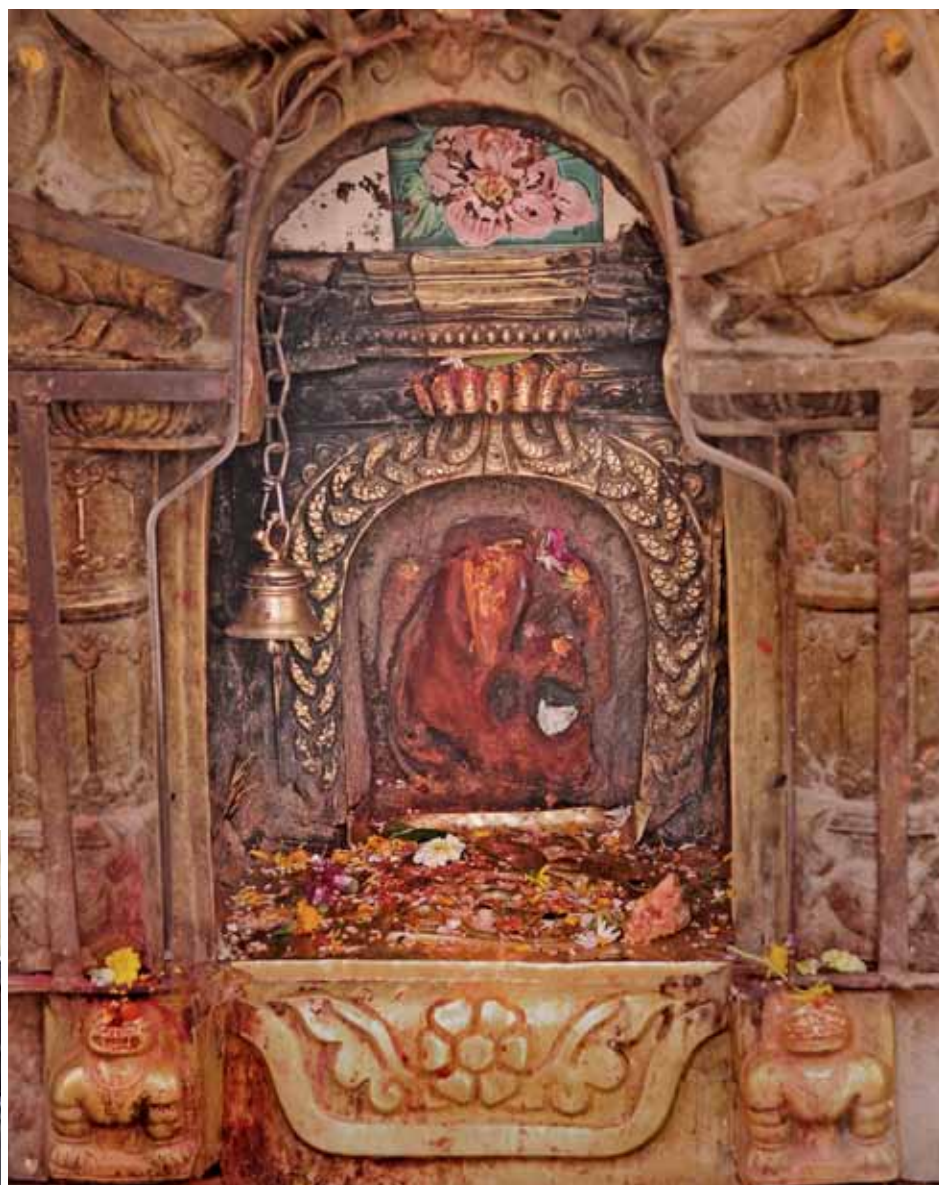
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5 things to do in Nepal



**2** "Sathi ko lagi yo hatth salam ho, du-shman ko lagi yo hatth falam ho" Almost every Nepali kid at that time had once in his/her life recited this iconic dialogue made famous by the one and only Rajesh Hamal (lovingly called Rajesh dai), a living legend in the Nepali movie industry. Take a day off, gather your friends, arrange some popcorn and binge watch Rajesh Hamal movies with subtitles (if provided) and fall in love with the nation's superstar all over again. And in that way, you're not only bound to have good time but you're also supporting the Nepali film industry.

**3** Although Nepal is a secular country, Hinduism remains the dominant religion and part of our public culture. Hence, one can notice a plethora of Ganesh, also known as the elephant god, who is a prominent and one of the most worshipped deity of Hinduism, and Swastik which is a symbol for prosperity and peace in Hinduism, in every nook and cranny of Kathmandu valley. With respect to the religion, the followers as well as the non-followers can come up with a game of spotting and counting the Ganesh as well as Swastik symbols which are easily found all over the valley. Not only is it fun but you can also experience it first-hand, the dedication of the Hindu followers in this modern world.



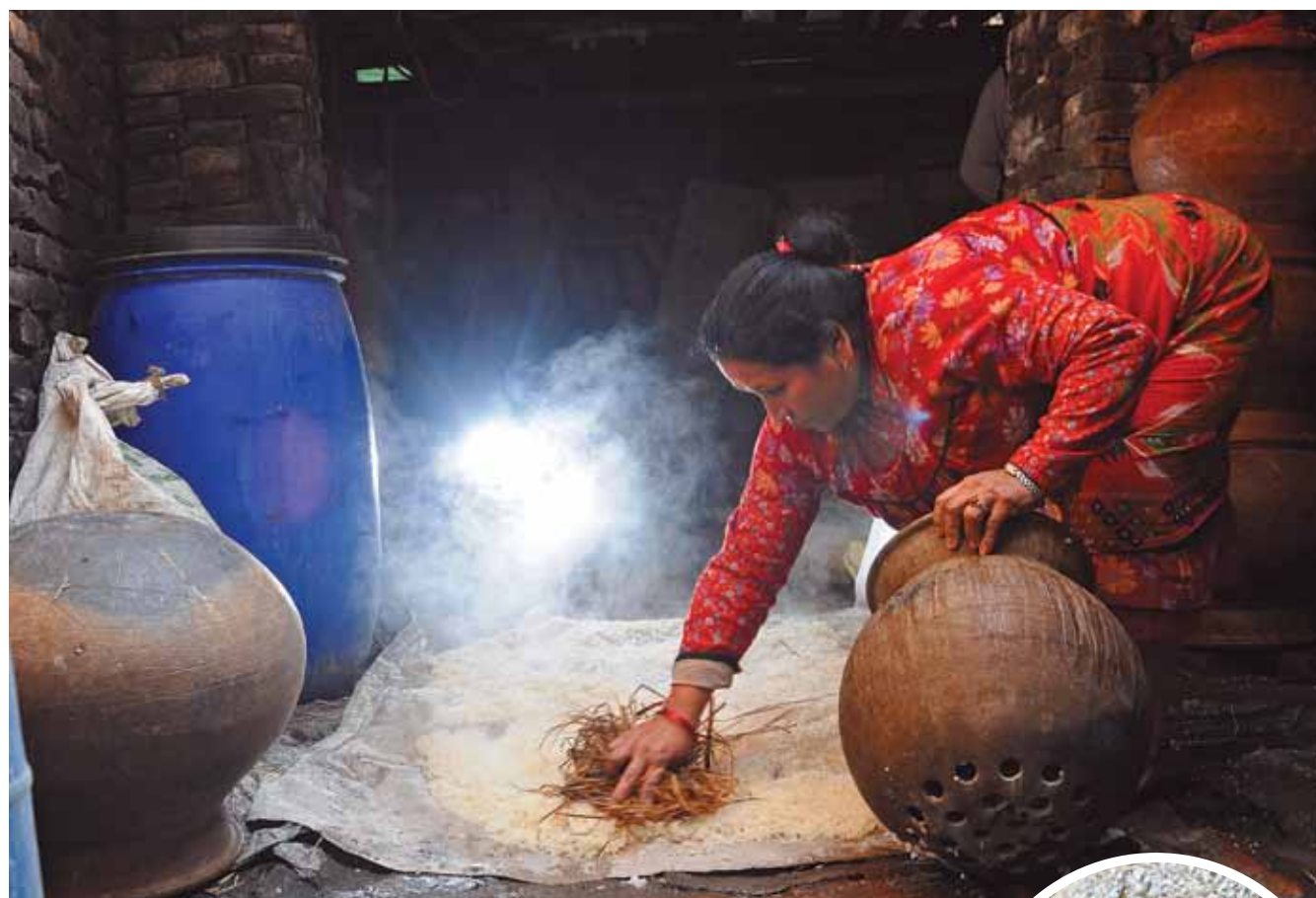
**4** If you haven't already been a part of the craze that is Bipul Chettri, then you're missing out on a great melodious experience. Listen to Bipul Chettri's album 'Sketches of Darjeeling' that includes hits like 'Asaar' and 'Deurali dadha' and get transported into a harmonious journey through the hills. Bipul Chettri's melodic acoustic tune will take you to his world that is different yet so similar at the same time. And if you're lucky you might even catch him live as his concerts take place frequently in the valley.



**5** Not much into cooking but yet want to put out something instant and delicious when with friends? Then make Wai Wai chatpattey, an all-time classic snack that is loved by all and equally fun to make. The fragrant spices of Wai Wai along with the tangy taste of the lemon and the freshness of the

garnish will make you crave for more. It will prove to be the perfect snack over a light chat with friends.

Ingredients: Wai Wai instant noodles, beaten rice (optional), lemon, finely chopped onions and tomatoes, boiled potato (optional) and coriander leaves.



Yogendra Maharjan



Food

## The Forgotten Haja

Remembering the mouthwatering delicacy from childhood, a unique mix of specially cooked rice combined with sugar and butter.

by SACHI MULMI

**A**sk a man about haja, and he'll tell you to ask a woman about it! Not because he cannot be bothered by the preparation of food items, but because he's more interested in the end product of haja - chyang or raksi.

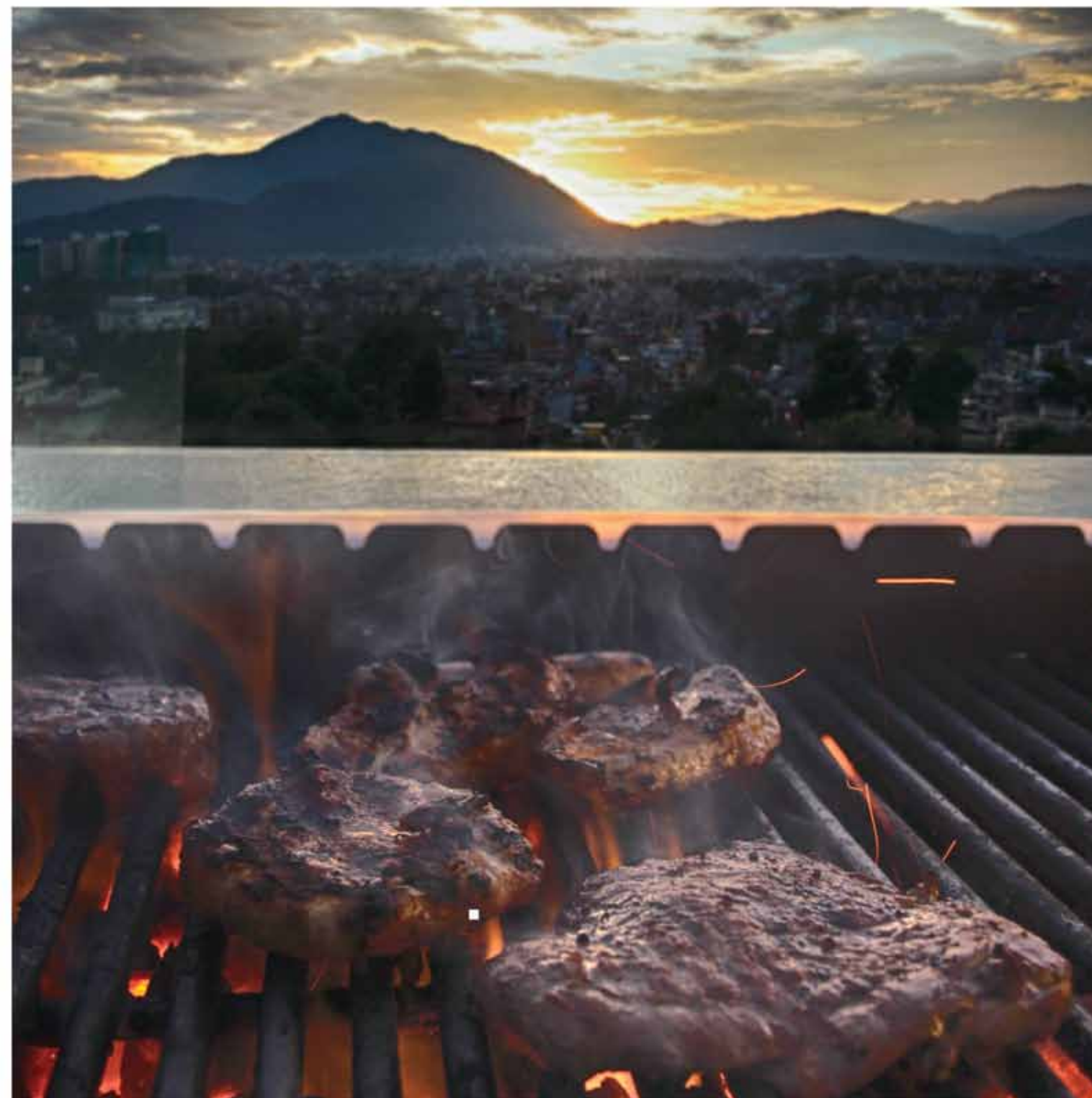
This unique rice delicacy is traditionally prepared when the women of the house start the tedious and meticulous process of brewing alcohol. And preparing it has some really interesting and difficult procedures. After boiling hot water in a phosi, you put the haasi on top, which is a big pot with holes on the bottom. The bottom is covered with enough hay to make a good base

followed by green leaves. Then you pour the required amount of rice, and cover the mouth of the haasi with a lid filled with water. Thus, the famed steamed rice is prepared.

For those who have consumed haja, they cannot stop praising it. There's something delicious about the rice made this way. Before the idea of buffet parties really picked up, guthi gatherings and other social functions would serve a scrumptious meal of haja. It is easier to prepare than normal rice. Perhaps what has slowly made its existence fade from the popular culinary choice is the difficulty and the heavy utensils it needs.

Though taichin rice is a favorite for haja, people also use other types of rice for it. And even the method of preparation have changed. Finding a phosi or a haasi in a normal household is difficult these days, so using a steamer is a much easier option.

Those who cherish the memory of haja, do so mainly for its amazing mix with clarified butter and sugar. The combination further accentuates the taste of the rice, making it a memorable treat. And more so the kids. The rice mixture is rolled into little bite sized and given to little children to enjoy. Rice had never been so tasty!



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# Finding <sup>Food</sup> the best Laaphing at Boudha

In recent times, Boudha has grown more popular for another reason. The fiery cold mysterious Tibetan food: Lafen also known as Laaphing.

SRIZU BAJRACHARYA

**B**oudha is one of the surreal places in Nepal, a place that will embrace you with faith. The fluttering prayer flags, the waft of incense from gompas, the flickering wicks of butter lamps, and the enchanting mantra ‘Om mane padme hum’ murmured rhythmically by those on a kora around the giant stupa, add more value to the spiritual journey that people make here every day. It’s

no wonder why thousands of people visit this place on a daily basis to immerse their souls in the serenity of the most sacred Buddhist shrine in the country.

In recent times, however, Boudha has grown even more popular for another reason entirely. The fiery cold mysterious Tibetan food: lafen, also known as laaphing.

By now, most people already know its taste; the dish is so popular that it has now migrated

to different parts of the city as a Tibetan culinary that most urbanites can enjoy even in malls.

But my hunt for Laaphing began again when a friend posted a picture of Laaphing on Instagram. This was at lunch, and hence, I couldn’t stop talking about the dish; I felt like I had forgotten the flavor of the spicy, slimy, noodle. You know how it is; when suddenly you have this craving –the urgency that makes you go bonkers.

It had been almost over a year for me, since I had my last laaphing. However, at the time, I had fulfilled my stomach’s wish to a happy end: I had gobbled down six servings of laaphing, both yellow and white. Now, I wanted to go for it again. And as we went on talking about our anecdotes of trying this dish for the first time, my foodie friend, started describing the place from where her sister brought her laaphing every once in awhile. “Kasto mitho huncha, piro ra ramilo, waah kasto khana paryo. (It’s so delicious, spicy and fun. Wow! I really need to eat it.) It’s probably the best place for laaphing in my mind.” The next day, we were on the road to find this place. The alleys of Boudha are quite confusing. Once you get into the lanes, unless you are a local, you are bound to get lost.

As our search for the small familiar lafen began, we wandered deep into the labyrinth of Boudha for almost 45 minutes. There are more than 10 laaphing places in Boudha, in every nook and corner you will find places that offers laaphing. And it seemed like each outlet was trying their best to offer something extra: for example, wifi, while at some other places, modern sitting arrangement. I did not mind this business model at all, because it’s the same story as how momo became the de facto staple food of Nepal.

After taking several turns, we finally found the chain of laaphing shops at Phulbari, Boudha. This is also the place where you will find the oldest and the most popular laaphing center. The place we were looking for was ‘Himalayan Tasty Lafen Center’, a small outlet with simple sitting arrangements, and a welcoming lady, Choying Shercho, who had dreamed of opening a laaphing center ever since she was young. She always liked the taste of laaphing, and she wanted to share her love for this food with others.

“This place was originally a khaja ghar, but I always wanted



to open a laaphing shop, and hence, I went for it when I got the chance,” says Shercho. It’s been more than six years now that she has been offering delicious laaphing to her customers.

College girls and boys and other youngsters come all the way from different parts of Kathmandu to try her laaphing. “Aba k bhannu, ramailo lagcha, mannis haru khoji khoji mero thaun ma laaphing khana aancha,” says Shercho. (I really enjoy it when people come searching for my place for laaphing, it’s a wonderful feeling to be recognized for the work you do.)

Laaphing is a jelly pancake steamed the same way as momo. The yellow laaphing is made of maida flour while the white one is made of chickpea powder, and it is served in three different ways.

**One- in-rolls:** This laaphing is a dry laaphing. The yellow pancake is rubbed with a spice paste (chili powder mixed in special Chinese oil), and to it, small granules of the maida bread soaked in water is added as filling. Once done, it is rolled and cut into pieces for serving.

**Laaphing soup:** The yellow pancake is cut into pieces, and to it, the soup of chili powder and vinegar is added. The garnishing is done again with small granules of the wet maida bread.

**White laaphing:** This laaphing is usually the one you order with soup. It is made the same way as the yellow laaphing soup. However, the only difference is that the white laaphing is made out of chickpeas powder.

After having four servings of the three variant laaphings, I ordered two more and packed eight for my friends and family.

As she rubbed the spicy paste into the yellow jelly pancakes, I asked her, “Isn’t it difficult? With a line of laaphing shops and outlets mushrooming even outside Boudha, your business must be facing quite a competition?”

“It is. Fewer people visit this place compared to the previous years. However, I am not that worried, because I think, in time, laaphing will slowly become like momos. Momo, after all, was a Tibetan dish, but now it’s so popular, and even though everyone knows how to make it and how to sell it: it’s still popular. I guess some things are born that way; the more you share, the more popular it gets,” says Shercho.

And it’s quite true, we came searching for Boudha’s best laaphing, but we ended up realizing that there is no such thing as ‘best’, it’s just the experience that counts. As long as the flavor of the laaphing lingers in people’s memories, it will continue to be popular.

# The Women in Red

The beauty of culture lies in its palpability to change its value with time. A newlywed fasts for the first time and finds new meaning in the traditional festival of Teej.

AVRATI BHATNAGAR



Every year as a little kid I saw my mother dress up in her prettiest red saree and all the regalia that came with it. She looked exceptionally beautiful around teej, rather she made sure she did. She would then fast for an entire day without even taking a sip of water. It is a game I used to say to myself. A challenge to go without drinking for twenty-four hours. All women in the family used to gather at our grandmother's place. The night before they would sit together and eat one last time before the teej fast would ritually start. We kids, careless and happy we are all spending the night together on this festival, would scream, play and run around.

As I grew up, the festival of teej gained a new meaning, the

night long singing and dancing, the adornments, and the rituals were not just amusements but they had a very specific purpose. Aunts would tease me and the girls that we should start fasting already if we wanted a perfect husband. Shiva would grant one to us. They are too young now, my grandmother would interrupt. Their mother-in-law will make them fast anyway. Let them be untroubled while they are in their mother's house. I would giggle outwards but feel awkward inside. How would Shiva help me find a good husband? Does he know what would make a perfect husband for me, when I do not know that myself? What if he gets confused and picks someone he likes but I do not?

Years later, as a grown woman living on my own and away from my family for years, teej had

become a childhood memory. My mother would some time mention about teej being round the corner on our phone conversations. I would dread her not eating or drinking for an entire day. She would say that if you believe in the fast you do not even feel the need to. It would not convince me but I would rather not argue.

Since I did not fast to make Shiva happy, the job of finding a perfect husband had to be undertaken myself. You see, if I didn't trust the Lord himself to do it I could not trust anyone else too. Maybe Shiva was pleased already or I was good at looking, but I found the perfect one I wanted to marry. I was a months old bride surrounded by a new family and teej was approaching. The women I would meet would ask me if I had fasted before. I would smile and shake my head, "no". They would enquire if my mother did and be satisfied with an affirmative answer. "This would be your first one, then", they would say. Older ones would mention how it was much harder in their time but now the rules are a little relaxed. Collectively they would discuss the long queues at Pashupati and the hours they spent waiting to gain entry the year before, and the year before and so on. Queues, hunger and thirst would scare me a little but I did not want to show it.

A week before teej the darkhahi parties started. Aunts and relatives invite women to their house to eat, dance and celebrate the coming of teej. They were the best part of the festival. Extended

## How would Shiva help me find a good husband? Does he know what would make a perfect husband for me, when I do not know that myself?

families getting together and having fun is exactly my idea of festivities.

On the day of Teej, I dressed up in my red wedding saree, half excited, half anxious.

Are you seriously going to fast all day, my husband kept questioning and went on to tease me about going hungry to ensure his long life and good health. Now I feel guilty about eating and I am hungry he complained. Cousins back home, younger sisters who were next in line to get married within a year - the ones I ran amuck with on this day decades ago as our aunts and mothers did the puja - texted me. Each one of them, asking me how I was holding up without eating or drinking? Is it as difficult as it looked? Do you really not feel like eating like our mothers used to say?

A part of me was not even listening to the chatter. As I stepped out of our home and went from one temple to another, the atmosphere outside was electric. All the women I saw were dressed up and on their way to

temples talking animatedly and laughing. There were mandalis or groups on the corner of roads singing and groups of women were dancing to their tunes. It was a true red party on the streets. The aesthetics of the festival were so arousing that you could not care for anything else much either. I forgot all about the fast as the excitement in the air caught up with me. "I think teej is the only time when there are more women than men on the city streets. Seems oddly subversive in its own way", I mentioned enthusiastically to my sister.

As I waited in the thankfully-not-so-long queue at Pashupati, paused a moment to look around. There were so many women in groups walking around in their best clothes, buying little nothings, dancing in the middle of the streets in a manner which was refreshingly lighthearted. It was their day! I realized something then; maybe, this is not about the husbands at all. Yes, it says so in the books and stories but that does not have to be the truth

all the time. Times have changed, they say and a woman like me can leave their house whenever I want and go out with my friends without my husband tailing me. But have times really changed for all women? Perhaps these are the occasions when women from all quarters of society can freely get out together and have an amazing time in the name of ritual. It made sense to me to see the excitement on the faces around me. They are not just fasting, they are celebrating.

The sun had already set when we reached back home. Timple garo bhaye hola (you might have found it difficult), my mother-in-law told me while giving me some boiled potatoes and water to have. The whole day is enough you do not have to fast the night too. I had those and went to my room beaming. My husband sat there reading. "So you successfully fasted for your husband, who does not even believe in these things" he teased again.

"Who said it was for you" I smiled knowingly and went to bed.



# BIPUL CHETTRI Local listening WILDFIRE IN NEW YORK

A long intended evening in New York finally comes to fruition and it ends up being one of most exciting nights in a long time for the Nepali community in the Big Apple. Bipul Chettri performs at the Mellrose Ballroom. An account.

📷 KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

It is a few hours before the show, and the July 16 afternoon thunderstorm cuts through New York's thick humidity. Inside the Melrose Ballroom, organizer Pasang Sherpa of PNM Entertainment is huddled around a round table in the center of a large empty floor with his associates. On stage, a band patiently starts the sound check instrument by instrument. Its front man, and star of tonight's show, Bipul Chettri, is

casually seated next to Pasang, keenly tuned in. At 6:30PM, its go-time. Outside the door, a line has already begun to form along the venue's wall. Inside, event staff setup at the door with color-coded wristbands. On cue, Prabal Gurung, the fashion designer whose non-profit Shikshya Foundation is a beneficiary of the event, arrives and is quickly ushered in to the upper level where guests will be getting a chance to meet him for a photo op.

Melrose Ballroom is an exceptional venue whose ground floor has a stage in front and limited seating in the back with a large open space in between and bars on both sides. On the upper level, guests are able to stand along the balcony and watch the show below. And on the top floor, a lounge space with a bar for mingling. "I wanted to make sure we did a proper concert and did not compromise on the experience," Pasang had said a

few days before the event. "And we have the meet and greet with Bipul and Prabal before the show, so the lounge space on top was perfect for it."

Pasang Sherpa has been a member of the Nepali community in New York for many years, and has been a pro-active member of the Nepali events community during that time. Of the many events he has been involved with, he was also key to putting together the Kutumba concert and fundraiser for the non-profit Grassroots Nepal a few years ago. A music enthusiast, back in the day he performed at several Nepali concerts as a member of a local band. "This is an event I had been wanting to host for a very long time, and Bipul and I had been speaking about it for a while. I am glad it has finally come together," he said. The New York show, of which Lights Out Entertainment is also a co-organizer, is part of Bipul Chittri and the Traveling Band's "The Maya Tour 2016."

Pasang was not the only one glad that the show worked out: tickets for the event sold well in advance and it began to look increasingly obvious the 1200 capacity venue would not be able to accommodate everyone who wanted to come to the show, or those who were thinking of buying tickets at the door.

The meet and greet part of the event revolved largely around a general Q&A session with Prabal and the Nepali actress Priyanka Karki, of which the entertainment highlight was perhaps Priyanka singing "Timle Ta Haina...". Bipul joined in for the latter half, and soon fans mobbed the trip for photos.

Downstairs, after an opening performance by a band, the packed venue was in a mood for a good time and Diwas Gurung, whose folk-rock band has performed for several Nepali events, was providing the soundtrack for it. Prabal Gurung got on stage and spoke a few words of gratitude and his love for Bipul's music too. However, minutes



later he had to grudgingly leave for a Bollywood actress' birthday party and missed the main event and star of the night: Bipul Chettri.

Well past 9:30 PM, and the line of people waiting to get into the venue is long enough that it wraps around the building. Inside the venue, the crowd begins to chant: "Bipul! Bipul!" And so he appears, and with him, his music that has made a humble music teacher a musical sensation amongst Nepalis and folks from India's North East region.

The venue was filled with energy as the crowd, bouncing in unison with hands stretched out, turned into one giant choir accompanying Bipul song after song. Several young women were hoisted on the shoulder of their male friends, giving them a great vantage point of the stage, as well as a unique spot for the essential selfie and video clips or Snap-Chat, Instagram or Facebook, or all of them.

"The bar on this side is better," a young woman said picking up two drinks with a friend. "It was so crowded on the other

side, we had to wait for 30 minutes!" Indeed, almost \$40,000 worth of alcohol was bought at the bars during the event (a dance party, which started after the concert, ended past 3:30AM).

The front man and the band, which had arrived in New York after performing in several other cities at events organized by the Nepali community, put on a flawless set. Still, as audiences below the stage stretched out their hands towards Bipul, he would gingerly shake a few hands or touch a few palms in between verses or songs, almost as if the singer songwriter still did not quite know how to respond, or had not come to terms with his popularity. Indeed, abandoning many of those arms reaching out to him, Bipul gathered his band mates, and with their hands held together, took a couple of bows, leaving the stage with a smile and a wave to the audience, and a fantastic set of photos and videos for them to share online from the night. Not to mention the kind of 'great concert experience' organizer Pasang had hoped for.



# ARJUNA'S DILEMMA IN A NEW AVATAR Muse

Kathmandu is getting prepared for a unique transcultural exchange and collaboration where east meets west such that each artist, each training, each tradition is honored, in the spirit of cultural healing.

DEBORAH MEROLA



**A**rjuna's Dilemma is a 70 minute contemporary fusion opera by the American composer Douglas J. Cuomo, inspired by text from the ancient Indian epic the Bhagavad Gita and the poetry of Kabir. Described as a work of both sweeping grandeur and piercing intimacy, the International Premiere of Arjuna's Dilemma is planned for the Patan Museum in Kathmandu, Nepal, September 1-11, 2016

So how might One World Theatre, an intercultural English language theatre company in Kathmandu, approach this amazing project? First, we invite world class artists to Nepal: Composer Douglas J. Cuomo, acclaimed for his original and distinctive concert, operatic, film and television work; Music Director Jonathan Khuner, Conductor at the San Francisco Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the Metropolitan Opera; and International Opera Singers Roy Stevens and Annalisa Winberg, who have performed professionally in 24 countries, on five continents and in 15 languages.

Arjuna's Dilemma seamlessly fuses Eastern with Western musical idioms and we welcome Gurudev Kamat, the renowned singer of Indian classical music, as Krishna's voice, with Arjuna sung by operatic baritone Roy Stevens. Improvisation is common to both musical worlds, with the Indian singer, tabla players and a jazz saxophonist each using their respective improvisatory traditions to reach for the ecstatic, the sublime and the terror that make up the emotional world of this work. Soprano soloist Annalisa Winberg is a vocal Narrator and the six female members from the Kathmandu Chorale function as a kind of "Greek chorus" commenting on the action. Ten instrumentalists from the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory play in a Western style orchestra.

The One World Theatre production features well known

stage and film actors Rajkumar Pudasaini as the embodiment of Krishna, and Salil Subedi enacting Arjuna, and Arjuna's bow Gandiva danced by ballerina Alize Biannic. An ensemble of eight professional OWT actors create a vivid tableaux suggesting the powerful memory and experience of love and war.

As a stage director, I am new to opera, and the seven years I have spent in Nepal have been most often as a communicator of American drama and culture. So the rich complexity of Arjuna's Dilemma, based on the ancient Mahabharata and sung

in Sanskrit, Hindi and English, places me as a cultural novice in Nepal. This is also true of the American Guest Artists, experts in their field, but new to Nepal and South Asian arts and culture.

So the preproduction visits to the country were obvious. Scenographer Greg Mitchell came first in January 2016 and explored the different courtyards of the Patan Museum with Sangeeta Thapa, Director of the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Suresh Man Lakhe from the Patan Museum, and Raju Roka from the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust. Together we discussed au-





dience access, sight lines, staging requirements, and the all important acoustics. I felt my initial hesitancy about approaching this new opera slip away as we easily imagined Arjuna's Dilemma in the splendid courtyards of the historic Patan Museum.

It was fascinating to see how a designer with hundreds of credits in regional theatre, Broadway/Off Broadway, opera, dance and television, carefully attended to the exquisite stone sculptures, wood carvings and architectural details of the Patan Museum. The entire scenography by Mitchell will highlight the striking environment of the Bhitri Chowk while preserving fragile structures. Live Sound Engineering by Lucy Peckam, an award winning Alaska based theatre and concert audio designer, will mix the ephemeral operatic voices, Eastern classic singing, and jazz instrumentation alongside the percussive tabla.

In February, Music Director Jonathan Khuner and international opera singers Roy Stevens and Annalisa Winberg arrived in Nepal and walked in wonder through the ancient Patan Durbar Square. Their admiration for South Asian music was also evident at a meeting at the In-

dian Cultural Centre when they listened attentively to the fluent singing and observed the gestural language and communication between the Indian classical singer and the tablas.

Then it was the turn of the Nepali musicians to literally "drop jaw" when Roy and Annalisa demonstrated their full operatic voices, coming from years of training and a deep musculature, and capable of filling an opera house without amplification with an entire orchestra behind them. The OWT actors gave the opera singers the same awed reaction when Roy and Annalisa sang an aria at our first meeting.

Even the Westerners have to place themselves in each other's hands. Roy Stevens and Annalisa Winberg come from the grand opera tradition where singers come into rehearsals after months of detailed preparation. Roy explained that opera singers would highly resist and even resent any attempt of a stage director to move them dramatically on the stage.

So asked into an improvisational session with the actors, Roy wanted to make clear his discomfort and inexperience in dramatic improvisation; however, his physical impulses and

choices were entirely strong and beautiful. It is exciting to think of the classical Indian singer and opera baritone, joined by stage and film actors, interacting and stretching the boundaries of their different musical and theatrical forms.

I, too, will be making a leap of faith, as I learn that in opera the Stage Director steps back upon the arrival of the Musical Director, who takes over the production. While a new idea, it is also a reassuring one as Jonathan Khuner, a deeply humane and accomplished conductor on the world stages brings together these local and international singers and musicians.

This makes for a most interesting and humbling combination in that we all are learners and experts, dependent on the others, yet sharing the best of our own traditions. This is not an American opera being imposed upon an unknowing Nepali people, or a clumsy attempt by Westerners to shine in an unknown world, but a unique transcultural exchange and collaboration where each artist, each training, each tradition is needed and honored, in the spirit of cultural healing.

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Feature

# HAJURBA RA HAJURMA

Listening to your Hajurba and Hajurma's stories can be both enthralling and fulfilling, transporting you back to their nostalgic memories.

NUMA SHAKYA

“As children we are in a hurry to grow up, but as grandparents we only want to be a part of our families’ lives,” my Hajurma used to say this to me, when her old age had not faulted her memories, time and again. A time when she still remembered who I was, when she recognized the people around her, when she didn’t forget as much as she does now.

Sometimes, after having lunch together, she asks me, “Khana khayoo?” to which my body winces because it makes me realize that aging gracefully perhaps is just a ‘saying.’ Because the reality is that, it is hideous at times: the deceiving memories that start to weigh in with the senses.

My Hajurma has blamed many of her guests as thieves for stealing her sweaters and her khasto (shawl), and we can’t blame her for seeing the world in that way. Perhaps it’s her dreams and her old memories playing tricks with her now. And, these days, she is constantly worried about her old radio; she fears it will stop working if she doesn’t play it. She loves to talk with her sons. She often laughs at herself and her craziness when she realizes her sieved memories: when she is looking for her specs, when she has it in her hands, when she is looking for daddy, when he is right in front of her.

But, there was a time when my Hajurma came to spend time with us during our school vacations. She made pickles and ate cheeseballs with me. We basked in the sun for hours, and watched Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Chandra Kanta together.

One morning, she jerked straight up when my elder sister’s alarm buzzed. She started clapping her hands in the air, and when I asked, “What’s wrong?” she said, “I can hear the gods, they are singing,” and she went on singing, “Om Jai Jagadish Hare, Swami Jai Jagadish Hare, Bhakta Jano Ke Sankat, Daas Jano Ke Sankat, Kshan Men Door Kare, Om Jai Jagadish Hare.” Later, I told her, “Hajurma, its Lunibha didi’s alarm song,” and we both cracked up.

There are many other stories with my Hajurma that I enjoy reminiscing about time and again. I return to some memories with her, and sometimes I just sit with her, even though she vaguely remembers my presence.

The point is: amidst the busy life we forget that our Hajurma and Hajurba just want to spend time with us. Let’s return to the lovely stories of grandmothers and grandfathers, because they were the ones who once made us feel important when we were busy talking about imaginative stories.

**I LOVE MY SPOT**

Sanu Maya Badhyakar, 75, loves sitting in this old falcha (traditional public resting place). She says, "This is my spot, I love watching people from here."

"It's better to be a spectator of life by sitting here than sitting at home and letting your mind be bored thinking of little things that dishearten you for no reason. Life is better when we are positive."



**WE MAKE A LOVELY PICTURE TOGETHER**

Sanu Maya Khadgi and Ganga Maya Khadgi are sister-in-laws, who love sitting in this spot and talking about their lives. Many tourists have taken candid photos of them while they have chattered idly.

"People are fascinated when they see us sitting here, I think we make a lovely picture together, therefore they keep clicking that shutter. I guess we are aging gracefully."

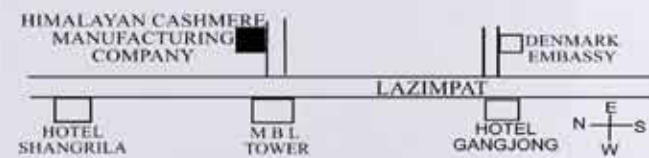
**CATCHING UP WITH THE FOUR FRIENDS...**

Gorkha Mani Kapali, 78, Asha Kaji Byanjankar, 62, Mehboob Khan Nepali, 63, and Asta Bir Maharjan, 55, are friends for life. They sit together on the stairs of the Bhimsen Mandir, watching passerby. Enjoying the free television of life at Patan.

"We are old men, what importance do we have now? We sit here watching life. Life has been good to us, but our age surely hasn't," they laugh.



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# OH Feature PRECIOUS DAUGHTER OF MINE

AMAR B. SHRESTHA

**I**t was almost midnight. We—a friend and I—waited with some impatience outside the hospital delivery room. There were no other patients or visitors. Finally, the swing doors opened, and an orderly wheeled out my wife on a table with our newborn child. The doctor walked beside her, and shaking my hand, said, “Congratulations. It’s a girl.”

The baby had a head full of dark black hair, that’s what I noticed first. Her face was puffy, and her eyes were screwed shut. She seemed quite large. I was as thrilled as could be! I congratulated my wife. She gave me a funny kind of look. Sometime later, after they were settled in their room, my friend and I went outside for a smoke. After a few puffs, my friend turned to me, and said, “Congratulations. But, it would have been better if it had been a boy, wouldn’t it?”

I was taken aback by his remark; didn’t expect this from a well-educated guy living in the 21st century. Anyway, my next task was to call my parents and give them the good news. My dad’s response was: “Congratulations, Goddess Laxmi has entered your home.” Now, that

was the kind of thing I wanted to hear!

#### Those bygone days

I am the only son among five siblings. I have been constantly told about how happy my father had been when I was born after three daughters. Although I grew up with my uncle (I was put in a missionary school in a hill station where they lived), I did spend the early years in my own home, and also at least three months of winter holidays every year. So, I can well remember that I was a pampered child, even though we weren’t well-off. I can clearly recall sitting down for meals with my father, while my mother and sisters hovered around us. I also recall being given one egg every morning at breakfast, a commodity that my sisters had to do without most of the time, since they cost a pretty paisa.

Things then were more or less the same with most families that I knew about. A son was a gift, a daughter, not much so. Besides the ultimate benefit of being blessed if one’s last pyre was lit by a son, parents obviously looked forward to their sons to provide for them in their old age. Daughters would marry (incur-



**After a few puffs, my friend turned to me, and said, "Congratulations. But, it would have been better if it had been a boy, wouldn't it?"**

In this day and age, it seems odd to be saying that a daughter is still considered to be a burden. However, it is a fact in many parts around the country, particularly in rural areas. At the same time, it is encouraging to note that a daughter is regarded to be no

less than a son in urban areas like Kathmandu. Whatever the situation may be, in today's world, both daughters and sons should get the same opportunities to get ahead in life, and to explore and develop their god-given unique abilities.

ring much cost) and would have families of their own, while a son was expected to earn and live with his parents, looking after their needs. These facts were givens. So it is understandable that, in those days, sons received much higher priority than daughters.

However, my father insisted on all his children getting a college education. You could say that he was probably one of the enlightened ones in those days, when daughters had to do all the household chores and were married off early. Anyway, two decades down the line, I now had a little daughter off my own. We were in the 21st century, and naturally, there was no question about a daughter being any less equal than a son. (By the way, that funny look of my wife as she came out of the delivery room, I found later, was her apprehension about whether I was happy to have a daughter instead of a son.)

**Early days of a new age**

I had quite a hand in raising my child, my precious firstborn, and the only one, as it transpired. It wasn't an easy task raising an infant by ourselves, without the wise advice of elders, since we lived away from our parents in another city. I would advice others to get as much help as possible from their elders in this onerous task. Experience, after all, is the greatest asset, notwithstanding modern medicine, specialist pediatricians, and new ideas of raising children. Long and short of it, we—my wife and I—would find ourselves at wit's end many times, not knowing why the child wasn't eating enough, why she was regurgitating most of the expensive baby food we fed her, and why she sometimes started wailing for no rhyme or reason.

There wasn't much question about the direction her life would take. We put her in a kindergarten school at an early age. Her first day of school is one that I often recall fondly. There she was, all excited, dressed up smartly in a brand new uniform, with her hair tied with ribbons, and with a colorful school bag on her back and a nifty looking water bottle around her neck. Being an outgoing sort, she seemed to be really looking forward to her first day in school. We were naturally happy to see her so positive and happy. Inside the school, as she lined up with the other children for the assembly, she glanced over at us, smiled, and then couldn't stop herself from shedding a





couple of tears. We reluctantly waved goodbye. However, it being the first day, we were allowed to take our children home at around noon. So, I went to pick her up. There she was, running around the grounds with new friends, looking pretty much at home. We didn't have to coax her to go to school, that day onwards, let me tell you!

Though our society is still pretty traditional (taking pride in one's customs and upholding them is a good thing), there is no bias in the treatment of, and behavior towards, sons and daughters. It is as clear as daylight that girls are on equal footing with boys nowadays. So, raising my daughter in such an environment was a cakewalk in this sense; of course, that left me with even bigger responsibilities of ensuring that she was given every opportunity to grow up strong, happy, and confident. We conducted all the usual customary rituals that had to be performed at different stages of growing up with as much pomp and ceremony as we could reasonably afford. Besides this, her birthdays were, of course, highlights of the year. I remember that her second birthday, in particular, was a very special one, since the first birthday is not celebrated in our society.

Time flew by, with her coming-of-age ceremony, known as Bel Bibah, observed when she was around 12 years of age. It's an intricate ritual that holds immense significance in any girl's life. First, she has to stay hidden in a dark room for a period of 10 days (called *gufa rakhnu*, literally meaning being put in a cave). The main thing is that she mustn't

look at the sun during this period. After 10 days, she makes her appearance outside, and worships the sun. Then, she undergoes the ceremony of Bel Bibah, in which she is symbolically married to the bel fruit. This means that she can henceforth never be a widow in her coming life, even if her real husband dies before her, having been also married to the bel fruit which represents some god.

As expected, the explanations behind this ritual are quite complex. However, for me, it also holds another meaning. It reminds the parents, the father especially (since he is usually the breadwinner), that their daughter has grown up now, and is almost a woman, so better prepare yourself for the coming years when the next most important stage in her life—that is, marriage—will have to be celebrated. Not only is it, customarily, the highest point of a daughter's life, it is also the most back breaking event for any parent.

A girl's marriage entails so many rituals, all incurring so much expense, that many parents fall into debt to ensure that they have met all the obligations that society expects of them. The return of the groom's procession with the daughter, after the wedding rituals are over and the father has handed over his precious daughter to her husband, is perhaps the most poignant of all moments in any parent's life. Well, thankfully, my daughter has just finished her college, and wants to make something of her life before getting married. So, things haven't reached the point of tearful farewells, as yet!

## LOCAL STORY

It's raining cats and dogs; monsoon in Patan is acts as a muse. Goma Shrestha, 22 and Bijita Raimajhi, 35, sit on the falcha enjoying small talk. I sit next to them as the rain gets heavier listening to them guffawing. Goma is newly married and for her it's been just six months here in Kathmandu Valley. "Kotha ma basirakhum bhane k garnu, baru bahira yesari kaam gare ali ramilo huncha," (What can I do sitting home all day? It's better if I work because life is fun that way.)

Bijita Raimajhi her stall friend adds to it, "it's actually good to be busy, when you are not, you unnecessarily worry and eat your own head." Raimajhi has two sons, and on most days she is worried about her younger one, "Current ko pwal ma aaunla ta lagayena; inaar bhitra tah khasena justo huncha," (I hope he has not pinned his finger to the plughole, I hope he hasn't fallen down in the well while playing with his friends.) A mother is bound to be worried about their children. But I ask her, "What bothers you the most?"

"I sometimes wonder why people yell and scold me, even, when I am trying my best or when I am working hard to make a better life," says Raimajhi as her eyes reckon the turmoil she has been through.

Goma and Bijita take a bus every now and then to Kalimati in the morning to bring fruits and vegetables for their stalls; often fighting their ways through the crowd of the bustling Kathmandu outside the core of Patan and the rude conductors. "There is not much profit in this business, however, this is our life, but a little humility can make our lives easier, you know? It can make us feel good; why would you want to be a reason for someone's bad day?" says Raimajhi.

# Indifferent Cart Procession Feature

Jatras (festivals) abound in Nepal, but the Khat Jatra is somewhat different from the rest.

NIRMAL SHRESTHA



Placing deity figures on a khat (wooden platform), and then taking them out in a procession, is known as Khat Jatra, a tradition that has been followed in Kathmandu Valley from the pre-Malla and Malla eras to the Shah era. Along with the campaign of nation-expansion, the custom of Khat Jatra, which was prevalent only in Kathmandu Valley, began to be also observed in other places of the country. Khat Jatra is

celebrated in various parts of Palpa, too. Among the khat jatras of Palpa, the one held in Tansen (Bhagwati Jatra) is of a different nature than the rest. While, outwardly, it looks the same as the others, this jatra, in which Goddess Bhagwati's statue is placed on a khat, is celebrated to commemorate Nepal's victory in the Palpa region during the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-1816.

This jatra is not only linked to religion, but also to nationalism. Therefore, this Bhag-

wati Jatra is not only different from all other jatras of the country, it can be said to be also indifferent. After the annexation of the Sen-era Palpa kingdom into the Kingdom of Nepal, disputes involving Butwal and Syuraj, along with the 22 villages of the east, resulted in war between the East India Company government and the Nepal government. There were many efforts from Nepal's side to prevent war between the two countries. But, on November 1, 1814, Marcus of

Hastings unilaterally declared war on Nepal.

With the objective of disintegrating its enemy's power base, and gradually weakening its strength, thereby gaining victory over Nepal, the Company government sent forces under Colonel Ochterlony from Rupa so as to gain control over the Sutlej and Jamuna River areas; Major General Robert Rollo Gillespie from Saharanpur, to gain control over Dehradun; Joe Sullivan Wood from Gorakhpur, to control the area starting from Butwal onwards to Palpa; and Captain Major General Bennett Marl from Makwanpur side to attack Kathmandu; while Captain Berry Latter was assigned the responsibility of controlling the area between Kosi and Teesta Rivers in the east.

From Nepal's side, too, to counter these war actions, the government ordered forces under the command of Kazi Bakhtar Singh Thapa to Bijayapur in the eastern region; under Colonel Ranbir Singh Thapa to Makwanpur; under Bada Kazi Amar Singh Thapa to the region following Mahakali; and forces under Colonel Ujir Singh Thapa to the Palpa Butwal region. War raged between the two countries. Except for the Palpa region, the war did not go Nepal's way in other areas. The



## Khat jatra in Palpa is celebrated to commemorate Nepal's victory in the Palpa region during the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-1816.

Company government could gauge the bravery, patience, strategic skills, and battlefield ability of their Nepali adversaries from close quarters in the battle in which they fought under Colonel Ujir Singh Thapa's leadership.

Before entering the battlefield, Colonel Ujir Singh Thapa made suitable arrange-

ments for weapons and ammunition, besides starting construction of roads and bridges and culverts and fortified garrisons on a war footing. In addition, various gods and goddesses were worshipped, and the most auspicious time was determined, so as to ensure victory in battle. And, touching the feet of 16-handed Mahisasur Mardini Bhagwati, located in the middle of Tansen bazaar, Colonel Ujir Singh Thapa also swore, provided that victory was theirs, to build a large temple and spread the goddesses' fame by conducting a Sindur Jatra all around the region.

A pitched battle followed, in Jitgadhi of Butwal, against the Company government force. Not once, but many, many, times, the defeated Company government forces had to retreat from Nepal. Nepal did not have to lose even an inch of land here. After the victory in



this region, Colonel Ujir Singh Thapa, as per his oath, began construction of an impressive three-storied temple in B.S. 1872, which was completed in B.S. 1876. Having donated gold equal to his height for the temple's gajur, and establishing the silver canopied Mahisasur Mardini Bhagwati, whose 18-arms were made of asta-dhatu (eight-metals, Colonel Ujir Singh Thapa started the Khat Jatra, inclusive of Palpa Bhagwati's Sindur Jatra, from B.S. 1877, on the day of Bhadra Krishna Nawami. Till today, this Bhagwati Jatra has been traditionally observed as a celebration of victory.

One day before the jatra, on the night of Krishna Asthami, the local Nepal Army commander places Colonel Ujir Singh Thapa's offering on the khat in which Bhagwati's statue has been placed. The next day, at an auspicious time, the judge gives his permission for the rath (chariot) to be lifted, but the rath is lifted only after the Nepal Army has offered its felicitations. The rath is lifted by 48 people, who are called pipas. These lifters, who wear a black tika on their forehead and a scarf tied around the neck, are all from the Kumhal com-



munity. After taking the rath three times around the temple, first of all, the Colonel puja is done. Taking the rath out of the main gate, which is considered to be the largest gate in the country, it is taken to the original site of the Palpa durbar, where the Chief District Officer conducts his worship. Only after this is the rath open for worship by all and sundry. According to old-timers, in the years gone by, if some victim of injustice appealed for justice on this day, the rath would move forward only after the concerned individual's case had been adjudicated by the judge.

After the rath is paraded around the city, accompanied

by musical bands and dancers, as well as soldiers of the Nepal Army, shield and sword carrying soldiers of Gurujyu's paltan, police personnel, government employees, students, the general public, and various associations and organizations, it enters the Nepal Army barracks, where it is offered a salami before conduct of Bhagwati puja by the Nepal Army. When entering the barrack's gates, the soldiers themselves lift the rath on their shoulders.

Another basic aspect of this jatra is the arrangement of a regular priest to conduct daily rituals and worship in the temple. The priest has to be someone with the knowledge of conducting rituals associated with Matri Mandali of the Devi's temple according to Hindu rites and rituals. Two hundred years ago, Colonel Ujir Singh Thapa had brought in Chandramani Gubhaju of Mayur Varna Vihar, Lalitpur, to Palpa, to conduct Nitya-naumaitik puja and Barsha Bandhan puja (karak puja), and tantric rituals and worship during Kalaratri Asthami and Chaite Dashain, etc. The descendants of this very same Gubhaju have been conducting worship in this temple till date.

This Palpa Bhagwati Jatra, considered to be the symbol of bravery, patience, strategic skill, patriotism, and victory, has always been bringing nationalism to the forefront.



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# When the Giant Roamed the Valley Streets

Photo story

One of the myths behind the Gathamuga festival, celebrated every year, is as interesting as the proceedings of the festivities.

 SAMRIDHI SHRESTHA  AMAR DANUWAR RAI



In the month of Shrawan, an intriguing spectacle befalls the ever-festive Newar-dominated cities of Bhaktapur, Patan, and Kathmandu. During the day, a boisterous crowd gathers at intersections, shouting and hooting at a curious looking dummy made of straws with a face painted on a nango, which anywhere out of the festive atmosphere would have been haunting. It is the figurine representing Ghanta Karna, the monstrous figure whose story dates back to ancient times.

The legend of Ghanta Karna is one of the stories surrounding the festival of Gathamuga. According to popular belief, Ghanta Karna, a giant with bells hanging from his ears, as the name suggests, roamed the cities of Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, and

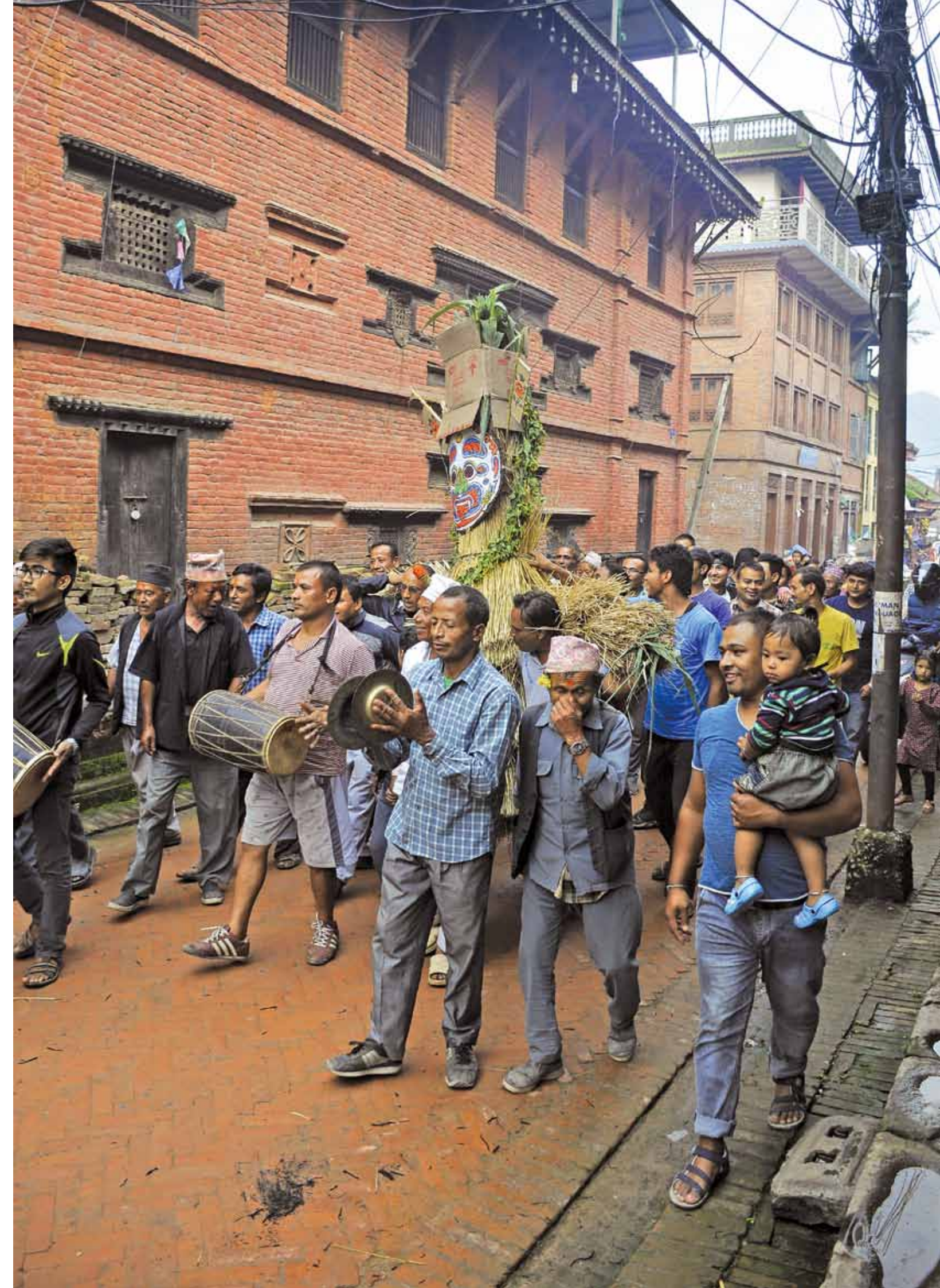
Patan. He made the lives of the residents miserable by snatching their children off the streets and homes at night, and devouring them mercilessly. Outraged and fed up of his torturous acts, the villagers united in an attempt to slay him, and so, fuelled by rage, they viciously attacked him, successfully killing him in the end.

It is this victory, a depiction of that fateful day, when the villagers dragged his body all across the street and at night burnt him, that is celebrated as Gathamuga. The figurine, too, is in a similar manner dragged across streets as people haul insults and cheer. The giant, however, was more than a monster; he was also a pioneer farmer. It is believed that Ghanta Karna was the first to introduce box farming. Initially, he was insulted for disrespecting Mother

Earth by cutting her. Later, however, as the effectiveness of box farming became apparent, the residents, whose sustenance depended on farming, also celebrated him.

The entire day of Gathamuga is mystical in itself. It is the day to appease spirits, as they are at their strongest on this day. Pujas are conducted at new homes to drive away any unwelcome spirits by lighting chital, the smoke of which acts as a repellent. Similarly, iron, another repellent to unwanted energy, is nailed to doors and worn as rings. Fire torches are lit at intersections, especially four-way intersections, as they are the portal and the dwelling of the other world. Gathamuga is also the cue for a festive season; with all the unwelcome spirits gone, the people can now joyfully engage in the festivals that follow.

Note: To know more about this unique festival and get a different perspective, please check out : Gathamuga: Farewell to the Helpful Ghost by Alok Tuladhar (<http://goo.gl/HdHZXn>)



### Festivals to look forward to

**Father's Day:** September 1, 2016

The day to honor fathers and shower them with gifts!

**Daar Day:** September 3, 2016

The day when ladies partake of a scrumptious feast before beginning their rigorous fast on the day of Teej.

**Teej:** September 4, 2016

The day to fast and pray for the health and wellbeing of brothers and husbands, all the while dancing and singing with your ladies' squad.

**Bakkar Eid:** September 13, 2016

**Indra Jatra:** September 15, 2016

This colorful festival can be witnessed as a great celebration especially in the city of Patan.

**Ghatasthapana:** October 1, 2016

The grand festival of Dashain officially starts from this day.



# Gunla: A Month of Holiness

Feature

In the sacred month of Gunla, there is always something to look forward to.

ANUTARA SHAKYA ANUP PRADHAN

As the month of Shrawan comes along, shades of red and green begin to appear in every corners of the street, the rain continues to pour and temples seem to be more crowded than usual. Shrawan is a holy month for the Hindu women who fast in the name of Shiva, the destroyer and while these women celebrate Shrawan, the Buddhist community awaits for the beginning of its holiest month, the Gunla.

According to Nepal Sambat or the Lunar Calendar, the

month of Gunla usually falls in the month of Shrawan. It begins a day after the New Moon. Gun means nine in Newari and La means month, it's the ninth month in Nepal Sambat. All throughout Gunla, processions of different kinds take place around Kathmandu and Lalitpur, some big and some small but everything that is unique in its own way.

Gunla begins with Chaitya Puja where the chaityas both small and big are cleaned up, polished with oil and worshipped. Chaitya's symbolize the harmony

of the 5 elements, water, air, earth, fire and space and hold up most importance in Buddhism. In fact the chaityas are so revered that Deepak Bajracharya, a Buddhist priest says that even objects that take the shape of a chaitya are not destroyed during Gunla. "Any object that has a dome structure and a pinnacle on top such as garlic cloves are not allowed to be destroyed during the month. So to avoid that, people separate the garlic cloves before the month starts." he says.

Most of the rituals during the Gunla revolves around worship-

ping and visiting various chaityas of the valley. Chaitya Puja is followed by Bwagi, a procession that visits all the chaityas of Lalitpur valley prior to Matya. People play traditional music and chant hymns about Buddha and go around town before the break of dawn. But since the Bwagi only travels for a couple of hours before sunrise each day, the journey may stop at one point and then continue the next day, this goes on for 5 to 6 days until all the chaityas have been covered but that is just the beginning. Bwagi is a prologue for Matya, one of the most awaited festivals for Patan locals.

Matya also falls in the month of Gunla, about two weeks after the Bwagi ends, a day after Gai Jatra. Mataya also involves walking around Patan to cover all the chaityas. The procession is a long line of participants who walk continuously for 12 hours to pay homage to the 2200 chaityas around Patan. They make offerings such as rice, camphor, money and sweets in memory of the loved ones they lost last year but in the spirit of Gai Jatra, merry making and humor is a part of the show and people enjoy the music and jokes that accompany the travel. Matya is followed by making more trips to other chaityas of the valley such as Swayambhu, and the chaityas in Sunakoti and Chapagaon.

Some of the more popular festivities that fall in Gunla are Janai Purnima, Gai Jatra and Krishna Janamastami. Unlike other festivals, these are celebrated by both Hindus and Buddhists. Gai Jatra offers merriment to the people during the gloomy weather and lifts up the spirit with its light hearted jokes and humor. Krishna Janamastami is celebrated with the vibes of a street festival when a sea of devotees visits the Krishna temple in Patan Durbar Square. Janai Purnima includes consuming Kwati, a healthy soup made out of 9 lentils and also offering it to the frogs for bringing in the rainy season and to the crows who are believed to be messengers of the rain god Indra. But lesser



known rituals take place inside Patan and Kathmandu's bahals, the traditional courtyards. These bahals bring out their relics for display while the priests visit each of them. These relics include an ancient map of Kathmandu valley in Guitole, Patan; a golden Pragyaparamita scripture in Thamel; a statue of Khata Aaju in Ihibahi, Patan and giant grains of rice believed to be from the Satya Yug at Ikkachen, Patan.

Gunla is not short of traditional rituals, jatras and festivities that take over the city. While most of the rituals are peaceful in nature, the Bhin Dyo Jatra or the Bhimsen Jatra is its wild cousin. The small idol from the Bhimsen temple in Patan Durbar Square representing the 7-foot Bhimsen that is also situated inside the temple is brought out for a stroll around Patan. Taking place during the evenings accompanied by alcohol and music, the Bhin Dyo Jatra adds the excitement that people have been missing during this month.

One of the most mysterious sessions of Gunla comes towards the end of the month. Juuga Panchadaan or Yala Panchadaan takes place a day before Father's Day. Its procession is similar to the Yala Panchadaan that takes place early during Gunla. Devotees make offerings to the high priests and they also get to view Pragyaparamita,

one of the oldest Buddhist scriptures. But what is more interesting about the Juuga Panchadaan is that the night before, people flock to Swayambhu to see its shadows show up in the clouds. The silhouette of Swayambhu can be seen showing up in four directions in the night sky and no one has been able to explain why. This phenomenon occurs only once or twice and only during Gunla, that adds to its mystery.

Gunla is revered as a sacred month in the Lunar calendar because a number of festivities fall in this month. But if we are to view these activities from a scientific window, the activities done in Gunla have a lot of health benefits as well. Gunla falls during the monsoon, and health is usually compromised during this season, with infections and fever easily transferring from one another. Harming animals and consuming meat products are not allowed during Gunla but when you think about it, meat products spoil easily and are the quickest to get contaminated. Instead people drink a bowl of Kwati, to provide energy and immunity. This time of the year also includes cleaning chaityas, since the rain might grow moss on these stone structures. All of these features are incorporated while the jatras add merriment during the gloomy weather.



# Street. Food. Love.

If you are the unconventional of kind and are truly in love with food, then you are probably not the kind to be thrown off by the possibility of a little stomach ache.

 AKRITI SHILPAKAR

**T**he real taste of any culture rests in the street food the place has to offer. The ever-bustling city of Kathmandu is thriving with gastronomic adventures at every corner, galli and chowk. We take you to a journey that entails delicious encounters at each stop. These humble foods are closer to a common man's heart and budget, bursting with flavours, and may cause a slight rumbling of the stomach. But the probability of a little stomach ache should not scare you off from taking up this journey. Come join us!

**2) SEKUWA:** The Nepali-style barbecue - Sekuwa, is as much a loved weekend-get-together plan as it is a popular street dish. A growing trend in Kathmandu street food scene, you will find at least one sekuwa stand in vicinity. While the crowd favourite choice of meat is buff, you will find unconventional stands or thela serving luscious pork too. These charred proteins are smoked over burning coal and is served in bite-size chunks along with the ubiquitous tomato achaar and red-chilli sauce. We found our favourite at Basantapur. They serve theirs alongside bubble rice and it is delicious.



Food

**STICK FOOD:** Easy, accessible and delicious, stick food in Nepal is a beautiful assemblage of western delights such as sausage and salami, and eastern delicacies like alu chop and tofu. Deep fried and served with spicy sauces, most everything-on-a-stick stalls sprinkle a good amount of black salt over the order to give it a tart-y effect. A few sticks of one of each on the menu keep your stomach from growling out of hunger during a shopping spree, until you are ready for a proper meal. Also light on the wallet, it isn't a surprise to see on-the-budget students hovering around these stalls, sharing a bite and a whole lot of laughs with their friends.

**PANIPURI/CHAT:** A borrowed street snack from our southern neighbour, panipuri and chat has found its way from our stomach to our heart and made a place for itself there. Panipuri is a concoction of crispy fried semolina balls, filled with seasoned mashed potatoes and lentils, and served with a tangy sauce. Chat is a messy but delicious mix of potatoes, crisp fried bread, yogurt, chopped onions, chickpeas, and of course a tangy sauce. Fulfilling and very budget friendly, feel no shame in popping mouthfuls of panipuri one after the another, or order as many plates as you can consume of the sinful chat. It is after all, the streets.

**FLAVOURED SODA:** As a kid, the marble at the neck of soda bottle was always fascinating. After every gulp, I would check to see if the marble is still there, and it always was. It is still a wondrous invention to me, but I have moved on to more satisfying discoveries within soda. Flavoured soda at Ranjanagalli has managed to excite and mesmerize its customers for years now. Just to see the assortment of colourful bottles at this hole-in-the-wall place is refreshing. Choosing from a long list of flavours such as cola, lime, raspberry, orange, etc. can be exhausting at times,



but this also means you can experiment with it at each visit. There is nothing better that can help you beat the summer heat of Kathmandu than a cool glass of soda from Ranjanagalli.

**CHATPATE:** Many a food-horror stories begin with chatpate, and yet every time we come across a chatpate stand we will buy at least Rs. 20 worth of it as if we are in a trance like state. That is the magic of chatpate, one of the most common and

loved street food in Nepal. A quick mix of bubble rice, instant noodles, peas, potatoes, chilli, tomato sauce, and a squeeze of lime is all it takes, and the didi or dai preparing it will do it in the speed of light. The spice-level of the dish can be fixed according to your taste, so let the maker know of it. Served in a paper cone, with paper slips for spoon, the dish is as street-friendly as it can get. If you haven't tried it yet, it is highly recommended you do, even if it is at a risk of a stomach ache.

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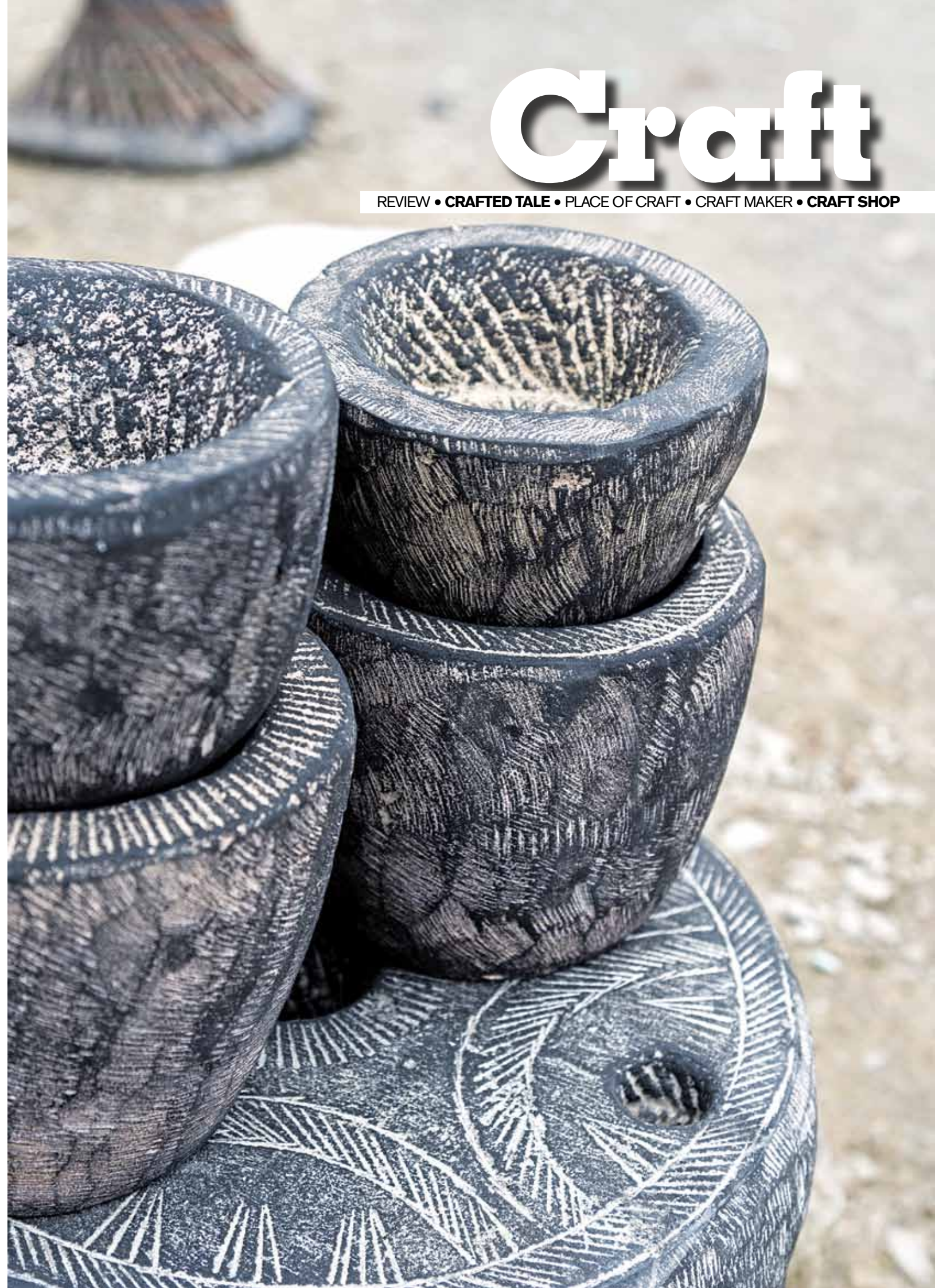
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# Craft

REVIEW • CRAFTED TALE • PLACE OF CRAFT • CRAFT MAKER • CRAFT SHOP



# On the edge

Crafted tale

Silauta (stone pestle grinder) is a traditional grinder used to crush spices and mill seeds and grains. These are kitchen hand-me-downs that families use for generations.

LUNIBHA SHAKYA



A line of Patharkat (stone-cutters) hucksters arrange an array of silauta shops on the edge of the road in Sitapaila. At a distance, Manbhakti Patharkat from Nawalparasi, Dhunibas, is excited to see observers acknowledging her husband's stone works. She skips her way from under the umbrella of her sister's roadside silauta shop and runs to her own umbrella.

"Do you like it? These are really good and heavy, which one do you want?" She shows it to her customer who is still wondering if she should invest her money on the stone grinder. Manbhakti then starts to demonstrate the worthiness of her stone by hitting it with hammer. 'Tung Tung' it resonates and she smiles, "Didi see it makes a wonderful sound, this will last you for years."

"Hmm... give it in 300" the customer bargains, Manbhakti is taken aback, she tries to convince the person more by showing the difference in the sizes and the heaviness of her stone grinders. "Didi I will make it 700," and the customer replies, "300."

"650"  
 "300"  
 "600"  
 "300"  
 "500 didi"  
 "400."

And as she takes in her money, Manbhakti closes her eyes and touches her head and heart with the money, to take blessings from her first laxmi (Goddess of money) of the day. And then she looks at me and says, "Ke garne, bhakhar bwani hudain cha bahini." (This is my first earning of the day, sister.)

The Patharkat caste is a caste designated to stone carving. However, people who belong to this caste are slowly shifting from this occupation to other opportunities. The Patharkat people in the remote areas of Nepal are still demeaned for their work.

"I continued to do this work, but my children won't. They should go after better opportunities."

The tattoo in Manbhakti's feet

allows her to interact with the society, not bearing a tattoo of any kind would outcast her from her society. It would also mean that she cannot use the public sources of water.

Silauta can only be made with stones that bear lines. The Patharkat people who work in this field, travel all the way to India's Binaya Khola (river) to find these 'Darshani Dhungah (name of the stone).'

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# PEOPLE OF KHUMBU

Photo story

Khumbu is predominantly Sherpa country, but there are many other ethnicities, as well, who live and endeavor in this rugged land.



In the far-flung valley of Khumbu, people live through the banality of living but not without the expectancy of a fuller existence, just like any group of people anywhere in the world would. And just like the lives anywhere in Nepal, the lives here finds distinction in the sardonicism of the bucolic belying austerity.

For the native Sherpas of the valley, for whom the money-making route to Everest cuts right through their villages, a sense of enterprise precedes over everything. While the natives may enjoy entitlement in the region's bustling tourist trade, for many south to the region, Khumbu is their own promised land.

Those who can discern the differences, superficial and otherwise, between the people of Nepal's many ethnic communities will readily see that the valley is made up of many ethnicities other than the Sherpas. The largest in number, perhaps, are the Rais from low-lying districts who hike up to the highlands every peak season to work in

the myriad teahouses and lodges scattered through the trekking route. Some have even shifted to villages like Pangboche and Sore, which lie midway through the route to base camp.

These are the same villages which are hub of activities during peak seasons. It takes one to closely look beyond this interim air of fullness, though, to see that these villages have lost a sizeable part of its population. Most part of the year, the cheery languidness is replaced by desolation, and an overbearing banality takes over these lives.

Those remaining, who have not acted on the reverie of greater promised lands, find meaning to their lives in devotion. For them, an allegiance to the religion, a school of Tibetan Buddhism, takes the same high place as enterprise does for many.



While the natives may enjoy entitlement in the region's bustling tourist trade, for many south to the region, Khumbu is their own promised land.





“

Lying on the route to Everest, the Khumbu valley's major generator of employment is naturally linked to the expeditions that regularly, every climbing season, make their way through this rugged valley in search of achievement and glory.



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“

The barren land of Khumbu calls for a special kind of vigor and vitality from its inhabitants to conduct their day-to-day lives.



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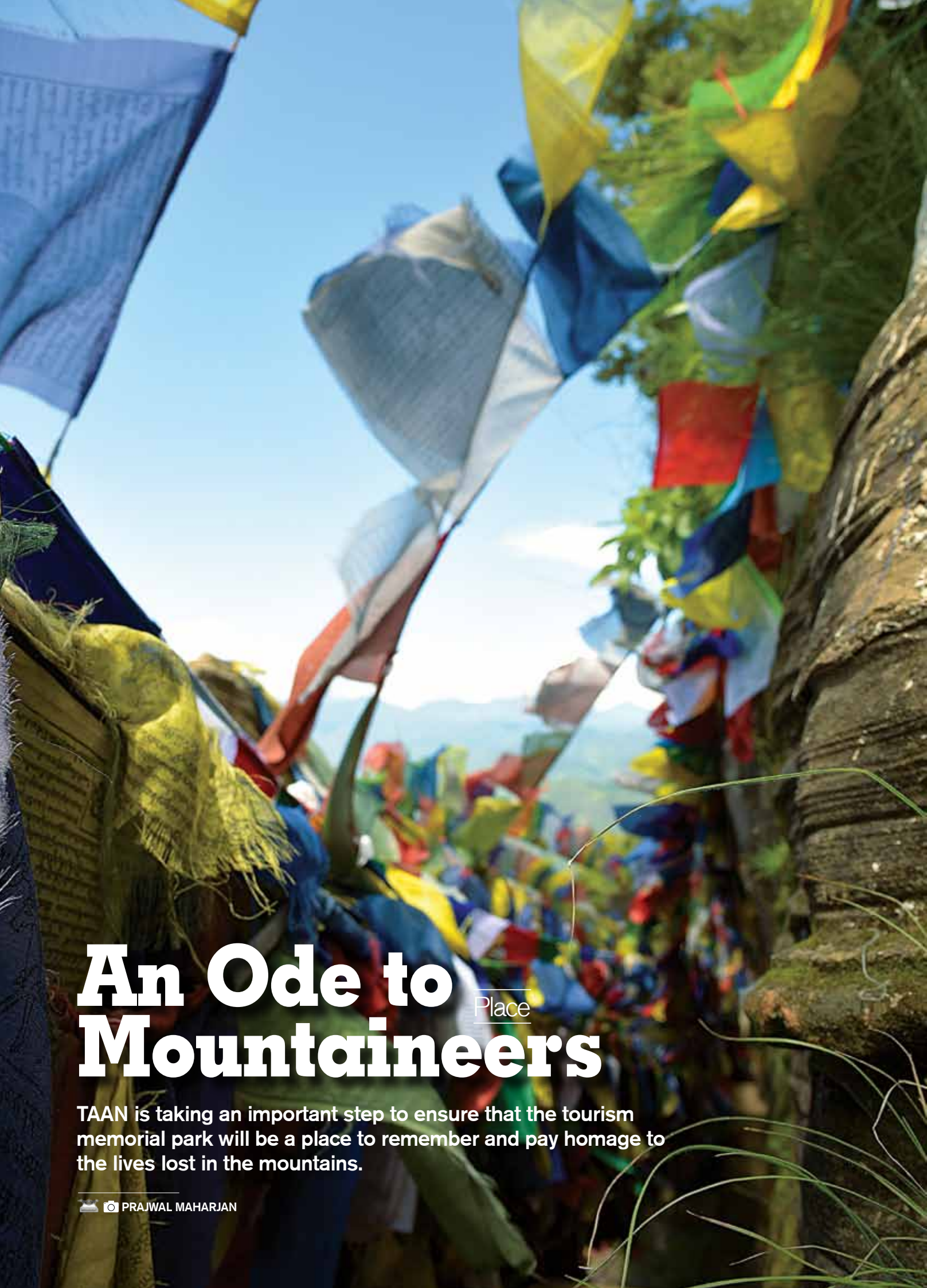
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# An Ode to Place Mountaineers

TAAN is taking an important step to ensure that the tourism memorial park will be a place to remember and pay homage to the lives lost in the mountains.



**T**AAN is set to build a memorial park for all the lives that have been lost in the course of trekking and mountaineering in Nepal. The park, to be built at Chanphori of Kavre district, will be located on the top of the hill of Timal danda at 2130m. The site which is about 73 km away from Kathmandu will afford a 180 degree pan-

orama view of Dhaulagiri to Mt Everest.

The memorial park will house a tourism museum and the area around it will be have tree plantation to be individually named after the deceased trekkers/trekking staff and also their family members.

#### What to See:

Carving on the walls of a cave in the shape of the yogi's body, phurpa (a weapon),

sankha, dhangro (Drum), dhorje and Buddha Chitta.

#### Historical Importance:

The name Timal is derived from Ter Mala, the initial name of the place. It is believed that Timal danda is the place where Padma Sambhav had meditated during 8th century in a sacred cave which is now looked after by the locals. Buddha Chitta is a sacred mala to the Buddhist

religion. It was only found in Timal Region until it became an important trade commodity. Now, it is being farmed in various region of Nepal, Tibet and China. A single piece of Buddha Chiitta can be priced from Rs 2000 to Rs 9 lakhs.

#### Other Attractions:

Timal Region also offers Rafting in Sunkoshi, canyoning, off road biking, caving and sight-seeing. It also has 2 major hiking trails not very far from Kathmandu. The Great Buddhist Master Trail is a 4-5 days trek on goreto bato leading to under construction roads. The major places on this trek are Panauti, Namo Buddha, Kot Timal, Narayanthan and Nepalthok with the altitude range of 508m- 2130m. The other trail which is the, Mahabharat Rhododendron Trail is a trek of 5 days. The key places are Nepalthok, Phusregang, Katarche, Godhchuli, Deurali Monastery with the altitude of 515m-2265m. The trails are best to hike during entire season of autumn, winter and spring season.





Place



Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, was an 8th-century Indian Buddhist master who propagated tantric Buddhism to the people of Tibet.

A spectacular sunset seen from Timal Danda on the Timal trekking trail.



Suitably representative of Nepal's rich cultural heritage, this is the kind of scene that amazes visitors from China, so much so that many make great efforts to capture in their memories through photography and writing.

# 5 Five Chinese restaurants you need to go in Kathmandu

The best way to cure the homesick is satisfy your taste bud.

YIQING LUO



“Why you can stay in Nepal for such a long time without feeling homesick?” as a Chinese, after two months in Nepal, my friend asked me such a question.

“Because I have my own magic,” I smiled and answered. This magic is nothing but good Chinese restaurants in Kathmandu which help me get rid of the homesick. No matter you are Chinese staying in Nepal or Nepali who are interested in Chinese food, there are 5 Chinese restaurants you need to go.

**THAMEL**  
Hotel Chengdu (address: Thamel Marg, Kathmandu)

**Trotter (pig’s feet)**  
What’s your first impression on Trotter? Oliy? No, the Trotter in

Chengdu is fresh-tasting. Pickled in traditional Chinese brine, the trotter becomes brown with the taste of spice likes anise, wild pepper and ginger. With the special sauce made of green chilly and vinegar, the taste of trotter is so palatable that though it is spicy which makes people’s mouths turn red, nobody can stop eating them.

**Chicken mushroom soup**  
If you are fans of mushroom, you can’t miss this yummy soup. Many kinds of mushroom such as Agrocybe aegerita, a kind of mushroom which is commonly used in Chinese soup, and oyster mushroom and be tasted. As Chinese who grew in Guangdong province, a place that famous for its diverse kinds of soup, you

can’t imagine how surprised when I found this soup in Hotel Chengdu. After lots of delicious but hot Sichuan cuisine, a bowl of chicken mushroom soup will refresh your mind and calm down your taste bud.

**Jia Lin Ge East dumplings** (address: Amrit Marga)

**Three kind of cold mixed vegetables**

Are there anything which can give you energy in hot summer better than Chinese cold dishes? Mixed crispy grated carrots, grated cucumbers and Chinese rice noodle with vinegar and chilly oil, this dish is famous in China for its sour, spicy and refreshing taste. Open your mouth, put this dish along with some coriander, that’s the taste of heaven.

**Chinese mee** (address: Thamel Jyatha Amrit Marg)

**Egg in fermented glutinous rice soup**

Are you interested in Chinese traditional dessert? Why not try the egg in fermented glutinous rice soup which is also known as “sweet wine” or “rice wine” in China? The soup is sweet with the taste of both rice and wine. The egg inside is cooked in the right time which not only make the taste smooth but also keep the original taste of egg. What’s more, the noodle there are also very delicious. As Chinese, I was so surprised to find this traditional dessert in Kathmandu, don’t be hesitate, just go and try.  
**Tianfu Hotel** (address: Jyatha Marg, Kathmandu)

**Yangzhou Fried Rice**

Yangzhou is a well-known city in China, but what makes it well-known is the Yangzhou Fried Rice. Adding the green beans, carrots, eggs and meat into the rice, this Chinese dish is not only tasty but also colorful and good-looking. This is the taste of hometown, when I tried it first time in Tianfu Hotel, I am deeply moved and touched.

**Other resorts around**

Garden of dreams a beautiful historical garden located at Kaiser Mahal, Kathmandu. With colorful flowers and green leaves around, you can enjoy the peaceful ambiance and also gain the peace in mind. It is opened from 9am-10 pm.

Narayanhiy Palace Museum: The former royal palace that witnesses the history of Shah Dynasty, the last dynasty of Nepal. Situated in Durbar Marg, Kathmandu, the museum is opened

11am- 4pm from Thu-Mon, closed in 3pm Nov-Jan.

**JAWALAKHEL**

**Huan Chinese Kitchen** (Lagankhel Satdobato Rd)

**Wanton Soup**

You have tried Wonton Soup in China, but what about Nepal? In Hunan Chinese Kitchen which is located in Jawalakhel, you can try Chinese Wonton cooked in special Nepali way. The cover of Wonton is smooth. What’s more, the soup is impressive having black pepper, carrots, green vegetables and black mushroom inside. Eating the juicy Wonton along with the savoury soup, it gives you an illusion that you are in China now.



**Other Places around**

Central Zoo: if you hope to explore natural world of Nepal by riding elephants or watching wild animals, then

the Central Zoo in Jawalakhel (near the Jawalakhel bus stop) must be your best choice. This Zoo open at 10:00-17:00 from Sunday to Saturday.





# ADVENTURE ON THE TEMPO

One of the best way to learn about a country is to take the public transportation. A Chinese girl “survived” hanging outside the tempo shares her unfordable memory of Kathmandu public bus.

TEXT BY LIN WAN

“Take out your camera! There are people hanging outside the bus” I was shocked by the courage that the people had and surprised that what I have seen in the movies were on in the reality.

“Click.” I took the pictures of that brave young man and shared the pictures with my friends in China. Besides being surprised and saying unbelievable all the

time, my dear friends showed her concerns about how can I survive the public transportation in Kathmandu.

The fascinating culture of Nepal motivates me to set out on my first journey to South Asia. I don’t want to have a browse in a country for a few days and I believe only by living like a local Nepali can I experience the real Nepal. I need to take the public transportation here. I told myself.

Finally, after bargained with the taxi driver for 18 days, I took a tempo on the way to Open Sui Mai momo in my local friends’ company. I got a chance to observe the local people in a close distance.

## SPACE, 13 PEOPLE.

Newari women with traditional clothes, students with uniforms and men with portfolio, all sat by me. At the moment, I felt like I

was not a spectator anymore. I was not a tourist sitting on the tourist bus with air conditioner.

“Oh my god.” I blurted my stock out again while a man jumped on our tempo and stood at the small stair outside the compartment. People inside the tempo looked at me with a smile, seemed like telling me take it easy.

I realized I was still an outsider and I needed more time to experience and understand the local lifestyle.

The bus stops and route that well-coordinated between local people and bus drivers do make me confused. I got a hard time looking for the right bus.

One day, I decided to take a bus to Swayambhunath Stupa. Just get lost and try, this beautiful city need my exploitation. When I was about to leave, my friend suggested that she took me to

the bus stop that I could find the right bus. So we walk for around 25 minutes to the bus stop.

A tempo came, my dear friend asked a gentleman on the tempo and asked me to get on the tempo quickly. I got no time to ask when should I get off and 5 seconds later, I stood on the iron stair while my body outside the compartment. My real tempo trip was on.

Clutching the iron frame inside the tempo as tightly as possible, the only idea I hold at that time was, do not fall out of the tempo and be safe. The way to Swayambhunath is so bumpy and I swayed along the road. My sweaty palms were so slippery that I relieved one of my hands to evaporate the sweat.

With one hand holding the frame, my whole body’s muscle was in tense. Suddenly, a sharp tun flung my body to one side.

I had to say, I was scared and I wanted to get off as soon as possible.

Fortunately, some people got off and I got a seat. Finally, I settled down.

Combining English and my limited nepalese, I got up enough nerve to ask a gentleman when should I get off.”Dai, would you please tell me to get off at Swayambhunath?” Thanks to his help, I arrived safe and sound.

My adventure on tempo seems to worn me out but I do appreciate every kind people I met along the way.

The bus conductors here are the people I have complicated attitude to. On the one hand, they are so nice that asking someone to help me find another bus. On the other, they keep getting people on the bus which makes me hardly have a space to stand.

When I got on a bus in rush hour, I experienced the most crowded bus I have ever did. Having a time taking subway in peak time in Guangzhou, which someone watched videos on his phone right upon my head, I thought I can adapt myself to the crowd.

However, I am so wrong. I should have known there is no limit in the universe, so as crowded public transportation.

I got on a bus that I won’t get on if I am in China. A slim young lady’s upper body leaned against the window because she needed to give more space to the old lady besides her. I got my two feet on the ground for five minutes and after the conductors “invited” more people to share the stale air on the bus, one of my feet got no space for itself. We were all together and we didn’t need to worry about falling down because people besides me kept me still.

“Pong pong pong.” The conductor beat the bus hard to reminding people that the bus was leaving. I put on my earphone because I got a seat at the back of the bus and there are still some seats for others on the bus. What a day! I am going to enjoyed the scenery along my bus trip.

# Food I found the taste of hometown **in Nepal**

Hometown is nowhere, unless you can remember the taste of it.

YIQING LUO

**I**t was my first visit to Nepal. After a five-hour long flight to Nepal, I thought I would be homesick in a country that I was totally unfamiliar with. To my surprise, I found the taste of my hometown in Nepal.

## MOMO AND DUMPLINGS

Geographically, I come from one of the southern provinces of China, where dumplings are not as popular as they are in the north of China. Yet, growing up I have had a fair share of dumplings sprinkled with vinegar. Every time I eat a plateful now, it reminds me of my grandmother who prepared a bowl of dumplings for me as breakfast. It was that bowl of dumplings that accompanied me to sleep at night and awakened me in the morning.

In an area called, Ekantakuna, behind an old mosquito screen, crossing a dark corridor, I entered a local restaurant called "Drop in restaurant" with my Nepalese teacher. There they were selling street style Nepalese Momo. My teacher said that this particular kind of momo was similar to Chinese dumpling but I found it hard to believe. It was quite difficult for a Chinese girl who has never experienced authentic Nepali food, to imagine how dumplings here would look and taste like. As if my teacher could read my mind, he reassured me that I would, in fact, like it.

I ordered the Jhol buff momo. There is a saying in Nepal that if you eat momo, then you must eat buff momo to know the taste right. After trying my first momo in Nepal, it was clear I had made the right choice. It did taste like Chinese dumplings and the buff

was soft as ever and I found it very easy to chew.

It was Jhol achar, which was the most impressive part. This staple accompaniment of momo, I was told, was made of tomato, chilly, brown sesame seed, onion and fresh coriander. It was



sour, hot and spicy all at once. The soupy consistency made the momo taste even better. I have a very low threshold for spicy food and which is why each momo I had, I followed it with a gulp of cold water. But I simply could not stop eating despite the hotness.

Nepalese people prefer to eat Jhol momo when it rains as comfort food. They say it refreshes you and helps you get rid of the gloom. My teacher said he prefers to eat Jhol momo during winters to warm himself up.

The bowl of Jhol momo indeed warmed me quite a bit. The momo reminded me of my hometown and along with it came the memories of living with my grandmother. I hope that one day I will bring her to Nepal to try the local momo.

## SHUMAI AND SUI MAI (OPEN MOMO)

A journey to south of China (especially Zhuangdong province, Hongkong and Macow) without trying Dim Sum cannot be considered complete. Dim Sum is a style of Chinese cuisine prepared as small bite-sized portions of food served in small steamer baskets or on small plates. Every lover of authentic Chinese cuisine and especially Dim Sum, must be familiar with one of the famous Dim Sum dishes Shumai. To my surprise, Nepal also has a similar food called Sui Mai.

As a native of Southern China I grew up with having Dim Sum with my family every week-



**"We want to show a lot of young Sherpas that they can make their own lives like we have, and teach them how to run their own businesses."**

end. For my family, Dim Sum is the symbol of reunion, where all family members get together to enjoy this food. Eventually as we all got busy with college and work, the occasions to reunite with my family and feast on Dim Sum became less.

This is the reason why I was so excited when I found Sui Mai in Nepal. It seemed that although my family were not together, we could still share similar food and cherish each other's memory. Two Nepali

friends guided me to Ghangri cafe, which was inside Hardic Fitness Center in Jhamsikhel, to try the Sui Mai Momo for the first time.

I loved this novel yet familiar dish. Not only was the appearance similar to Shumai but the taste was very much alike as well. What distinguished Sui Mai from its Chinese version, however, were the accompaniments served along with it. Ghangri Café served us with three different sauces to put in three of the four pockets of the open momo - green chutney, tomato ketchup and Nepali momo achar. The mixture of these three different sauces made the taste amazing and unique, which cannot be tasted in Chinese Shumai.

Since, Nepal is close to China, their food culture shares something in common. As a Chinese tourist, I appreciated that I can try Nepalese local food, and at the same time, find the taste of my hometown so far away from it.





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Meena Kaini  
Kathmandu, Nepal

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Dr. Anju Ranjit  
Pokhara, Nepal

"Thanks to Laavanya, my skin feels better each day!"

Adeline Wenger  
Geneva, Switzerland

"The Maha Karibonaha Powder smells lovely and leaves the skin absolutely radiant. From the moment I opened the container, I embarked on a joyful journey. I used the deep nourishing cream afterwards and all my friends told me I was looking stunning."

Marcus Cotton, Managing Director  
Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, Nepal

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# The Buzz

MARKET WATCH • EVENTS • NEWS



## Hidden Life Foundation

Hidden Life Foundation (HLF) is the first-of-its-kind organization in Nepal that supports those who are unjustly put into prison, mainly due to their poor economic conditions, by paying their bail amount, so that those who have suffered can reunite with their families. HLF also focuses on the welfare of the prisoners, making sure that their hygiene and living standards are improved through donation of various items, such as water tanks, clothes, and shoes.

HLF, through different care centres, provides basic social and income-generating skills and opportunities to the former prisoners who wish to start afresh, away from any crime related activity. HLF, which has so far helped secure the release of 23 prisoners in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Palpa, and Dhulikhel, seeks even the smallest amount of donations to help secure the lives of the people who are usually left unloved in society.

## CAM anniversary

Nepal Children's Art Museum celebrated their 2nd Anniversary on the 23rd of July where an art exhibition was held with interactive installation, along with a show of a brand new mural as well as slam poetry and musical performances. CAM partnered with Gettysburg College, Pennsylvania in a two month summer abroad program this year, and all of the artwork exhibited at the museum was created by children in workshops conducted by Gettysburg students as part of their summer abroad with CAM Nepal.

The organization aims to provide art facilities and experiences that are so noticeably absent in our country, by making a creative place for children so that they can freely express themselves through art, learn and feel proud of their identity at the same time. It aspires to encourage children's appreciation of their culture and promotes self-expression through hands-on art experience. With the help of an enthusiastic group of volunteers and children's groups, CAM has successfully worked on various events, exhibitions and workshops, and has established partnerships with various local and international social service organizations such as UNICEF, UNHCR, Maiti Nepal and CWIN.

## Concert for the Nation

A concert based on the concept of originality, 'Swadesh Bachauna Ma K Gardai Chu?', saw the venue full of audience which was organized by Space and Fragments. While five bands, Downstairs!, Steadfast, Elbowroom, Fragments and Space played all

original set and told their own stories through lyrics, the crowd response was overwhelming. The event was pretty much a treat for Rock and Metal music fans and in itself the statement of the musicians what they are doing to save the Nation.

## THE SINGLETON OF GLEN ORD

Diageo PLC, along with its official distributor, Global Trading Concern Pvt. Ltd., launched two new Single Malt Whisky on 2nd August 2016 in Kathmandu. The Singleton of Glen Ord 15 Years and 18 Years Old are new addition to the current line of The Singleton of Glen Ord brand.

Complex and confident, the 15 year old reveals itself at its own elegant pace. With hints of melon and summer citrus fruit, it exudes firm waxy notes and rich floral aromas. Priced at Rs. 6,900, it provides a richness that builds to provide a gloriously warming sensation as you drink it.

Less spicy and more mature, the 18 year old is slightly darker in colour and deeper in flavour. It is full and cooling with the aromas of walnuts and antique oak. With elegant orange oil and rich fruit, it provides splendid mouth-coating richness. Valued at Rs 10,050, it is best enjoyed neat or with a drop of water.



## 50th Anniversary of The British School

August 20, 2016

One of the most prestigious and renowned international schools of Nepal, The British School commemorated its 50th year of establishment at Yak and Yeti Hotel. Officially opened in 1966, The British School has been proffering creative and resourceful educational services to all students of all abilities, helping them understand their roles as citizens of the global community. The lavish event became even more stunning with presence of the

patrons, faculty, alumni, and parents. The guests were entertained with melodious musical performances by the students, and intrigued by the speeches of Mr. Richard Morris, British Ambassador to Nepal, and Mr. Chris Decker, Chair of Governors-designate. The event concluded with dance and dinner, where all present were engrossed in the joyous atmosphere that celebrated The British School and its endeavours.



## Soaltee Uttar Dakshin Food Festival

Soaltee Crowne Plaza organized Uttar Dakshin Food Festival to provide a unique experience to the guests, where they got to experience the authentic taste of the rich North and South Indian culinary heritages. The extremely successful annual event was inaugurated by His Excellency Shri Ranjit Rae, Ambassador of India to Nepal. Delicacies from Uttar and Dakshin were relished by all present.

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# ECS COURSES

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Phone: 442.6439, 98510.07.900

Email: [ecs@infoclub.com.np](mailto:ecs@infoclub.com.np) to book a place.

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Many excellent staff are registered with us, including cooks, guards, gardeners, maids and drivers. Our list is constantly updated. Interviews are carried at our office to help resolve language problems between our clients and the staff. If you are looking for efficient and reliable staff, please come and discuss your requirements with us and don't forget to register your staff with us before you leave. **PLACEMENT FEE:** Rs.5,000



## NEPALI LANGUAGE CLASS FOR FOREIGNERS

ECS Services has been supporting foreigners to learn the Nepali Language (speaking, reading and writing) for many years. If you would like to learn or improve your Nepali vocabulary, please call us. Group or individual classes are available.

## BASIC ENGLISH READING & WRITING

### FOR HOUSEHOLD STAFF

Our clients and their staff often face problems when not communicating face to face. If your staff could read and write memos or notes, things could be easier for you. We present this reading and writing course that will enable your household staff to read notes/memos, write simple sentences, and take telephone messages. This will also help your staff to get employed after you leave.

## BASIC ENGLISH LANGUAGE

### FOR HOUSEHOLD STAFF

Our English class for household staff enables them to communicate with you in simple English. Language structures are taught along with vocabulary that is related to household matters (for daily use). Oral communication skills will be emphasized in this course rather than reading and writing skills.

## NEPALI LANGUAGE CD

The revised ECS Nepali language CD is now available. It gives you the chance not only to listen but also to practice your Nepali along with the CD. We feel that this improved CD will help you learn the Nepali language more effectively. A booklet comes with the CD. **PRICE:** Rs. 999 (including booklet)

## HOUSE KEEPING & FOOD HANDLING

### FOR HOUSEHOLD STAFF

ECS is organizing food handling and hygiene course for your household staff. If you are unsure whether your staff is aware about hygiene then this is the ideal course. This hands-on class includes daily hygiene, importance of hand washing and preparation of fruits and vegetables. We will teach them the proper way of cleaning - tables, windows, kitchen floor and bathroom. We will also teach them how to take care of a refrigerator. We will discuss how illness is spread and why the corner and behind the door is important to clean. We intend this course to help your staff to clean the house properly.

**VENUE:** Maharajgunj

## SPECIAL COOKING

### FOR HOUSEHOLD STAFF

ECS cooking course is an opportunity for your maid or cook to improve his/her cooking skills. At the end of this course, participants will be able to work as a cook independently and can even organize a small party. The course content includes information on different food items for practical cooking and will also make them aware about kitchen hygiene. We teach them how to prepare Indian, Chinese and continental items, as well as basic Western cooking techniques like simmer, sauté, etc. We will also discuss how to organize a kitchen, to prepare menus, cutting techniques, steps for serving food during small and big parties. This course helps them improve their skills so your staff will not only serve you better while you are here, but they will find it easier to find a job when you leave.

**VENUE:** Maharajgunj **FEE:** Rs.15,000

## INDIAN COOKING COURSE

Participants will be able to cook the following items.

- 1) Chicken Biryani
- 2) Paneer Tawa Masala
- 3) Bharwa Shimla Mirch
- 4) Murgh Makhmali Kabab
- 5) Pudina Paratha

**DATE:** 28th August, 2016  
**TIME:** 1:00pm to 5:00pm  
**VENUE:** Maharajgunj  
**FEE:** 1,500

## INTERNATIONAL COOKING COURSE

Participants will be able to cook the following items:

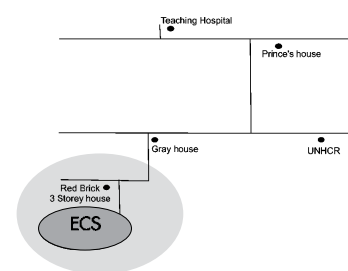
- 1) Jerk style chicken
- 2) Chicken with chunky pepper sauce
- 3) Soba noodles with vegetables
- 4) Insalata pizza
- 5) Potatoes with spicy cheese sauce

**DATE:** 25th September 2016  
**TIME:** 1:00pm- 5:00pm  
**VENUE:** Maharajgunj  
**FEE:** Rs. 1,500

ECS Services offers staff employment services (cooks, watchmen, gardeners, housemaids and drivers); courses for household staff (cooking and health); Nepali language for expatriates and English language for household staff. We hope that these services provided by ECS help make your life more comfortable.

## ECS

Maharajgunj, Kathmandu  
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# Spilled Ink Urban Walkability

BY DON MESSERSCHMIDT

**W**ant to go for a walk in the city? Choose your day, time and place carefully, to avoid the worst of Kathmandu's air pollution. Out in Pokhara (by comparison) there's far less pollution, so any day, any time, and almost any street or lane there is good.

The best time to go walking in Kathmandu is after a heavy rain, or while it's raining if you don't mind the wet. Rain clears the air, so mornings after it often dawn clear, rewarding you with snow peaks. Years ago, before Kathmandu became so highly populated, overrun with exhaust fumes and pollution from other sources, the high peaks were our daily sentinels, always there to be admired. Nowadays, it is sometimes hard to know if they still exist beyond the brown cloud that smothers us.

Advising the best time of day to go walking is complicated. When I asked a local air pollution expert, "Are early mornings a good time to walk?" he said "No. Too much pollution."

"Evenings?" I asked. "Again, no. Mid-day is best," he said. He explained that around noon those microscopic particles that we inhale with every breath will have risen up into the atmo-

sphere. By late afternoon they're down again and they stay low through to next morning. Walking when they're highest is best.

"Well, then," I went on, "should I wear a face mask and, if so, which is best?"

His reply was discouraging. He pointed out that the particles most harmful to our lungs are so small that it takes an electron microscope to see them. Most face masks simply don't block anything that small, though it's better to wear one than not.

That almost put me off walking altogether, though I know that if I go out of valley I can both walk and breathe more safely.

When we decide to take the risk and walk in the city, common sense tells us to choose the least used streets and alleyways without speeding vehicles. And try to avoid tangling with bicyclists — although not many bikes are seen these days on the city's chaotic streets. Biking the Ring Road used to be popular; but that was then. Too much pollution is now.

Now consider the following; it may urge you to become a walker anyway. Social researchers have found a positive correlation between the IQs of urban walkers vs. urban drivers. Those who walk more and drive less appear to be

more intelligent, that is. It's a correlation, not causation, so walking won't necessarily make you smart. But being smart might encourage you to walk more. The research is mostly from Western urbs and suburbs, where city planners are creating more, larger and safer environments. It's called walkability, and walkability attracts a better educated class of urban settlers, mostly Millennials.

You may know them as Generation-Y or the Net Generation, those youthful city-dwellers, your neighbors perhaps, who became adults round about the Millennial Year 2000. They tend to be better educated and more upward aspiring than previous generations. They also tend to seek (demand) urban environments that are walkable and bikeable, and that have quality health care facilities and good schools. City planners around the globe are seriously addressing their demands by creating urban green belts, parks, sport fields, bike lanes, and walking-dedicated streets.

In Nepal, Pokhara heads up my list of walkable places to live. Not only can you amble the streets and by-ways in relative ease and safety, but you can be out trekking in the green hills under those magnificent snow peaks within minutes from Kalimati, Mahendra Pul or Lakeside.

So, how does walkability happen? There's an old proverb that say "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride." It means that simply wishing for something nice, like pollution-free walkable environments is not enough to make it happen. Action is required. Citizen action. So, promote walkability, get with it, get smart, go walking.



For more about walkability and whether or not walkers are smarter than drivers, see [bbc.com/autos/story/20160712-do-smart-people-walk-more](http://bbc.com/autos/story/20160712-do-smart-people-walk-more). My conversation with the expert is approximately what was said, in the spirit of creative nonfiction. I can be contacted at [don.editor@gmail.com](mailto:don.editor@gmail.com), when not out walking. If you have a story about urban walking, send it to me to be considered for a Spilled Ink guest essay. For a good story about walking the city's streets and alleys, read the first one in Pranaya Rana's recently published book of short stories, 'City of Dreams' (2015), available in local bookstores. [DM]