

# TODAY

NEPSOCS

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE FOR MERGING NEPSOCS

NEW  
LAUNCH

HOT  
TOPIC

Sense of  
belonging for  
social mobility







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NEPAL BOASTS A DIVERSE ARRAY OF FOOD INFLUENCED BY THE DIFFERING CLIMATE AND ETHNICITY.**



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# Editorial

Hello!

*I was a mere teenager when I first landed in this country of dreams. But, my first impression of the country was grey, dull and isolated. I felt I had just been born in the place which is complete alien to me and there was no sense of belonging what so ever. And I always thought that I had to run while others could walk to catch up on the years because I was born years later to the natives.*

*I spent most of my early years thinking that, this is just for short period of time and before too long I will be back in the country where I belonged. Little did I know, the practicalities of life had something else in store for me. However, during those difficult days of feeling alienated, I started getting involved with local Nepalese community organisations, organising cultural, social and professional events which created a strong sense of belonging to the place. It took me at last a decade to consider myself a global citizen with strong sense of belonging to Nepal and Nepalese all around the world.*

*When I first heard the idea of 'Merging NepSocs' I was very excited. Because, what Merging Nepsocs was trying to do was, reduce the time and struggle to create the sense of belonging for the British-Nepalese students and new comers Nepalese to this country - which had taken decades for me.*

*I feel privileged to be leading this magnificent team to deliver this magazine. With this Magazine - 'NepSocs Today' - we bring stories, articles, interviews, poems, pictures, news, and the sense that we all belong to the same thing in our core.*

*We have put in an immense effort, time and love into this project. We are absolutely proud and delighted to be part of this historic magazine, probably the first in the UK of its kind and we hope that this meets your expectations and our ambitions.*

Thank you!

**Ojesh Singh**  
Project Lead  
NepSocs TODAY

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# Contents

Feb 2020 • Issue No. 01

## LETTERS

07 Letter from Prime Minister of Nepal  
Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli

08 Letter from Ambassador to Nepal,  
Embassy of Nepal, United Kingdom

11 Letter for MNS President

## 9 JOURNEY WITH MNS



## PHOTOSTORY

20-23 Photostory by Rupak Prajapati

## 62 FINDING ONE'S LOST SELF

## HOT TOPIC

24 Goondas and Hustlers from Rock to Rap: A  
brief history of the Nepali music scene in the  
UK

28 In Defence of Hypebeasts

## MNS EC TEAM

16 Merging NepSocs EC Team

## 40 INTERVIEW WITH YODDA





## POETRY

34 Poetry

## TRAVEL

60 It's not about you or me

## ARTICLE

70 Chhaupadi

## ARTICLE

51 When will you build my house?

## ARTICLE

84 Telemedicine in Nepal

# 74

DILEMMAS  
FACING  
HERITAGE  
CONSERVATION IN  
**KATHMANDU  
VALLEY**

## ARTICLE

65 NepSocs Stories

## INTERVIEW

30 Professor Surya Subedi



## CUPPA WITH 52 **NAMRATA SHRESTHA**

# Letter from Editor-in-Chief

**A**s the year of 2019 is slowly and quickly approaching to its end at the same time... it is unsurprisingly that cold and alarming time of the year for the adults and adolescents around the world... when we begin to anxiously pick up our new 2020 diary, evaluate the year that we just walked, jogged and trekked... upwards, onwards and hopefully inwards too! Click your fingers and with some swift swish and swoosh on tinder or your daily hustle or side hustle, 2019 is gone and done. Before our bare eyes open, just after one blink: Boy Bye 2019. Blink again, it's 2020. Happy New Year!

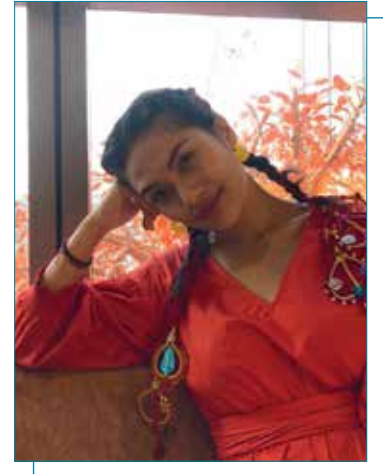
Naturally, we fantasise the new beginnings and fresh scents 2020 can bring so charmingly. And, I wonder if we all feel a pile of regret build up, like some ignored, shaky blocks of Jenga in front of us creep in more than bouncing fleets of gratitude come in our thought processes. Where in the world... did we travel to, the food selfies, OOTD, OOTN, pranks and debates we captured, recorded and posted on our social feed and stories.

Ping, - that one morning when you will get your timely or some say is untimely but seasonal notification. Here we go on a ride full of roller-coaster emotions, incomes flood of yearly accumulated pics and vids. Take a trip to the memory lane curated by yours truly, your smart device's gallery, then Facebook, next stop to Instagram, and maybe Snapchat if you are still in that bandwagon. Arranged snapshots sprinkle one by one, adding icing and closure to what we celebrated with our online friends publicly or privately throughout the year. Consciously or not is another debate which I can foresee being a big dilemma in the next few years as social media interfaces are faceted and yet, still remain a close part of our lives to access range of contacts and spectrum of information but is needlessly to say has triggered damaging effect to many state of mental health even if "online life" is put to hiatus.

Above all, whether if you feel amazed by how much you have accomplished in retrospect or if you feel clouds of regret for not pushing yourself out of your comfort zone. It is possible that everyone feels a bit of both. So, my foremost message to our fellow readers of our first ever launch is to let's leave those doubtful braincells back in 2019, wave em' GOOD Byeee! Tata and now, forget comparing yourself with other people online as their content is simply super selective and at most times scarily delusional. Chances are high that the influencers online have come across same doubts and anxiety at some point in their life too and it is platform like NepSoc Today where we hope to bring light to the norm and the truth than the delusion.

As the editor of NepSoc Today, I hope that we can bring light to the narratives of today's youth, eccentric individuals, artists, celebration of our heritage, humble patriots, contemporary thought leaders and subcultures. Willingly, we can serve more substance to the stories we feel moved to share in Instagram and Facebook and add the sauce of our own. Just imagine, yummy chutney with mo-mos ( this is, minus any chances of food poisoning). May this be the platform where we feel united and the voices of the diaspora is captured, and we gain empathy.

With Love,  
Tina Tamang  
Editor-in-chief







प्रधानमन्त्री

काठमाडौं, नेपाल

### शुभकामना

बेलायतमा अध्ययनरत विद्यार्थी एवं युवा व्यवसायीहरूले त्रैमासिक रूपमा प्रकाशन गर्ने नेप्सक्स पत्रिकाको नयाँ संस्करण प्रकाशन हुन लागेको जानकारी पाउँदा खुशी लागेको छ ।

अध्ययन एवं रोजगारीको शिलशिलामा विदेशी भूमिमा रहेका विद्यार्थी तथा व्यवसायीहरूलाई समेटेर पत्रिका प्रकाशन गरी सिर्जनात्मक एवं रचनात्मक प्रस्तुतिमार्फत् नेपाली समाजलाई विश्वसामु जोड्न गरेको प्रयत्नको म सराहना गर्दछु । नेपालको अबको एकमात्र एजेण्डा देश र जनताको समृद्धि नै रहेको छ । नेपाल सरकारले लिएको समृद्ध नेपाल-सुखी नेपालीको लक्ष्यलाई सफल बनाउन शिक्षित, सीपयुक्त र जोस, जाँगर भएका युवा जनशक्तिको ठूलो भूमिका रहन्छ । यस अर्थमा नेपाली विद्यार्थीहरू तथा युवा उद्यमी व्यवसायीहरूले विदेशमा आर्जन गरेको ज्ञान, सीप र दक्षतालाई प्रविधि हस्तान्तरण मार्फत् आफ्नै देशमा भरपुर उपयोग गरी मुलुकको चौतर्फी विकास र सामाजिक रुपान्तरण अभियानमा उपयोग गर्नेछन् भन्ने विश्वास लिएको छु ।

अन्त्यमा, नेप्सक्समा प्रकाशित लेख, रचनाहरू सबैको निम्ति ज्ञानवर्द्धक र उपयोगी हुन सकून् भन्दै पत्रिका प्रकाशनको पूर्ण सफलताको कामना गर्दछु ।

७ असोज, २०७६

केपी शर्मा ओली

# MESSAGE FROM AMBASSADOR

**Message from the Ambassador of Nepal to the United Kingdom,  
His Excellency Dr. Durga Bahadur Subedi**

The United Kingdom has occupied a very special place in the affection of the Nepali people. Nepal also holds a very special place in the hearts of the British people. Ever since the establishment of their diplomatic relations, friendship, mutual understanding, cordiality, cooperation and respect for each other's national interests and aspirations have guided their relationship.

Relationship between Nepal and the United Kingdom can be traced back to 1792 when the two countries signed a Treaty of Commerce. With the Treaty of Sugauli concluded in 1816, the formal diplomatic relation was established between the two friendly countries.

The United Kingdom is the first country in the world with which Nepal had established diplomatic relations. The United Kingdom is also the first country in the world which established its Embassy in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. This is the country where Nepal had established its first diplomatic mission (Legation) in 1934, which was elevated to the Ambassador level in 1947 A.D.

The United Kingdom has been one of the biggest bilateral development partners of Nepal. It has contributed significantly to improve socio-economic conditions of the Nepali people. It has continued to provide substantial development cooperation to Nepal. The United Kingdom's valuable assistance has been utilized, in line with the priorities of the Government of Nepal, in critical sectors of development including vital infrastructures, health, education, transport, and telecommunications.

The United Kingdom is one of the major trading partners of Nepal. Nepal's trade with the United Kingdom is increasing. However, the trade balance is not in favour of Nepal. It is heartening to note that the annual British aid is on an increasing trend. Over the years, the close and cordial relationship between Nepal and the United Kingdom has grown manifold to cover diverse fields. Growing people to people ties and frequent exchange of high-level visits have contributed to make the relationship deeper and dynamic. Besides the cooperation for development, the United Kingdom has also been a highly valued partner in Nepal's efforts for the institutionalization of democracy. The Nepali people value the moral and substantial support received from the British Government and people for their efforts towards strengthening democratic foundation and

institutions. The Government and people of the United Kingdom have welcomed the historical transformation in Nepal, taking place in recent years as a milestone in Nepal's history.

The Nepali people respectfully recall the historic state visits of Her Majesty the Queen to Nepal in 1961 and 1986. The Nepali people also recall the visits of Prince Charles to Nepal in 1986 and the recent visit of Prince Harry in March 2016. These state and official visits were taken by the Nepali people with high interest and in high esteem. Her Majesty the Queen's state visits and those of members of Royal family have left lasting memories among the Nepali people. These visits have helped enhance the close and cordial relationship between the two friendly countries and helped raise more goodwill and brotherhood towards Nepal and the Nepali people among the friendly British people.

The foundation of relationship between the two countries was not laid overnight. It took two hundred years. Their friendly relations have thus traversed through different eras and withstood the test of time. Celebrating two hundred years together is a momentous milestone for any bilateral relation in the case of Nepal and United Kingdom something for greater because these two countries hold close, cordial, cooperative and mutually rewarding relations.

Nepal has undergone historic political transformations over the past one decade and a half, which has redefined the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of national life of Nepal.

The Nepalese people have elected a stable government which enjoys more than two-thirds of majority in the parliament, and is certain to last for full five years term. The present government has set the development agenda as its priority goal with the motto of making 'prosperous Nepal and happy Nepali'.

It will be the primary challenge as well as an opportunity for the new government to give a boost to Nepal's development which have unfortunately remained sluggish in the past owing to the protracted political transition in the country.

The post-earthquake period was undoubtedly a challenging period for Nepal's pace of ongoing economic development. However, this challenge has also offered some opportunities for Nepal. The international community showed their affinity and magnanimity and extended overwhelming





support and cooperation to Nepal and the Nepali people.

After the devastating earthquake, the Government of Nepal faced the daunting challenge of the reposition of Nepal's image from a country riddled with post-earthquake crisis to the best value investment, trade and tourist destination with the assurance that Nepal is a safe, secure and most peaceful country.

The year 2016 was the year of survival, the year 2017 as the year of revival, the year 2018 as the year of reinvigoration and the year 2019 as a year of building better. I am pleased to share that the survival phase completed successfully. We have also been successful for rapid and robust revival as well as for reinvigoration.

This year, we have to mobilize the resources, both internal and external, for the development of the country ranging from the infrastructure to the rebuilding and reconstruction works which were devastated by the earthquakes of 2015.

I am pleased to note that the Nepali diaspora which is more than one hundred thousand in the United Kingdom is active, not only for promoting Nepali language, culture and custom, but also is contributing to the

enhancement of our bilateral ties. They are thus contributing to the creation of a beautiful cultural mosaic of the United Kingdom. In this

context, I am delighted to witness the establishment and expansion of the Merging NepSocs, which has embodied the motto of sense of belonging for social mobility aimed at bringing the Nepali students in the several universities of the United Kingdom together.

I am delighted to see that the Nepali people in the United Kingdom have already been an integral part of the mainstream British society and through their engagements in social, cultural, and commercial affairs in the United Kingdom, they have brought our two cultures and countries closer.

The Embassy of Nepal in London organized a special ceremony comprising a week-long series of events including Nepali photo and painting exhibition, Nepali culture, food, music and literary festivals, Nepali trade exhibition and a special event in the honour of Gurkha veterans in March 2017 to commemorate the bicentenary of the establishment of bilateral relations between Nepal and the United Kingdom.

As Nepal and the United Kingdom entered the new era of their close, cordial and cooperative bilateral relations after celebrating two hundred anniversary, the historic bond and cordial ties of friendship will gain a new height in the future.

I had a distinct honour to present my Letters of Credence as the Ambassador of Nepal to the

“  
*I am delighted to witness the establishment and expansion of the Merging NepSocs, which has embodied the motto of sense of belonging for social mobility aimed at bringing the Nepali students in the several universities of the United Kingdom together.*



United Kingdom on the first day of December 2016 at the Buckingham Palace amidst a special ceremony with renowned and respected British tradition, decorum and style. It was truly a memorable day for me, and I would say, a great achievement of my life and diplomatic life. As Nepal's new Ambassador to the United Kingdom, I now have the privilege of serving to further promote the rich bilateral relations between Nepal and the United Kingdom.

My connection to the United Kingdom is old. Back in 1993, I arrived in this wonderful country as a student of Leeds University in the beautiful city of Yorkshire to pursue my Masters Degree in International Relations. My stay and study in this country not only enabled me to acquire a quality degree but also offered me an excellent opportunity to know its rich civilization and kind people. I now have responsibility to get Nepal and Nepali people more known in this great country.

I am using over three decades of my experiences and expertise in Nepal's Foreign Service in London and am trying to work diligently and doing everything I can to make sure Nepal is visible, noticed, remembered and respected in the United Kingdom.



The Embassy of Nepal and I are pleased to cooperate with the Merging NepSocs for supporting the endeavours of the Government of Nepal for making 'prosperous Nepal and happy Nepali' by the utilization of huge knowledge, skills, expertise and experiences of Nepali students in the United Kingdom for the development of our motherland-Nepal.

I wish to take this opportunity to inform you all that the Government of Nepal has decided to observe the year 2020 as Visit Nepal Year. We have also contributed a high-Level committee in the United Kingdom to support and promote the visit Nepal Campaign and to send, at least, one hundred thousand British tourists to Nepal next year.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to request and encourage you all, and through you, your family and friends, to support and publicize the Visit Nepal Year Campaign and to highlight Nepal as a safe, secure, peaceful, beautiful and best value tourist destination.

Having said these few words, I wish to convey my greetings and best wishes for every success of the Merging NepSocs and for the health, happiness and continuous progress of all the members of Merging NepSocs.

Long live Nepal-Britain relations !

19.04.2019

**Dr. Durga Bahadur Subedi**  
Ambassador of Nepal  
to the United Kingdom.



# Letter from MNS President

*[As I begin to write this message, I reminiscence about the 17th of October at Aston University – the day when the first campaign was launched. We had around 50 attendees and today we have 50 active campaigners and an even larger ambassadors' cohort with hundreds of members. For many of us, the journey of the campaign includes stories of the broken cars, sick leave at work, overdrawn bank accounts, traffic jams and many more.]*

*Gratitude to innumerable NepSocians whose whole-hearted commitment and sacrifices have given reality to the dream that 'Merging NepSocs' once was.]*

With its old history, yet again the state of Nepalese diaspora in the UK is such that we have increasing population but fewer connections, more events but fewer impacts, more opportunities but less guidance.

As we look closely, we have more savings but fewer investments; more integration but more insecurities. These are the times of the rise of the professionals and academics within Nepalese communities but with the simultaneous absence of direction for Nepalese youth. It is the time of individual accomplishments but with the erosion of the sense of belonging.

At a time when the Nepalese diaspora, especially the young generation, has been forgetting their roots, it has raised barriers in networking. Uniting together all the Nepalese youths in the UK becomes important not only to awaken belongingness but also to improve social mobility.

'Merging NepSocs' has been trying to achieve this noble aim by bringing together Nepalese youth from all around the country as the campaigners, ambassadors, and participants to take responsibility of various projects, and the quarterly magazine, 'NepSocs Today', is one of them.

The first issue of 'NepSocs Today' is the garland of the beautiful thoughts, being plucked from different parts of the country to be woven together. I thank all our beloved campaigners, Magazine Panel, Sponsors, well-wishers, individual NepSocs, our ambassadors and the entire Editorial team who have sincerely contributed their time and energy for this sacred mission which shall take Merging NepSocs to the zenith of glory.

**Pawan Kandel,**  
**Merging NepSocs**



# MNS EC TEAM



Hi, my dear NepSocians- let me share some secrets with you. Right now, I feel taken by the thoughts of the early days of the campaign – long journeys, cold weather and MNS icebreakers. My position in MNS EC is President.

One thing that I am proud of achieving in my life so far is the injection of philosophical thoughts which drives an openness of mind - an acceptance that the social reality is not to be taken seriously but to be 'role-played' in a beautiful manner.

## What do you think of the new trend that being "woke is cool"?

I would say that this is one of the oldest trends since the beginning of human civilisation. The early birds have always been cooler than those who join the cult at the last minute. It appears that we spend most of our lives forgetting that we are 'free to be awake'.

## Are you scared of new beginnings? Why?

New beginnings are exciting as they come with new energy, new hopes and storylines. Sometimes they can be accompanied by the closure of old chapters in life –this may be a difficult experience.

## Your fav nepali quote/(or song/ or album) is...

Music has always been an important part of my living and I grew up listening to English, Hindi and Nepalese songs (& Urdu Ghazals). In regards to the Nepalese music, my journey has been as follows :  
"NABIN K BHATTARAI/ YASH KUMAR" to "NEPATHYA/ SUDIP GIRI/ SUGAM POKHREL" to "NARAYAN GOPAL/PHATTEMAN",

While typing this – "Yeti Chhokho, yeti mitho duila timilai maaya" and "Kehi mitho baata gara" by Narayan Gopal are on my top list!

## What excites you about MNS movement?

(I) the way it brings together the disconnected part of the Nepalese communities and social groups (II) the friendships you develop with people you would never meet otherwise (III) team spirit while organising events (IV) the sense of belonging you experience (V) The after parties!

Thank you! Once you are a campaigner – you are always a campaigner: Join us Today!



**Pawan Kandel**  
President



**Gaumaya Gurung**  
Vice-President



Hi, I am Gaumaya Gurung. Right now, I feel intrigued. My position in MNS is Vice-President.

One thing that I am proud of achieving is leading an outreach eye camp in Gorkha recently. We conducted free eye tests for 456 villagers and provided 293 spectacles.

## What do u think of the new trend that being "woke is cool"?

If the trend means being awake and aware from within, I am all in.

## Are you scared of new beginnings? Why.

I too have fear of new beginnings, of messing it up. Learning to take it with humor has helped me create a healthy space to laugh, learn and grow from mistakes.

## Your fav nepali quote/ (or song/ or album) is

Ful ko akhama fulai sansar ,Kadako akhama kadai sansara.

## What excites you about MNS movement?

The platform which Merging NepSocs has created to connect young Nepalese diaspora from various entities is phenomenal. I am hopeful that the Mentoring Scheme and ICS will help younger generation to make informed career decision and in future relay back their skills and experience to serve the community. I feel positive that Merging NepSocs will grow to unite us intellectually, beyond our history, geography, caste and creed.





**Bishnu Gaire**  
Elected Vice-President



Hi, my name is Bishnu Gaire, currently stepping my foot on the entrepreneurship path after graduating in EEE from University of Greenwich. I am the elected vice president of MNS.

**What do u think of the new trend that being “woke is cool”?**

To be honest, it is the first time I am hearing this term and I quickly googled it and realized I have been “woke” for few years now but I am not sure if it’s cool. If I base my point of view on the google definition of “being woke” than being woke should be natural. As a human being we are a curious creature and we do question everything.

**Are you scared of new beginnings? Why**

Yes, because organisation like MNS rely on lot’s people fulfilling their responsibilities voluntarily and it is very easy for people to lose that enthusiasm unless we the EC keep the momentum alive. Lot of organisation similar to MNS start off with big objectives and big promises but as the time goes by they become ineffective and sort of die. As everyone working for such organisation does voluntarily managing their fulltime job or everyday activities, the momentum could easily be lost. I want Merging NepSoc to expand far beyond UK and be this force of Nepalese youth. And while it is natural

to be scared of such huge beginning, I have full confidence this EC will design the base to achieve our goals eventually.

**Your fav nepali quote/ (or song/ or album) is**

It is hard to pick one with so many amazing songs and quotes. But if I must pick one it has to be this song,

“Soche jasto hunna jivan, samjhe jasto hunna jivan

Jasto bogyo ustai huncha, dekhe jasto hunna jivan”

by TARA DEVI

The lyrics are just great and Tara Devi’s classic voice makes it even better.

**What excites you about MNS movement?**

The idea of bringing all Nepalese youth around the world to the same platform is very exciting. Joining the force of academics and creatives we can achieve unimaginable things and play a vital role in the development of Nepal. Working on MNS events really gave me the feeling of sense of belonging and I believe it is true for so many of the Nepalese youth attending the events too. It is easy for youth of today to be in the state of lost identity especially when most of us don’t live in the country where we grew up and MNS really fills that gap and makes us feel special again.



Hi, I am Nilkiran. Right now, I feel ready to make 2019 a year where things happen. My position in MNS EC is Treasurer.

One thing that I am proud of achieving in my life so far is, being able to overcome my fear of public speaking. Being a naturally shy kid since childhood I found almost hard to go out of my comfort zone and express or even communicate effectively with group of people. The day I started overcoming was by acting, acting confident and the more I did it I found myself adapting to it and now it just comes so naturally! This has led to me meeting amazing people, being involved in various projects and most of all be a part of Merging Nepsocs!

**What do u think of the new trend that being “woke is cool”?**

Wait it’s a trend?!! Well Being woke for the right reasons is empowering.

**Are you scared of new beginnings? Why.**

Mixed feeling, it’s scary for the thought of losing who you are right now but exciting to unleash the adventure to who you are becoming.

**Your fav nepali quote/ (or song/ or album) is...**Kun mandir ma janchau yatri  
by Adhi kabi Laxmi Prasad Devkota

**What excites you about MNS movement?**

The campaigns and how powerful and exuberating it is to see youth unite selflessly for one reason to grow both as an individual and the Nepalese community.



**Nilkiran**  
Treasurer



Pawan Kandel  
President



Bishnu Gaire  
Vice-President



Gaumaya Gurung  
Vice-President



Samir Gurung  
General Secretary



Bibek Khatri  
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Tina Tamang  
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Manita Ale  
Marketing  
Manager



Achyut Gaire  
Design Team



Prajowl Adhikari  
Design Team



Pratish Gurung  
Design Team



Anuj Adhikari  
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Ash Thapa  
Campaigner



Kabita Kandel  
Campaigner



Manish Kunwar  
Campaigner



Nabina Kandel  
Campaigner



Nhyoumila Tuladhar  
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Ravi Bhandari  
Campaigner



Rohit Paudel  
Campaigner



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Campaigner



Sandesh Shrestha  
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Sanjok Gaire  
Campaigner



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**Bibek Khati Chhetri**  
Vice-Secretary



Hi, my name is Bibek Khati Chhetri. Right now, I feel ecstatic. My position in MNS EC is Vice-Secretary.

One thing that I am proud of achieving in my life so far is, graduating University with a degree in Mechanical Engineering BSc and just making my family and friends proud of me.

**What do u think of the new trend that being “woke is cool”?**

Being conscious about yourself and the environment around you is an important quality that an individual should strive for. With an ever-growing global network, we as individuals have tools to find out and learn about issues and injustice that happens around the world. This comes with a responsibility to make sure we are aware of the issues but also help towards solving the said issues, in any form that we can. With trends starting and ending before even a day passes by it is very important for us to fully understand what is happening around us and not just drift with the waves of social media. Yes, being woke, implying awareness about the inequalities, injustice and unfairness in the world is cool. But working towards improving these terms, to educate yourself correctly about the different issues and the different cultures, to understand a situation before jumping to conclusions, and just learn to be more humane is much cooler.

**Are you scared of new beginnings? Why.**

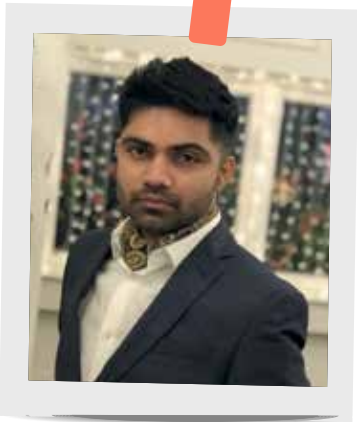
A new beginning brings with it many feelings, leaving the comfort of what you know is always a scary thought. Will it succeed, will I get to the destination, will I fail: all these and many more thoughts cloud our minds but there is that adrenaline of heading towards the unknown. The city that once was cold and silent now roars with memories, the projects that seemed impossible have moulded good habits, somethings didn't work but it was a lesson, and the unthinkable sometimes just surprises you. Yes, I fear new beginnings but more than that I get a rush of excitement to experience a new adventure.

**Your fav nepali quote/ (or song/ or album) is...**

This is probably the hardest question, there are so many greats that in my mind are just pure classic but as of me writing this Lau Na Ho by RK Square, because it's just very special song .

**What excites you about MNS movement?**

Being able to see this movement from the very first meeting in Birmingham I am so proud of where we are and the destination ahead. The thing that excites me the most it that we are working towards connecting all Nepalese people in the UK as one, preserving our diverse tradition and culture, and hopefully being able to teach all this to the next generation.







Hi, I am Samir Gurung aka Sexy Shishi. Right now, I feel spiritually elevated and I genuinely believe that I am traversing life in different forms. My position in MNS EC is General Secretary. I set up meetings at unexpected hours, write lot of unpublished minutes, create a platform for other members to showcase their skills and engage in heartfelt conversations and shows where they find their aligning interest in.

One thing that I am proud of achieving in my life so far is... understanding the struggle is always on Work mode and we just need to live gracefully by giving plenty of Khaja & Aaram Time to oneself.

**What do u think of the new trend that being “woke is cool”?**

Coolness can be quite an arrogant term for someone who considers themselves as “Hot”. Thus, I am not sure if my thoughts are justifiable. It’s very subjective whether one is woke or not and depends on what are we relating it to especially when it come to being cool. Honestly, I seriously still need to google more on new trend. I believe I have a lot of catching up yet to do.

**Are you scared of new beginnings? Why?**

Not at all. New beginnings bring new hope, new madness, new anxiety, new me and it’s similar feeling like buying new clothes which I hardly do.

**Your fav nepali quote/ (or song/ or album) is**

“Yo Naamko bhari kaha lagi bishaula, Aafai sanga lagcha daar na Mato ma milaula?” by Haribangsha Acharya & “Teso Gare Kaso Hola?”

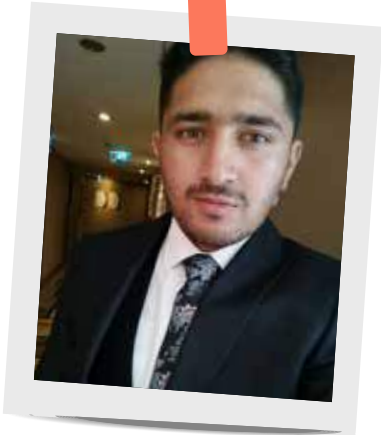
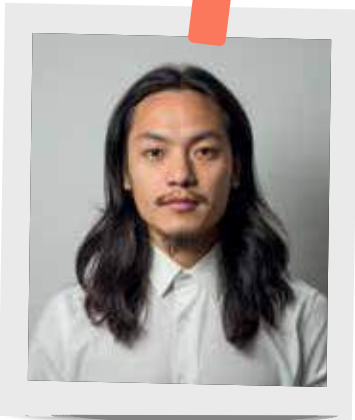
**What excites you about MNS movement?**

Realness to be better together is what excites me the most about MNS movement. Everyone in the movement is passionately dedicated to pave a progressive path for our generation and create a platform for the next generation for speedy growth preserving the essence of their identity. MNS movement is the art of giving and providing service to the community and people.

Thank you! It’s an immense pleasure to work with all and hope to have a fruitful time ahead together. Let’s get connected. I am easy to find.



**Samir Gurung**  
General Secretary



# Journey with **MNS**

WORDS BY ASHUTOSH (ASH) THAPA



Over 8000 lives lost. More than 100,000 houses destroyed. Millions of hearts shattered across the globe. April 25, 2015 marks the day which physically, emotionally and psychologically devastated the Nepalese people, when an earthquake of 7.8 magnitude struck the country. The disaster not only threatened the stability of the country but also exposed the country's weak economy, powerless government system and financial inefficiencies.

A year and a half later, I decided to navigate through Kathmandu, with the hope of seeing an immense amount of progress made in comparison to videos depicted through social media platforms. As disheartening as it is to say, the progress of rebuilding the economy and infrastructure was minimal. The trip also highlighted the misalignments in political, financial and educational system, which has been contracting the growth of Nepal for decades. This journey also helped me strengthen my roots which were weakened growing up in the UK. Back 'home', I was progressing towards completing my bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Leicester (UoL).

During the penultimate year of my bachelor's degree I decided to establish a Nepalese society in Leicester, which allowed me to

meet other Nepalese people. Another motivation to run the Nepalese society came from realising the existence of disparities and underdevelopment in Nepal. I was determined to create awareness of such issues to fellow society members. Being one of the very few universities to officially establish a Nepalese society in the East Midlands region, I took the opportunity to expand the relationship with other universities within the area. This is when and how my interaction with 'Merging NepSocs' (MN) began.

## My Journey with Merging NepSocs

I clearly remember, I received a call at around 10pm on October 2017 by Pawan Kandel (President, Merging NepSocs) to discuss a potential meetup between a number of universities regarding merging Nepalese societies in the UK. With the success of this initial meeting in Birmingham, October 2017, we were able to expand rapidly across the country. By the end of 2017, we were able to reach out to 25-30 universities successfully. With the creation of this organisation, not only did the group manage to meet more curious individuals but more opportunities arose along the way.

March 2018, still to this date, marks as one of the most critical months for the entire MN group. It was a pleasure to attend the first meeting with His Excellency, Dr Durga Bahadur Subedi, the





Ambassador of Nepal and the Information Officer for Nepalese Embassy. This meeting concluded on a very positive note with the Ambassador and his team fully supporting MN and agreeing on helping the group to expand further. I remember how the Ambassador was reiterating and emphasising his curiosity on starting an organisation like MN for quite some time and passed us his utmost gratitude for helping to build this every-growing community. In my opinion, this meeting was a huge milestone for the group, helping us to build morale and motivation, even more so as the first ever event (The MN Talent Show 2018) was only a couple of weeks away. There was a lot of pressure on the group as the Talent Show was the real opportunity for us to show what the group were capable of.

This event was highly rewarding to everyone, the campaigners as well as the attendees due to the power of MN's idea of togetherness. There were coaches filled with students and young professionals from around the country travelling to Wolverhampton for the show took our motive of networking to a whole new level. I cannot speak for other regions and universities but in the East Midlands, the cooperation and excitement between universities (De Montfort, Leicester, Loughborough and Nottingham) was especially high and I can only imagine a similar effect in different regions and universities. For these reasons, I believe this was a critical moment for the entire organisation. Personally, I have been able to make life-long friends since the interaction and preparation for The Talent Show.

Moving swiftly to the second major event, Summer Ball 2018, was again very important - it was the day when the first elected committee group was formed. This day revealed faces of the leading team for the group. Along with consistent reputation, extravagant venue and the presence of H.E. Dr Durga Prasad Subedi, the show

was also complemented by Nepal's own new-school folk band, the Night Band. Using traditional Nepalese instruments and expressing the true colour of Nepalese folk-music, the band helped to share with UK diasporas what has been lost in recent years. Being a huge fan of music in general, listening to the Night Band was a true privilege for me.

Overall, Merging Nepsocs has been an wonderful formation and has helped many individuals find a platform where they feel belonged. During one of the networking events earlier this year, I was reunited with an old school friend who I had not seen in over 12 years. The sort of opportunities and impact these events has had to members is unmatched. With panels such as magazine, mentoring, and social action plan slowly coming together will make an impact on the society too. These are huge projects that require thorough planning and cooperation which I truly believe will create positive externality to the community.

#### Work & Bhakta Band

Upon graduation from UoL, I secured a position as an Associate within the Banker and Private Equity Coverage Team at one of "Big Three" credit rating agencies, Fitch Ratings. With my role primarily focusing on the multibillion-dollar market of high yield bonds and leveraged loans, the learning curve has been extremely steep.

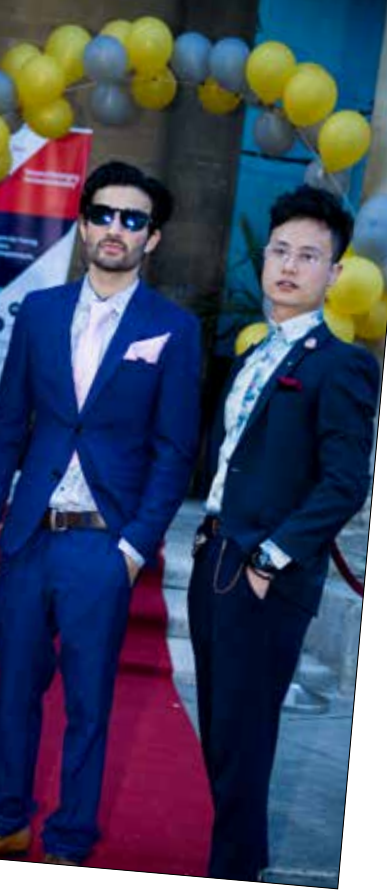
Outside of work, I am also the lead guitarist for Bhakta Band - group formed during my penultimate year of my bachelor's degree. The group and I have been playing for all the major events MN has hosted so far. I have been very passionate about music and in particularly guitar since a very young age. Being able to play in front of hundreds of people who appreciate the group has been very rewarding and helped me keep my work and social life balanced.



# PHOTO STORY



















# GOONDAS & HUSTLERS

FROM ROCK  
TO RAP

A brief history of the Nepali music scene in the UK

WORDS BY PREMILA VAN OMMEN

## PART 1: GOONDAS

Once upon a time in Belait, a land far far away (from K-Town), there was a little place called Puja Cottage in the area of Wembley, London. At the Puja Cottage restaurant, a group of students, who formed a band called Prayas, played their first gig to a mixed audience of around 70 people in the year 2000. Playing covers of Nepali rock classics, Prayas soon moved out of small restaurants to hold bigger gigs in places such as the Acton Priory. Over 300 people turned up in space that only had a 250 persons capacity, and so, Ealing Town hall was later booked in 2002 for a Nepali New Year's celebration, pulling in an audience of 600. At that time there was only one fully established Nepali community association, the Yeti Nepal Association UK. Today there

are over 400, reflecting the leap from a Nepali population recorded as being 5938 in the 2001 UK Census to estimates today as 100,000. Looking back at this same area of London that birthed the humble beginnings of Nepali rock music gigs in Britain, the Joon Festival in 2017 in Wembley Arena pulled in a crowd of around 6000. This was more than the whole population of recorded Nepalis in all of Britain the time Prayas played.

This was a time before aunties and uncles gathered at the annual Nepali melas to post your unflattering photos without permission on Facebook; a time before bhais and bainis went to meet their internet boyfriends and girlfriends for the first time at Gurkha Cup; a time before Soundcloud when there was MySpace; a time emojis. In that digitally darker era, the dark streets of Camden were perfect





as the breeding ground for growing a Nepali music scene. It was right at London's heart of the dark arts of rock 'n' roll. With famous artists such as The Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix playing at its Roundhouse, and ongoing daily gigs in its many venues featuring musicians of all genres, Camden was a Thamel of sorts for Nepalis. Bustling tourists walked by each day past rows of bars and pubs, rainbow coloured 'yak' wool jumpers, singing bowls, tie-dyed Ganesh shirts and pashmina shawls. In corners if you looked carefully, were the dealers, and in the dens, goondas from the real Thamel.



Making of the family of Camden ko Keta, these goondas arrived through a mixed hustle of visas: as students that never attended classes, or seducers of foreign women. In 2002, some formed London's second Nepali band, Layasutra, and launched their first gig in Stables Market. Yes, obviously, as in Thamel, there was a fight. The Camden ko ketaharu would be notorious in the area, usually getting banned six months at a time from pub to pub, rotating back to old haunts when management changed, teaching new staff how to say all the bad words in Nepali. With their squealing guitars, what did these long haired, hard-knuckled, tattooed guys sing about at these early gigs? They sang about missing Nepal, mayalus waiting in gauns, ghar ko samjhana, songs of love and loss.

By 2006, as the UK's Nepali population began to grow due to settlement rights for Lahure families, a new music performance series called 'Get a Gig' was created at the venue Camden rocks to give a platform for a new generation of British Nepali bands. Back in those days the regular gigs were small yet screamingly loud, dominated by metal music genres such as death and thrash. Skills were carried over from Kathmandu by the Shrestha brothers, Alan and Alice, who came over as students but belonged to Nepal's first black metal band Cruentus. At the same time, a more musically diverse annual gig called 'RockSmarak' began taking shape. In contrast to Camden, crowds were more mixed between boys and girls. Two young women also formed a short-lived gig series called Ghamailo Events and Ojesh Singh of UK's first Nepali rock band Prayas created 'A Rock Night in Town' concert at Shepherd's Bush inviting a host of then rising musical artists such as Nattu Shah.

Live rock music events also began to spread out of London such as in the Old Prince of Wales Pub, Ashford as well as a major heavy metal event



in Aldershot in 2010 called the Gathering of Darkness. Genres of rock music dominated musical expression of young Nepalis with band after band forming (between 2007- 2012 there were over 50 bands), playing varieties of melodies with electric guitars and crashing drums. Whether covers or originals, the music was still rock. Ironically, this form of music, usually associated with a lifestyle combining sex and drugs, was encouraged by 'uncles' of the Nepali community. One of the 'mamas', Ramesh Sarangkoti, launched the annual 'Nepalese Band Competition' in 2008 which encouraged the formation of new bands eager to win the 1 Lakh Nrs award. Bands from places afar as Manchester and Folkestone came to play in a school hall in Wembley. Elders continued to encourage musical talent through the annual Nepali Mela launched in 2009 by providing platforms for bands to play on professional stages to a large audience.

Far from the evening dens of goonda dais in Camden, Nepali youths could whip out their guitars in daylight to scream "Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me!" in front of their bajays and bhojus while covering thing song 'Killing in the Name' by American band Rage Against the Machine. This was a hit from 1992 which became popular again in Britain in 2009 due to Facebook protest campaign to place it as the UK's Christmas number 1 single. A crowd favourite often requested at gigs, the band Soundbox played it at Nepali Mela, and Plug N Play covered it at the Nepalese Live Band competition.

What is remarkable is that Nepali rock bands today continue playing tributes given to rock music history. Both in Nepal's Thamel and Northolt's Thamel, guitars echo chords from the music of Pink Floyd, Nirvana, Pearl Jam, the Doors, the Eagles and many more songs of other musical legends. This western music cultural heritage is in part due to tourists in Nepal in the 70s who followed the hippie trail, bringing along cassette tapes and sharing their music. Simultaneously, from that era, Nepali musicians of Darjeeling and other parts of Northeast India who had a longer established connection to rock music, travelled to Nepal for better career opportunities. They became music teachers and songwriters. This mixture of talent and influences in Nepal gave birth to the first rock band in Kathmandu called Prism, and continued to help flourish Nepal's own rock music that mixed folk music and poetry. These new legends then also became honored eventually through

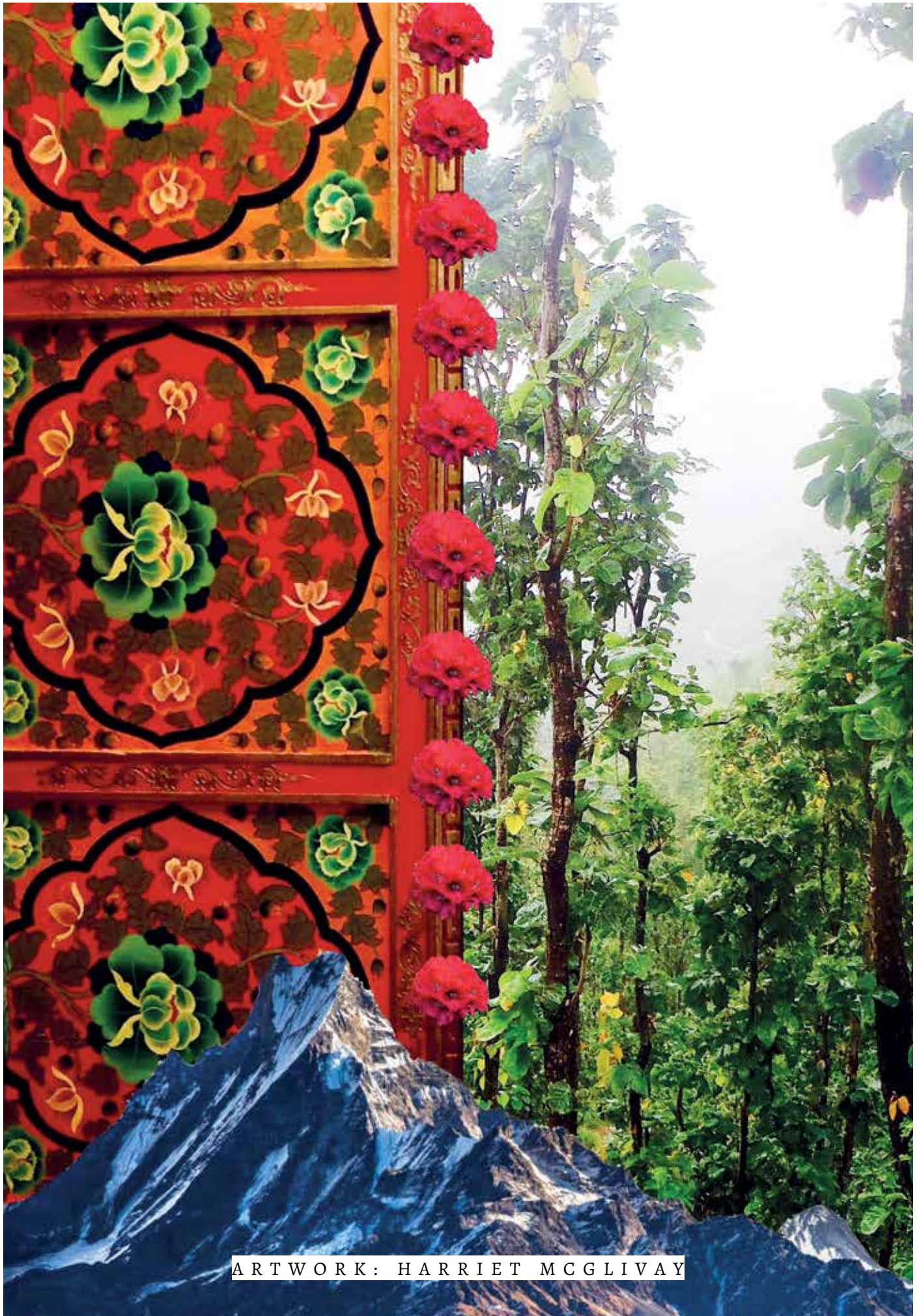
invitations to play for Nepali audiences in Britain. Camden, again, was the key area to perform for these guests such as Mukti Shakya and Robin Tamang who were supported by the goonda dais and bhais to play as their backup bands. As audiences and communities grew, larger venues outside Camden were rented to accommodate for bands such as 1974AD, the Edge Band, and of course Nepathya, the same venues such as Brixton's O2 Academy that hosted artists such as Madonna.

Although fantastic for Nepal's musical heavyweights, the large venues did not have lineups starring UK based Nepali artists as main acts. Stages featuring British Nepali bands and singers circled back to Camden and other parts of London, playing music combining a large range of influences. JPT Rockerz combined the poetry of classical adhunik git to 90s American band Phish. American alternative rock could be heard with Lemoncurse while Metaphase was inspired by Avenge Sevenfold and Japanese metal band X-Japan. Haami band followed even more complicated stylings of Japanese math rock while Impact Depth, The Missing Link and D and Gorilla Bubblegum stuck to more classic rock styles. Many of these bands played largely to Nepali audiences but Hadez and Symbol of Orion were able to partake in metal gigs alongside non-Nepalis. They also joined Emergenza in Camden, the world's largest international unsigned band competition with an average of 200 bands, reaching the semi-finals and finals between 2009 and 2011. Scaling down to much smaller gigs, there was also good old fashioned punk with Justice Nowhere. In the spirit of punk and anarchy, Justice Nowhere covered political topics such as corruption in Nepali governments and issues around Palestine.

Young women also joined in discussing political topics of the day in their music such as Jerusha Rai sang her thoughts on the 2011-2012 anti-capitalist Occupy Movement at St. Paul's and Kanti Gurung in 2016 on Black Lives Matter. As many young men from bands left music to take charge of greater responsibilities, it was mainly many young women that continued to play although in much softer sounds and notes. There were not many female bands, but instead, singer/songwriters. A mixed band called the Nerds had a female vocalist, Sonia, and a lucky female drummer named Lucky. However, the first girl band, simply called Nepalese Girls Band, was formed

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*A longer version of British Nepali rock music history by the author can be found on [www.himalmag.com](http://www.himalmag.com). If you have more music stories to share, DM on Instagram @punxdidi*





ARTWORK: HARRIET MCGLIVAY



# In Defence of Hypebeasts

WORDS BY BIDUSHI GURUNG



**I**n a digital age, social media platforms such as Instagram have facilitated for the phenomenon of hypebeasts to become ubiquitous yet, I was still surprised to find that many people and even youths of my own age cohort were not aware of this materialistic, millennial sensation: despite their prevalence online in recent years. In short, a hypebeast can typically be classified as someone, usually young men, who follow trends and brands purely because they are in style and 'hyped up' like the many fashion items one may don.

The most iconic and recognisable image of a brand that is evoked when discussing hypebeast culture is indeed the red rectangle with the word 'Supreme' placed within it. Nonetheless, Hypebeast brands can vary from other streetwear labels such as Bape (or A Bathing Ape), Palace, Yeezy, Off-White, Anti Social Social Club to traditional designer brands such as Gucci, Balenciaga or Louis Vuitton and sportswear such as Nike to name a few.

With the overarching theme being that such brands and their products are surrounded with immense hype and equally high price tags, the label hypebeast was and to a lesser extent, still continues to hold some negative connotations due to the understanding that such individuals only indulge in these brands' clothing or accessories purely for the purposes of buying

into the hype.

On the contrary, in recent years there have been shifting implications of the term "hypebeast". It is no longer simply used to insult someone for their materialistic and solely trend chasing ambitions. The creation of HYPEBEAST magazine and media collective by Kevin Ma, as an attempt to embrace and challenge what it means to be a so-called hypebeast has dramatically changed the way the way this subculture is perceived. Not to mention, the influence of creative visionaries such as acclaimed designer Virgil Abloh and the diverse range of collaborations between streetwear labels and traditional designer brands have further aided in shifting the perception of hypebeasts into a legitimate subculture that is recognised as a valid space for fashion, design and creativity to flourish. Hypebeast culture is no longer a niche, but rather a space that has expanded globally through social media to form a community of likeminded young individuals to critique, discuss and construct a dialogue between brands and consumers.

However, it is still discerned as being obsessed with brand or trend chasing ideology because as its namesake suggests, the subculture is built upon 'hype' but how is this hype created? The example of Supreme is particularly illuminating as the



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**Hypebeasts in 2019  
are not homogenous.  
They may own the  
same or similar items  
but the way one  
chooses to style said  
items varies greatly  
among individuals  
as this subculture is  
far more complex  
and multifaceted  
than it may seem on  
a superficial surface  
level**

streetwear brand has warped a traditional supply and demand model through creating artificial scarcity of products. Joint with a lack of specificity about the items in the ‘drop’ and their presence on social media, all of these elements leads to mass speculation and hype to amplify the demand for said items, driving a significantly profitable resell market as the limited nature of items equals to a disproportionately high resell value and price. All of which are feeding into the exclusive nature of this subculture that is contrasted with the desires to invest in the hype through following the same trends and wearing the same clothes. As a consequence, leading some to argue that hypebeast culture is hampering on individuality and uniqueness as everyone chases after the same hyped up brands and fashion items, symbolising a token of belonging through owning the same merchandise. Ironically, as consumer choice theory postulates, consumption patterns reflect our identity, essentially who we are as individuals from the food we eat to the clothes we wear as Virgil Abloh states in an interview with HYPEBEAST magazine, ‘clothes are just tools to make a collage about yourself’.

Regardless of this, to some extent hypebeasts are still construed in an adverse way due to the inherent materialistic and consumerist practices they enact. From the eye-wateringly expensive price tags to simply buying into the hype to flex on Instagram as a way to impress others of being able to afford such luxuries, it’s inevitable to question their need to gain validation from

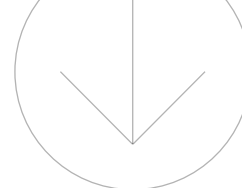
others. This can be made apparent through applying Frantz Fanon’s theory of the ‘internalisation of the gaze’ to the hypebeast phenomenon. Ultimately, there is a production of a desire for a certain identity to be acquired when sporting specific brands and clothing which are then valued by being observable by the gaze of others as they produce the need to reach certain expectation through obtaining specific merchandise. Therefore, through buying into the hype of brands such as Supreme, hypebeasts are aware of the recognition that comes from wearing expensive clothing especially through likes and followers on Instagram, further leading them to pursue the expectations that arise from being a Hypebeast.

Yet, such critiques of these super consumers seem too reductionist and perhaps even fails to acknowledge the agency of individuals found in the mere act of choosing which brands and items to indulge in. The clothing, accessories and brands consumed is emblematic of the identity one may want to present so by that token, the merchandise themselves hold a symbolic value to the individual as stylistic elements among hypebeasts are inherently personal and differ from one person to another.

Hypebeasts in 2019 are not homogenous. They may own the same or similar items but the way one chooses to style said items varies greatly among individuals as this subculture is far more complex and multifaceted than it may seem on a superficial surface level. There is also a failure to take into consideration alternative reasons to purchasing these high-priced fashion items such as appreciation for design as some may be buying for the art rather than giving into the hype, which has been facilitated especially through blogs, magazines and media companies such as HYPEBEAST and Highsnobiety. As a result of the presence and influence of the latter entities, the artistic and design elements of hypebeast culture have certainly been elevated to a higher status and priority.

Streetwear and hypebeast culture are no longer relegated to the periphery, instead it has been embraced and incorporated into the fashion and design industry, proclaimed by OFF-WHITE creator Virgil Abloh as a ‘new space to be defined’, as an art movement through the work of industry individuals and hypebeasts alike to transform contemporary fashion.





BY PAWAN KANDEL

**A**part from a role of a professor at Leeds University, what else have you been occupied with these days?

I also have the following responsibilities: Chairman of the Board of Editors of a top law journal published by Cambridge University Press; Chairman of the Global Policy Forum for Nepal and was Joint Co-Chair of the oldest British charity working in Nepal- the Britain-Nepal Medical Trust - until I stood down from this position earlier this year after serving the charity for 12 years. I also teach as a visiting professor at the University of Oxford and practise law as a Barrister and QC from London. At present, I am part of the legal team in three cases before the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Finally, I currently am writing a book on the status of unilateral economic sanctions in international law and am preparing the ground work for another book on human rights in Asia.

**What is your New Year resolution for 2020?**

Reduce my work commitments and go hiking as much as I can in the Scottish hills. I have done the full length of the Hadrian Wall Path walk of about 92 miles from the east coast of England to the west coast and a 100Km non-stop walk along the south coast of England to raise funds for charity – the Britain-Nepal Medical Trust.

## In conversation with professor Surya Subedi

*That was a time of genuine patriotism, vision and leadership and this is what is needed if Nepal wishes to sort out the outstanding issues with India, including the border issues*

**What are your favourite books - both fiction and non-fiction?**

**We are also curious to know what other hobbies you have. Are there any notable figures you have found inspiring in your life?**

Some of my favorites are: 'Long Walk to Freedom' by Nelson Mandela, 'East and West' by Chris Patten and 'To Play the King' by Michael Dobbs. I currently am reading 'The Lost Boy' by Dave Pelzer. With regard to my hobbies they are: hiking in the hills of Scotland, visiting theatres in London (for example I have been going to the BBC Proms for the past 20 years) and visiting small islands like Malta. I have visited Malta several times and have been to a small island in the middle of the South China Sea too. Some of my inspirational figures are: Nelson Mandela, King Birendra, Sir Adam Roberts and Colin Powell (former US Secretary of State).

**Lately, Law has been one of the popular choices at University for Nepalese diaspora in the UK. Our A-Level students want to know what kind of subjects at college would provide the best preparation to be a Lawyer. What would you advise them?**

I would advise them to take 'hard' subjects such as history and English Literature rather than 'soft' subjects.

**How pleased are you with the present constitution of Nepal (2015) - have you identified any major weaknesses or strengths?**

It is not a perfect constitution, but it is as good as it can get under the circumstances. Any constitution is a living document

and it should be amended to reflect the aspirations of all sections of the population, including the Madhesi people.


**Regarding dual citizenship (what the NRNs have been demanding for decades), do you think it will ever be feasible for Nepal to issue dual citizenship? If not, "citizenship continuation" (nagrita nirantarta) - is that a practical solution?**

It is feasible, and it should have been possible had the leadership of the NRNA been strong at the time of the adoption of the new constitution of Nepal. When the NRNA was hijacked by business people, there was no intellectual leadership needed to lobby effectively for it. Since the NRNA has now lost the respect and trust from so many people especially after the recent global conference in Kathmandu, I do not think that nagrita nirantarta would be possible under the leadership of the NRNA. But if other organizations come forward and provide leadership on this issue it may be possible at some time in the future, but not in the near future.

**Recalling the months, you worked with King Birendra, especially the 1989 Blockade by India (negotiating with Rajiv Gandhi's team), what did you learn about our relationship with India from that exposure?**

That was a time of genuine patriotism, vision and leadership and this is what is needed if Nepal wishes to sort out the outstanding issues with India, including the border issues, on the basis of





The judiciary in Nepal suffers from political interference and corruption. While some judges lack the intellectual depth and breadth required to implement the rule of law, there are some good people within the judiciary who are doing their best.

mutual respect and equality. King Birendra was a gentlemanly, highly educated and enlightened person with a big heart. I have not seen these qualities in any of the top Congress or Communist leaders of Nepal these days. We were successful at the time to mobilize the international community in favor of Nepal and win friends internationally.

**Regarding India’s newly published map which shows Kalapani as its own territory - does this break any ‘soft’ or ‘hard’ international laws? If this issue could not be resolved through communication with Indian government, who do we go for justice?**

My views on this are highlighted in a press statement released recently by the Global Policy Forum for Nepal. It has gone viral. I would advise your readers to visit it to understand my position on this issue. It has gone viral. The weblink is as follows:  
<https://ekantipur.com/news/2019/12/06/157562456686942074.html>

**What is your opinion on “judicial independence” of Nepal? From Panchayat to present days - how has the progress been? Is Nepal struggling to implement “rule of law”?**

The judiciary in Nepal suffers from political interference and corruption. While some judges lack the intellectual depth and breadth required to implement the rule of law, there are some good people within the judiciary who are doing their best.

**“Arrested and detained twice as an activist during the student life in Nepal”, are you going to be involved in politics any soon?**

Not at the moment. When the whole world is my playground why should I give this up unless I think I can bring about fundamental change in Nepal and the time is not ripe for it at the moment. For the time being, I am enjoying every minute of my life in the UK. It is by and large a meritocratic society. I have achieved as much as possible in this country as an academic. It is not an ordinary thing to become a full professor at an elite British university, get an OBE, appointed a QC, become an advisor to the Foreign Secretary (or Foreign Minister) and awarded the highest degree – the DCL – by the University of Oxford which is awarded rarely and only in exceptional cases. There is a system in place in this country to recognize talent and contribution that one has made to their field. But I intend to return to Nepal one day when I think that the Congress-Communist monopoly over power can be broken and politics can be freed from the clutches of mediocre and under-educated or ill-educated politicians.

**Having spent the most energetic and productive years of life outside the country such as the UK, Cambodia, Netherlands etc - does this erode the “sense of belonging” with the motherland Nepal?**

No, it does not. I feel that I am Nepali as strongly as I was when living and working in Nepal. But I am not a narrow nationalist holding parochial views. I am a global citizen who believes in global values and is busy promoting them. If we make the world a fairer and better one for all to live in, then Nepal and Nepali people too certainly benefit from it. My work has benefitted Nepal in so many ways and will do so in the years to come.



*That was a time of genuine patriotism, vision and leadership and this is what is needed if Nepal wishes to sort out the outstanding issues with India, including the border issues*



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ILLUSTRATIONS:  
ABANI MALLA

## HANDS ON THE WHEEL

ABHYAS GIRI

failure and success  
both very slow,  
no evidence of a secret way,  
tests no rest if we're still waiting to blow  
then grab attention and pay it up  
close  
coz the one thing I know  
is that every. second. counts,  
habits make the person and today means  
now,  
no counting on tomorrow, only non-believers wait around.

Unfamiliar, the position that we are in  
where many do or die,  
where the hungry learn to fly.  
If I tell you  
you're given £86,400 to spend everyday,  
you'd probably spend big on yourself and yours,  
champagne wishes, booking front rows at exotic shows.  
Well 86,400 seconds are gifted to you everyday  
where money meets time,  
the rich and poor all equally intertwine.  
It comes without a fee,  
nor for dollar, nor for pound,  
so I beg you tell me  
why would you sell them for free?



Remain distraction-prone or gain some more self-control?

It takes sacrifice for an individual to realise where they can go.  
But so distracted, someone remind them they have reasonable potential.  
Ground laws of attraction, grow some courage and it's all between your temple.  
Is it eventful? what you stand for.  
What you run for.  
Guidance may sound like the typical uncle  
but add ambition to intent and that sum itself becomes inspirational.  
Realise it's not always hard work you just have to work hard,  
pull it off your own graft,  
and just like you, everyone starts  
with a self-inflated life raft.  
So craft your mind soldier, you weren't built for Minecraft.  
And it's never too late to Snap off Chats and Face your Book,  
or lace your boot, an anchor from a hook,  
brewing visions that leave your enemies shook.

Regardless, living mediocre cannot be the common wisdom,  
your parents left Nepal without caring for a risk until it hit them.  
Old school feeling when responsibility fuels,  
wouldn't last forever unless the vision was immune.  
And as their descendants we're built from their genes,  
Like apples not falling too far from the tree,  
you have to uphold the belief  
that average can therefore never be  
you or me



# MY STAR

B I B E K   K H A T I   C H H E T R I

The night sky I look up to gaze into;  
looking for god not likely;  
lost trying to find the way;

From where I was and where I am;  
you look the same;  
finding comfort in vast space;  
It keeps me content;

I will see you again;  
Surely;  
you never left my side;  
Don't fade away now;

Always bright always there;  
Guide me through this darkness till the morning comes;  
My star.

*This poem is a very personal piece I wrote with loved ones in my mind.*

# NEWLIFE ALGORITHM

N H Y O U M I L A   T U L A D H A R

NewLife Algorithm by  
I wish I could take all your pain away  
Like how you could take mine.  
I think about you every day,  
Even when I have no time

I wish all the memories were good  
All the rest were discarded.  
how I wish I could,  
Delete the phrase "dearly departed"?

Open Life in read mode  
Open NewLife  
Copy Life to NewLife  
Remove "pain"  
Remove "sadness"  
Close Life  
Delete Life  
Save NewLife  
Rename NewLife Life

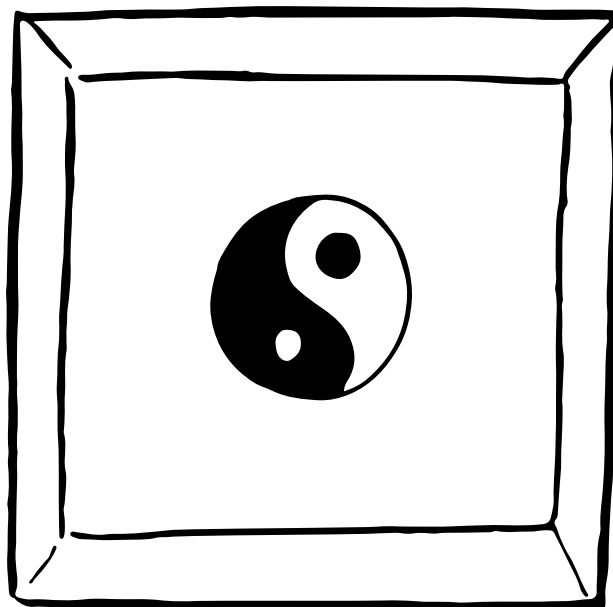
If I was in charge of the algorithm  
We would dance to the same rhythm  
Things for us would be different  
For now, I flow with the current

If I took away the sadness, the pain  
I wouldn't find happiness in rain.  
It would be hard recognising life's pleasures  
All these are my cherished treasures

# A\_REALITY

Bodies of metal, spring and screws  
Blinded by reflection  
Of the Rose tinted windows  
Empty houses built on foundation of hope  
To create Eden, a paradise  
Transformed into a cage, invisible to the naked eye  
With the promise of an Oasis  
A bird trapped in that cage  
Slow breeze of fresh air  
Brings with it sweet fragrance of flowers  
Rays of the sun  
A warm blanket of comfort  
Looking up in the clear blue sky  
Knowing it's freedom  
Extending its wings  
Flies without ever leaving the ground  
Overwhelmed by the beauty of the landscape  
Never curious what's over the mountain  
A dark wasteland of monsters and evil  
The universal truth  
Just an illusion to deceive the mind  
Repeated throughout the ages  
Logic cannot defy  
The wheel keeps turning  
Chasing a concept  
A creation of the same illusion  
Tunnel vision that grants perfection  
Wide eyes sees beyond such  
But it's just Colour to the blind  
A scream among the stars  
Searching for sweet honey in a hornets nest  
Reaching out to heaven while walking to hell

*Poem two was written in a train journey, from Manchester to Birmingham, it was just a reflection of what I see I guess.*

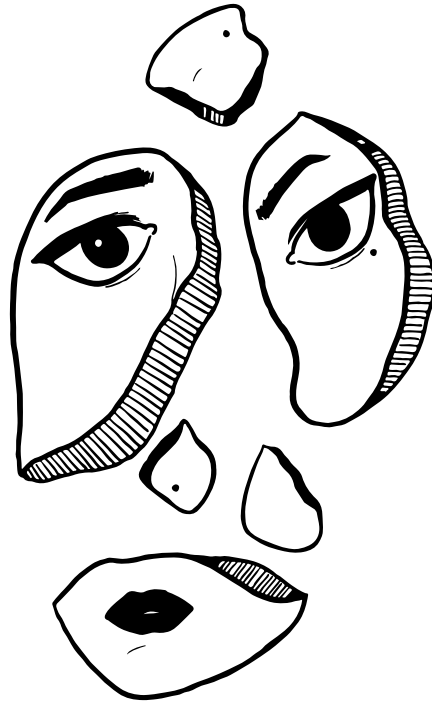


## LOST MYSELF

Chasing the duties & the dream,  
The ideal life & the big boss,  
Changing priorities & reshuffling my  
lifestyle,  
I have lost a little part of myself.

The part, where I want to explore all  
the aspects of life,  
The part, where I seek creativity every  
moment,  
The part, where I laugh louder than  
the voice inside my head,  
The part, where I feel the most alive.

Another step closer to my perfect life,  
Miles away from my happy self.  
Lost myself & my purpose.  
Stuck with the duties & the bills!



## MOVING ALONG

T

You are here  
In every corner of my room.

Crafted edges so soft,  
Built bridges and a loft.  
I lay frozen in my bed,  
With only thoughts of you,  
my only muse, raw truth and my favourite booze.

I told you once  
Before I go to sleep,  
I hold and squeeze my two hands together \_

One is yours. Clasped, other's mine.  
WE are one,  
with earth's mind and,  
space's soul, in god's time.

I love you in the moment,  
I love you now.  
My heart feels beat with you...  
Baby I am moving along.

## UNTITLED

Paara bata chammaka chamkeko, eh chandrama!  
Timro yo jhalakk dekhera ma ramau?

Ya,  
Kalo tyo aakash ma  
Timro eklopan samjhera  
Nirash hou?

## VICTORY!

L I S A M A H A R J A N

When you breathe out,  
And you literally feel your heart drop  
And when you breathe in,  
You inhale a little courage...  
And all the cells inside of you, are against you, beg-  
ging to cry out loud  
But you put together all of your courage...  
And you stand tough!  
That, my friend, is a victory!  
Billions of cells inside you could not break you !  
Then tell me, why should you let anyone else do that  
to you?  
If you can fight yourself my friend,  
You yourself can fight others!



## FOR MY PARENTS

SALONI PUN

Leaving the house you'd built,  
The people you'd grown to love,  
Places you'd seen in the night and day,  
Couldn't have been easy  
This land must've felt like the one in fairytales,  
So far far away  
You must've searched for sounds, your ears had been tuned to hear  
Since your mother had held you in her arms  
Your nose must've searched for the aroma of spices,  
Used day in, day out by every house on our street  
Everything, you knew as home  
Was absent  
Yet, you made sure  
We always felt at home  
You never let us feel your heart ache  
Missing the sanctuary of familiarity  
Everything was always, "Fine"  
The people  
The food  
The work  
"Fine"  
On the tip of your tongue was always,  
"How was school?"  
"Do you need anything?"  
Circling your mind was always, our future  
And bursting in your heart was and is still,  
Love for us  
You chased comfort for us,  
Whilst leaving your own  
You sacrificed your own dreams for us,  
So that we could chase ours  
There aren't enough words in this language,  
Nor any other  
To articulate how grateful I feel,  
For you two are my greatest gifts  
Everything I am and will be,  
Is because of you  
All that I'd like you to know is,  
How much I love you both

## मलाई उहाँको याद आउँछ

SAMIR (SHISHI) GURUNG

हरेक शिशिर यामको बतासमा,  
मेरा पुर्खाको मेहनत, लगन र पसिनाको याद आउँछ  
भरोसा, विश्वास र बहादुरीको गाथा संगै  
किल्ला कांगडामा गरेका संघर्षका दिनहरू याद आउँछ ।

सुनसान रातहरूमा बिताएका अनिदो निद्रा  
अनि फक्रिएका फूलहरूमा,  
विश्वमा समृद्धिका लागि आस्था जगाएका पलहरू याद आउँछ ।

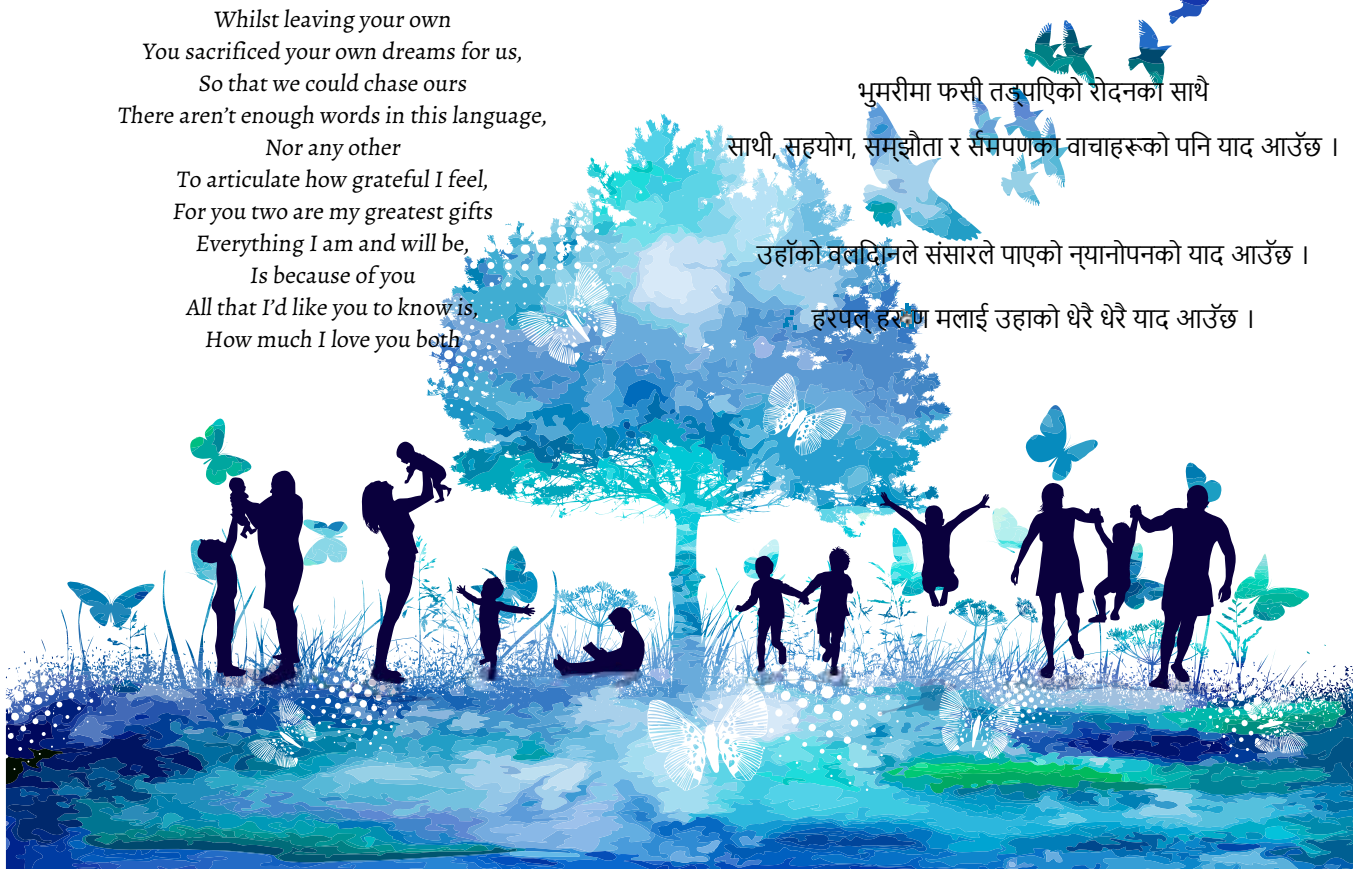
आफन्तको बछिोडमा घर परिवारलाई सम्झेर  
अझै एक दिन बढी बाँच्ने  
त्यी मलिन सपनाहरूदेखेको याद आउँछ ।

मलाई ती सुकेको दाउराहरूमा  
त्यो सूर्य विनाको कठोर चिसा विहानीहरू  
अनि भोक र तिर्खाका वावजुद पनि,  
गुन्जीएका मायाका गीतहरू याद आउँछ ।

भुमरीमा फसी तडपिएको रोदनको साथै  
साथी, सहयोग, सम्झौता र समपणका वाचाहरूको पनि याद आउँछ ।

उहाँको वलदिनले संसारले पाएको न्यानोपनको याद आउँछ ।

हरपल हरण मलाई उहाको धेरै धेरै याद आउँछ ।



# WHO SAID NEPALIS DO NOT KNOW HOW TO THROW A **SUMMER BALL.**

**G**litz and glamour, the finer things in life, a magical world that we all fondly wish to be a part of. Music, dance and socialising the very essence of a Ball, a night of laughter and excitement. As Britain was enjoying the hot summer days there was something keeping everyone excited amongst the Nepalese Youth. An event like non other, a night to put on the best dress in the wardrobe and just flaunt yes it was time for Merging Nepsocs first ever Summer Ball.

Let's start from the beginning, as a very productive campaigners evening was coming to wrap, Pawan Kandel, MNS President stood up and brought everyone's attention back in the room. Summer Ball, two words that got all the members energized and excited, as ideas filled the whiteboard it was evident the event could not come at better timing. With a long list of tasks to complete the campaigners set out to tick them off one by one. Not long after the news got out, MNS Summer Ball is coming to ST Mary's London on the 25th August.

As promotion videos started going around the social media platforms it was showcasing the creative minds of the campaigners. From a remake of classic Bollywood scene to a box office fight to a silent movie the world was experiencing the zest of what the night has to offer. One by one more information got out for the theme to the DJ and finally in the last hours before the event an amazing opportunity presented itself to the MNS family. Night Band, a very influential Nepali folk band who keep the traditional sounds of Nepal alive while highlighting important issues in the society, was ready to perform in front of the MNS crowd.

Finally, with excitement at an all high the day was here. A hot summers day the campaigners got busy to transform the cathedral floor into the groomed stage for the Summer Ball. As the day went by with all preparations ready, one by one the crowd started coming in. Greeted by a red-carpet reception with a backdrop fitted and fixed for the perfect instagramable posts everyone was getting into their Gatsby Swag. With a glass of champagne and a bag full of excitement the ball started off. With a fantastic performance from the night band it reminded everyone the value of our rooted culture and tradition and how beautiful our narratives are. There were activities to make everyone network amongst each other and get to connect with people from all over the nation. With everyone in full attention, there was one more agenda on the table.

Summer Ball not only was the first ever Ball event for MNS it was the very first AGM, where the first elected committee got announced. Weeks before the event candidates submitted their manifesto for the campaigners to have a look at. Now it was the



time to announce the final results, with heating suspense in the air each member got announced and were received with a roar from the crowd. The leaders of this moment stood on the stage as everyone showed their support with shouts and cheers. To keep the night moving tables got shifted over and a stage was created for a freestyle dance battle as each duo went at it the crowd went wild stomping, whistling, shouting, cheering each person along. The night carried on with a surprise flash mob mixing viral songs of the summer keeping the excitement alive. There was also a magical ballroom dance that got everyone in a sentimental mood grabbing their loved ones whether it be their life partner or a summer fling or even their best friend everyone enjoyed a slow dance or two. A hearty meal made sure everyone was energised and up to dance all night long as cocktail dance was not long to go.

With the crowd at an all time high, Bhakta Band got on the stage to rock everyone's with classic hits of past and present that everyone



can sing along to. As the crowd sang and grooved to the rhythm, DJ Khatra took over to keep the party alive. The energy, the happiness, the unity, the moment screamed of a scene straight out of *The Great Gatsby*. Summer ball was a night that got the best out of everyone and created an atmosphere of pure thrill that will be in the hearts of all those who were there.

## TALENT SHOW WOWZA!

So, sense of belonging we said! What do we really mean? Is it the oozing intoxicating feeling that you get while having a pint or shots with your mates down at the local pub? Is it the sense of feeling content while reconnecting with your friends that have taken different routes than you, after college or high-school? Is it the warm, accomplished feeling you get while making momos with your loved ones? Is it the nostalgic feeling you get as you sit down with your favorite bunch, reminiscing about your past crazy adventures? Or is it the humble and proud feeling of being part of something bigger than yourself, something that connects you with millions of people across the globe, something that helps you keep your head high as you feel pride of your ancestry and culture. Well, it can be all the above and more.

After sharing campaign pitches to numerous universities in the UK, Merging NepSocs captured many roomful hearts of hundreds of students and young professionals up and down as we commuted following the google map nav. From Kent to Scotland, the word was... Merging NepSocs is here and it's here to stay. With so much enthusiasm and fiery energy from the campaigners and all the members we were motivated to find the perfect way to seize this fruitful, awesome momentum. That's where Talent show comes in. Like a stylish cross-sectional bridge.

Having met so many diasporas with talents and skills in wide range of fields, it was an obvious choice to bring a platform catered to celebrate one another. A night to mingle with people that you might never would get the chance to meet, a night to cheer, hype your deserving friends and dance your worries away.

As the flyers got shared all over social media it was fast evident that people were excited and eager to



join in this unprecedented wave. Day after day, we received videos from different NepSocs around the nation showcasing their dance, songs and drama which they anticipated to perform with much thought gone behind it. As the day got closer and closer, the excitement was at an all time high.

Finally, the Talent Show was here. Facebook Live streamed from UK Nepal Live outreaching thousands of views. Location: Diamond hall Wolverhampton. Date: 24th March 2018. As the coaches rolled in from London and Midlands, slowly people from all over UK started to come in. It was a major moment to see the massive group of people all dressed in very dashing style. So much talent all under one roof and one rocking stage, closely exemplifying what us lively Nepalese youth are like and what we can be notably represented best for. The hustle and bustle of the room stirred as people got to network and share the spark of excitement as they wait for the performances cheerfully. Performers took their turns to grace the stage and moved the crowd with emotions and energy. From Birmingham to Southampton to Leicester to Manchester to London all the different Universities bought something special for the crowd. Dance, drama, poetry and music, all the arts were present, and with a wonderful meal to keep the energy at an all-time high the crowd responded with cheers and motivation. It was a night of pure excitement and appreciation.

There it was, in all this madness and excitement, a very warm feeling in the air, a feeling that couldn't be measured or quantified, a feeling that electrified all senses and spoke so loud to the very core of our hearts, a feeling so great it connected everyone there. The feeling that we set out to find, the feeling that we all longed for it was right there at that moment a sense of belonging.



## Who is YODDA?

A patriot proudly producing Nepali rap songs in the UK. A pioneer of the Nepali Trap Rap Scene. His success so far has been predominantly achieved independently. Proud of his original writing, this young man does not care to look, scroll, or swipe for ghost writers; but rather turns towards his trusted collection of Nepali dictionaries. Born and bred in Pokhara, residing in his adult years in England: is this something unheard of and something not celebrated enough? NepSoc Today shares with you the story of the “home-grown” rapper, Yodda.

Hold tight and read on to learn more about... Yodda's experience as a rapper, his motivation, his progressive hustle in the West, his future visions, his very personal milestones, doubts he has about Nepali diaspora and his conscious choice to keep his private life private alongside his growing spotlight and fame.

First of all, let me start this modern saga with something light! When I asked Yodda, what are three words that he would use to describe himself...

# YODDA

*A patriot proudly producing Nepali rap songs in the UK. A pioneer of the Nepali Trap Rap Scene. His success so far has been predominantly achieved independently.*

...He looks puzzled and taken aback as though he never thought this question would be asked to him in his whole life. Confusion is blatantly screaming on his face, nevertheless, he eventually composes himself to list fitting adjectives. “I would say that, I am nice...”, as he raises his brows, he nods his head up and down approvingly. I could see that he struggled to affirm effortlessly and celebrate his strengths and, the real character traits that make Yodda, the Yodda. Much resonance to what the Nepali children of today generally might find common about each other. Yodda tries really hard to collect his thought process together. Sweeping his wavy hair with his fingers, he begins to add, “erm... humble? Yeah, I would say that I am humble...” He looks up to the ceiling and assents with a rhythm in his intonation now, “And...” Drumroll. He chuckles to add, “...a veryyyy handsome guy!” We both laughed loudly to agree and applaud the conquering state of mind that Yodda has in the year of 2076.

At just 25 years old, Yodda is a beast. He started his rap journey in 2011 from small club openings to now performing at more upscaled events, along with his thriving fanbase. He rocked

at Joon Fest, UK 2018 and has even shared the stage with international rappers such as Keith Ape in London 2017. Famously known to enthrall his fans by his scooping strong stage presence and entice listeners eardrums with his powerful beats, fire flows, and fondly curated Nepali rap lyrics. KHARAB BANI, SANSAR KO SABVANDA DAMI, and RAMRO MANCHEY. Can we hear the echoes of Yodda's creative, warrior-like rap songs defeat today's collective young or even old worriers around us?

It is a cold, mundane and moody London weather, January 26th 2019 to be precise, and under the floating grey clouds my eyes meet the silhouette of group of Asian looking men standing across the street from Yodda's Airbnb location, one of the sets for his new music video shoot “Saino Tapai”. At first, I questioned if they were tourists, maybe just pedestrians, or actually international students; all wearing colourful, puffy parkas having a cig, looking moderately sheepish... But quick after these thoughts bounce off my mind there is an incoming call from Yodda himself which snaps me back to reality.



A young man with short dark hair is crouching in front of a large, dense bush of purple flowers. He is wearing a black baseball cap, a black t-shirt, and blue jeans with large, distressed patches on the knees. He has a silver watch on his left wrist and a ring on his right hand. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is filled with the vibrant purple flowers and green leaves of the bush.

yoda

...in reality, it really is  
not easy, it takes time  
and effort"



As I approach, I get introduced to a refreshing young team of videographers with whom Yodda has built strong business ties with, to create dynamic video content for Yodda's Youtube channel. The collaborating team's last project was thoughtfully executed, grasping seemingly unprecedented visuals from some critical angles, bringing Yodda's clear emotive concepts to life. The music video of Yodda's popular song, "Kharab Bani" from his latest album "Nakab" has captivated over a million views from his YouTube streams alone.

Yodda shares with a fresh grin on his face that he feels really happy to see a positive growth in the blooming field of Nepali arts! There is now an approving shift in perspectives amongst Nepali diaspora who confidently choose a creative career. We finally see a force of creative individuals like Yodda fuelling a new normal. Yodda agrees, "Yes, with conviction, the Nepali youth living in the UK are now pursuing more creative career paths because it is no longer like the old days when only traditionally respected jobs like engineers, doctors and lawyers can be life sustaining. Now, if you have passion for something creative there is no reason why you

and many times not getting paid or feeling no ounce of respect from the organisers." Yodda now looks back at the stretch of improvement over the etiquette and hospitality for a rapper himself. The artist closes better deals and receives invitations from trendsetting clubs and event organisers worldwide, serving his international fans from Nepal to New York.

Real Talk. ONE very first overwhelming concern of mine while on my way to meet Yodda in the city was: WOW, this individual is famous for his meticulous way of threading Nepali diction ever so eloquently. Most of his Nepali rap lyrics as I mentioned before, are at most times fearlessly, dominantly "Prastha" Nepali, meaning clear and fluent Nepali as a native speaker and in result, this man's verbal Nepali quality is just... unworldly talented. At one point I began feeling pressingly worried that, if were to carry out the interview in Nepali, I may not be able to grasp a proper understanding of what he refers to! Send prayers, my friends! This made me think deeper, to explore that even the connections that we have as young Nepali diaspora with some Nepali music, like Yodda's raps, is perhaps only abstract because I cannot always



cannot choose that as a career and make money from it." We will discuss this more in the later part of the article.

The artist however also brushes over some bitter flashbacks overcoming the struggling stages in his career as an aspiring rapper going back to the years of 2011 and 2012. "At first, as an independent artist I had to make all of the business moves by myself, and for myself, and this included transporting myself to the venue, setting up sound checks, making payment deals,

understand the root of his intended meanings. But I suppose if we want to live in a less stressed life, we can justify this by saying that art carries the beauty of ambiguity and remains open for everyone's interpretation and everyone's effort and that journey should be celebrated.

Though many Nepali adult admirers and eager younger listeners, wherever they are based in the world, who are fluent in Nepali reading, writing and might not face a challenge to understand



his lyrics, many younger diasporas with less awareness and exposure to Nepali vocabulary, books, media, peers, friends or family will perhaps struggle to fully comprehend Yodda's lyrical talent. Yet, once you hear Yodda's rap songs, you will unmistakably dance, move, groove and catch vibes from his music, don't we all...

Yes, that's right, I am affirming that in this era we are witnessing even young diasporas at a crossroad. Where do we go from here?! Yodda feels that we have to accept that many first or even second, third and fourth generation immigrants have unique journeys, different life exposure and parental and friend social influences which can hinder our native language continuity. What perhaps should be demanding more of our attention is the intentional conversations where we acknowledge the possibility that, actually... Nepali rap songs can be instrumental to help preserve the Nepali language. And in the long run, music can more effectively transcend to globally booming, young, rap music lover souls and influence timely ageing adolescents and adults better.

When I asked Yodda if it was important for him to only rap in Nepali; to my surprise, he listed a couple of practical obstacles. Before I share with you why, I should let you know that I also learnt about Yodda that he does have a surprising academic background. He finished his studies up until SLC level in Pokhara, Nepal but he decided to drop out from community college here in the UK. He shyly explains to me, reflecting back on his school days in Nepal, "when I was a student at a boarding school in Pokhara, I really wasn't good in my Nepali class. I used to "just pass", you know when you get 38 marks and the teacher will just give you extra two marks to pass you in class, out of pity."

Everyone who moves to the UK instantly switches their language code to English, as it is a model fit for societal



survival. Yodda adds that he finds getting his English-speaking accent like British or American a problem: which many of us diasporas struggle to navigate and adjust their identity to too.

Where and when did he nail the bridge and tighten his rap bars in Nepali linguistically? "It's like this" he proclaims "perhaps subconsciously, after listening to Nepali radio and Nepali TV news; we were all aware of big Nepali words from when we were little and young in Nepal." I take from this that exposure is indeed the key. He explains furthermore, "but it's only when we become older and more conscious; when we begin to learn about its semantics and how Nepali words and jargon fit to our wider context. It is actually simply easier for me to write my feelings down in Nepali as Nepali is what my mind thinks in before I respond in English. And from looking at the bigger picture, Nepali rap also promotes the Nepali language"

"Even if you don't know a word's meaning, when you come across that word again at later point in your life, you will remember the



“  
When I was a student  
at a boarding school in  
Pokhara, I really  
wasn't good in my  
Nepali class. I used to  
"just pass", you know  
when you get 38 marks  
and the teacher will  
just give you extra two  
marks to pass you in  
class, out of pity.



word, it is like an “ah-ha” moment it will come to you and it will make you wonder and want to find out the meaning of that word. I’m telling you this because this has happened to me several times and it suddenly clicks for me. I think of a word but don’t I always know its meaning. So, I go to my dictionary and look up its definition. I will then write it down and I write rap like that.”

Oh wow, maybe everyone is work in a progress and has room to continue expanding their vocabulary every day. Yodda laughingly tells me that, “yes, I own a few Nepali dictionaries.” And a funny hate comment he once received and now recalls in front of me stated, “I hate Yodda because, he is a Nepali dictionary” cue, mero kharab bani cha. The whole room stirred with echoes of laughter. All jokes aside, “How did you feel?” I asked.

“I felt exactly how you are all feeling now. I just laughed!” he exclaims looking alarmed, “so what, I use a dictionary?! At least I am taking my initiative to learn the words and cleverly make sure it makes sense pragmatically with what I am trying to display from my rap.”

As I express my Nepali proficiency worry, Yodda sits opposite to me with his legs cosily crossed, sipping milk tea that one the videographers kindly made for us. “I am more used to speaking in Nepali but if English words slip in naturally as an alternative, we will just go with that flow.” I cheesed a smile, being grateful and welcoming his approach with open arms...

...While his friends gaze and listen eagerly around us, he manages to break some cheeky jokes in the room where shared laughter bounced and accumulated within the walls of the Airbnb, and I began to feel like I was leading a talk show with Yodda as my chief guest. I soon come to learn that one of his closest friends who heavily supported him in his early pursuit of the rap genre was Pratish Gurung who was also with us in the room.

Stars aligned when the venturesome pair started to hang out. Yodda adds that he has already shared and repeated this story

with all of his closest friends and decides to share it with us too. “Back in the days, Pratish used to make me listen to Nepali rap songs. At the time we were listening to a lot of songs by Yama Buddha and MC Flo and we also started to front saying, “Oi, we should rap too!!!” He pauses shortly and laughs modestly, reflecting on what he just said, we all start laughing and follow his tale in awe and anticipation. “We chipped in £10 each and went to buy a microphone with £20 in our hands. We even recorded a song together.” I have since conducted some researched and the song still exists on YouTube! It is called “Hay Daiwa” and is by Yodda ft. Pratish. I must say that this genuine and sentimental track curated by the pre-Yodda I met today, who learnt how to produce all by himself, still pleasantly depicts a zealous, emotive, soulful, heartthrob for his supportive listeners.

Yodda has in fact grown his musical talent from his high-school days in Nepal. He played guitar and at one point was part of a metal band as a drummer. Exploring the birth of his artistry, Yodda explains, saying, “much of my early music influences from being part of the metal band were from very aggressive music. It was loud and displayed anger like no other mainstream pop or acoustic music.” He agrees that perhaps being in an unconventional metal band aided him in getting the courage to pursue rap. He is humble in the way that he aspires to be an unprecedented role model for the younger generation. “If you look at Nepathya, they are legendary in the Nepali artistry. Now, I am not saying that I want to be Nepathya. But my hope is that as Yodda, my younger listeners will look at me and wish to be like me just like I always did when I listened to Nepathya when I was younger”.

Are we now noticing at a new trend of less fearing youth pursuing creative and unconventional career paths? Yodda, believes that it is possible, he tells me, “you can now build a career pursuing your true passion. There is room for creativity to prosper and you can even teach yourself new skills just by using YouTube.”



“There was a time when everyone was questioning, “Aie... can people really get paid from YouTube?”. It was something unheard of and brushed aside - this was only couple of years ago. But now it's totally normal. Even YouTube videos of music covers are influencing parents to buy guitars and keyboards for their children, whereas, when I was young and growing up in Nepal, carrying a guitar was frowned upon and you were seen to be a delinquent.”

But, truly, how difficult is this lifestyle? Yodda stresses to me that it is very tough to balance a full-time job alongside being a rapper as society seems to believe that “if you are an artist and don't focus solely on your artistic work, you are deemed to not be serious about your art.” There is a constant battle that he has with himself, feeling like he is wasting time when he is not able to spend time on music, but still wishing to be able to support his family. “If you look at this music video too, I started working on it in October but we are finally shooting it in January. In practise, it really is not easy, it takes a lot of time and team effort.”

I posed a question about whether he is too self-critical and a perfectionist. He calmly nods and draws a heavy sigh, “I talk about this with my friends a lot and yes I have learnt now that I was not getting results, simply because I was too focused on making my work “perfect” but this meant that I was not able to finish it.”

Some people might be sceptical of online motivational videos and passively scroll through such videos found on social media, but Yodda fires away a moving story, “Actually a one-minute Instagram video completely changed my work mindset and life”. The video was made by Instagram sensation Gary Vaynerchuk who has strong 5.2 million followers and is infamous for influencing an entrepreneurial mindset and creation of online community. Yodda explains that “the video was a conversation between Gary and a rookie rapper who was feeling demotivated while producing music even though he was really passionate. He was watching Netflix when he had spare time. Gary was so clever to spot that he was insecure and had anxiety. The video finished with the inspirational quote, “perfectionism is the thief of progression”. And after watching that video, I finished a song overnight and here we are now... (at the shoot of the MV) Abracadabra in today's millennial style.

Prime time is yet to come for Yodda. You can connect with Yodda via his YouTube, Spotify, Instagram and Facebook pages.



“

*One Instagram video changed my life.*

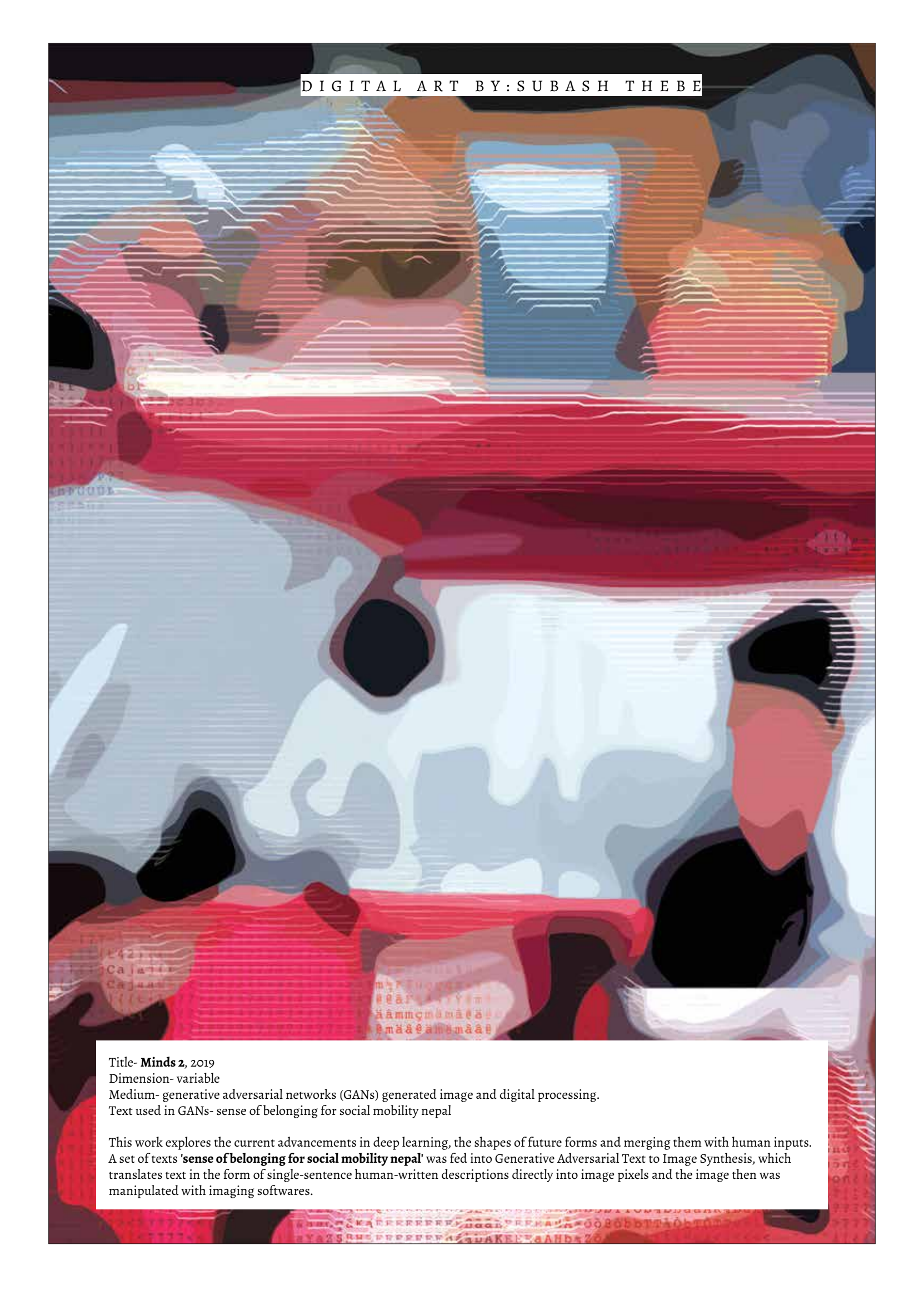




**T**his painting is inspired by the recent Miss Nepal controversy surrounding the issue of makeup and women empowerment. In my painting, I wanted to highlight that although Miss Nepal may aim to empower women and provide them with certain platforms and opportunities, it certainly does not empower them to the extent that it claims. The makeup dripping down the woman's face in my painting which appears in a tear like manner symbolizes how women have suffered from immense societal pressure to look perfect and wear makeup. It also highlights how exhausting and almost patronizing the process of participating in 'beauty pageant' seems to be. Most importantly, women empowerment means being able to choose to wear makeup or not, and if Miss Nepal really does believe in women empowerment it should understand this, at the least, it should be considered of this during the audition round. This is the 21st century! A women's ability or decision to wear makeup should never determine how forward-thinking' or 'educated' a women is nor should it ever be a precondition to being successful or being selected for Miss Nepal in this case.

PAINTING BY: SAMI SHRESTHA





DIGITAL ART BY: SUBASH THEBE

Title- **Minds 2**, 2019

Dimension- variable

Medium- generative adversarial networks (GANs) generated image and digital processing.

Text used in GANs- sense of belonging for social mobility nepal

This work explores the current advancements in deep learning, the shapes of future forms and merging them with human inputs. A set of texts '**sense of belonging for social mobility nepal**' was fed into Generative Adversarial Text to Image Synthesis, which translates text in the form of single-sentence human-written descriptions directly into image pixels and the image then was manipulated with imaging softwares.

# Young Professionals

WORDS BY MANISH KHAREL



**M**erging NepSocs has five projects one of which is Networking, and within the Networking project, we have a special initiative for Young Professionals. The initiative aims to bring together Young Professionals across the UK diaspora together, with networking, talks, discussions being

the focus, with the aim and hope that people are better connected, inspired, and better equipped with skills to help progress their career. We always welcome extra help and ideas – so if you want to get more involved, or suggest something, please get in touch with Manish Kharel, our Young Professionals Coordinator.



## Rajesh Hamal Event

In under 48 hours' notice, we hosted legendary Nepali Actos Rajesh Hamal in London. The event was a talk, discussion and Q&A all in one.

## Launch Event

We kicked off the initiative with a launch event – a networking event and Q&A with a star-studded guest panel. We had a Partner from PwC, a Senior Environmental Journalist from the BBC, and a Senior University Lecturer who is pushing the boundaries of technology with LiWi (WiFi, but using light instead).

The event gave our members a chance to interact directly with the esteemed guests and the Q&A portion of the event gave our members many golden tips on how to better manage and progress our careers, as well as some valuable insight on what different career paths look like. The feedback on the Q&A part was overwhelmingly positive – our members felt inspired to see Nepalese excellence on display, as well as receive advice from Nepali perspective, which is sometimes hard to find.

The Networking portion of our event connected people across sectors and geographies, from corporate workers and engineers, to entrepreneurs and artists – we even reunited childhood school friends who hadn't seen each other for 10 years, when one of them left Nepal to immigrate to the UK. There were discussions





on what sort of events our young professionals want to see from the society in the future, as well as insight into different sectors. We're confident we connected future business partners at our event, and we hope they remember us when they are successful and making a lot of profit.

**Young Professionals Club**

Featuring Deepak Josh, CEO of the Nepal 2020 campaign  
Spearheaded by Monika Shrestha and Sibani Ghale, we launched a regular event with the aim of frequent and informal networking, but with the added element of discussions at the event. We want this to be a place where young professionals can

regularly interact with one another, and discuss important and usually-shunned topics.

The first event was used to generate ideas and shape future events. In our second event, we had the pleasure of Deepak Joshi, CEO of the Nepal 2020 campaign, attending our event. We hosted a Q&A with Mr Joshi, where our members gained valuable insight in what it takes to run such a campaign, as well as some of the current challenges (and what the government intends to do about them) the Nepali tourism industry faces, such as developing infrastructure and 'tourist' prices, which may put off potential tourists from visiting Nepal.



# IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU OR ME

WORDS BY NHYOMILA TULADHAR



India has very opulent parts like every country and you can easily just avoid the worse sides. You can easily sit inside the air-conditioned Delhi metro and forget about all the suffering out there. This is similar to how you would sit on the London underground and forget to think of others, while you stress about the little things that don't really matter.

India was a life changing experience. I acknowledge the fact that I sound like a typical student traveller, but it really was life changing. Even though I'm still lost and clueless about my future, one thing is clear, it doesn't matter. I could tell you about the amazing sites I visited but you could just look at my photos for that. I could tell you about the things I bought but they're just material possessions. I could tell you about my experiences, but words can't do it justice you have to experience it yourself. So, in the end I've decided to write as much as I can. Limited amount of words but unlimited amount of emotions.

Loughborough. Heathrow. Chennai. Madurai. Kodaikanal. Madurai. Thekkady. Madurai. Kovalam. Madurai. Chennai. Delhi. Amritsar. Agra. Delhi. Heathrow. Watford. The whole journey seems like a blur for me except Russ. Russ stands out.

"Serving the deserving..."

Let me tell you about Russ, the main star of all of this. Russ is my summer love. It's a beautiful story of how a young girl fell in love with something so good. Wait. Russ is neither a boy, nor a girl. I am referring to the Russ Foundation, the charity I volunteered at. Again, this might be a typical article you read about volunteering abroad, but I will try and keep it interesting.

Firstly, let's set the scene of the love story and give you some context. Russ Foundation is a charity registered in Tamil Nadu and Russ International is the partner charity in the UK. There are many programmes which are funded by the money raised by the volunteers which tackles issues like education, healthcare, HIV/AIDs and community care and support. It is critical for charities like these to exist at the grass-root levels in places like India. The benefits and effects of these charities ripple out. During our time as volunteers, we stayed at the Russ campus and lived amongst the kids and the staff who help them. The children are either



infected or affected by HIV/AIDs, this means either they have HIV/AIDs or one or both of their parents have HIV/AIDs or died due to it. Even if the kids are orphaned by this tragedy, we don't call them orphans. This is because Russ believes that the staff are the parental figures and the charity itself is a big family unit.

Now to introduce some of the main characters. Dominic (the haggling king) and Aleks (the chaffing king), best project leaders I could ask for. They were our first aiders, tour guides and baby sitters for the whole trip. Berlin is the "big boss", who looks after Dominic and Aleks. Someone must. Honestly Berlin had the friendliest smile and presence, he is the parent figure of this whole operation. I truly admire his resilience and his pure intentions. Supporting him are his amazing staff, Devi aunty being one of them. Throughout our month in India, she looked after the volunteering team by coordinating meal times and generally taking care of us. I give a special

mention to her because I really built a good relationship with her. She ended up being like a mother figure to me, as well as to all the children at the home. All the children were unique and had their own stories but seeing them so happy at Russ, one could forget about their reality.

I nearly forgot one of the key characters to all this, my volunteering team. We all managed to work together and since we were all very different the dynamic of the group was very interesting. Coming into this we all had our own, different, motivations to participate like travelling to India or boosting our CV. However, one thing that bonded us was the kids. We were our happiest when we were spending time with the kids. In the end all we cared for was the kids.

While choosing an overseas project I was split between going to Nepal, India or Uganda. Volunteering in Nepal seemed like the best option, as I know the language, culture and the project seemed great. Seeing gorillas in the wild in Uganda would've been an amazing experience too. The story that really swayed me towards India and Russ was about a little girl who was begging on the streets. In a newspaper article about street beggars, they came across this very strong and powerful picture of a girl naked on the streets with a bloated stomach. Naturally, Russ found this girl and rehabilitated her and now she is thriving. Throughout my volunteering experience I met others who have been through their own hardships as well.

Even though, I was born and grew up in Nepal until the age of 10 and was used to seeing the large disparity between the rich and the poor. I found the real India to be very overwhelming. I use the term real India because, as a tourist you can sometimes brush past the normal conditions millions of people live and travel in.



You get off your AC Uber and check into your AC room.

India has very opulent parts like every country and you can easily just avoid the worse sides. You can easily sit inside the air-conditioned Delhi metro and forget about all the suffering out there. This is similar to how you would sit on the London underground and forget to think of others, while you stress about the little things that don't really matter. My point is, you can be ignorant wherever you are, and you don't need to go to India to realise some of the issues facing not just India but the world. It doesn't matter where you are or who you are, you can always help because you are part of something bigger and better. You don't have to raise thousands of pounds and go to another country



Cuppa with...

## NAMRATA SHRESTHA

**T**ell us girl, what was the highlight of your trip to the UK?

This was my first time visiting the UK. The highlight of my trip was most definitely at the talk at SOAS University with Lex (Limbu) where we got to have a sincere conversation with the youth here in London, who are from Nepal and to be able to understand how they felt and view the current Nepali Cinema. It was a rare opportunity for me to have this two-way discourse and I feel very lucky. We don't have any initiative to have such discussion in the universities back in Nepal!

**Are you overwhelmed by the support you and your movie, Prasad's premiere received from the UK Nepali diaspora audience?**

I felt very loved from the Nepali Cinema fans here in the UK. They welcomed me so well and waited for me even in this cold weather which took me by surprise. Watching the movie sitting beside them as an artist I must say, was a very special moment. I felt grateful to be able to see their live reactions and hear their response to the conflicts in the movie because you know now in Nepal at the multiplex screenings, we don't really talk in the cinema. But hearing them openly say stuff like "jau na jau" (go, go) "c'mon" while interacting with the movie, I felt like we were part of this altogether. It was fun and definitely one of the rewarding parts of the trip.


**So, what do you think is the key to succeed in Nepali Movie Industry?**

For me, it has been a case of consciously and carefully choosing the movies, the team you work with and your consistent, hard work. You cannot just relax after one of your movies gets successful. I have been in the movie fraternity for 10 years but I still feel nervous in the start of the first day of shooting and premiere of the movie. You need to love what you do and then everything else follows...

**... One thing that I like about you is that you are very grounded as an individual. When did you feel the eureka moment that you do not want to be the so called, pretty girl next door, standard commercial actress but play unorthodox and unprecedented roles such as a divorcee, blind and athlete?**

I always knew that I did not just want to be a pretty, commercial actress. I don't know when but I think it is because of the movies I watched and aspired to play roles of. There were many critics in the media who said that my career in Nepali cinema is not going to last long because I rejected a lot of mainstream roles after playing on Sano Sansar (her hit breakthrough, blockbuster movie in 2008). I didn't dance in movies apart from a small cameo for a movie. So now, even when younger aspiring actresses share to me about their concern that, oh I don't like to dance... will I be able to





sustain a career in Nepali Cinema fraternity... I tell them; look at me, I can do it and so can you!

**YAS SIS!!! With a significantly growing number of Nepali diasporas going back to Nepal to pursue their career in acting such as Miruna, Dhiraj, Jassita; do you feel any threat in the market?**

No, not at all. This is all that I always wanted you know. We are living in a changed time right now. We used to think actors as a job that is a "last resort" and for someone who could not find any other job. Now, acting is a much-respected profession and even yesterday I was humbled when I heard parents encouraging their children to look at me and become a leading actress like me. And it's very good that our Nepali cinema is thriving by diaspora returning back and serving their home country. They are well-groomed and well-trained actors and actresses who take their jobs seriously. I like their effort and I like that our Nepali acting profession is growing in size!

**What surprised you the most about the Nepali diaspora here in the UK?**

I actually feel like people here are more Nepali than we are back home. They are more cultured here. The way they listen to Nepali music all the time in the car and everywhere, eat Nepali food altogether and also celebrate our culture- like say yesterday when we had Maghe Sankranti, it's been literally years since I can remember to celebrate Maghe Sankranti. My mum would send me food but maybe because we work a lot in Nepal and don't stay at home, we don't feel the festive vibe thrive as much in every small occasion. Also, I get offered Nepali food more when

I leave Nepal for work than in Nepal. But along with that, the poor, nepali timing and unpunctual arrival remained same in the UK too.

**You seem to have this tunnel vision since your very young age, did you always want to be an actress?**

No. I actually wanted to be a child psychiatrist which is yes, unheard of but I wanted to do that. But I just happened to start shooting music videos after I finished school after getting scouted by Alog Engmann who I have to give a huge credit to for always being a good support throughout my career. And starting to work with the team who guided me, changed my perception a lot about pursuing a career as a Nepali film actress.

**If you could go back in time, what advice would you give to your 20 years old self?**

I am 32 right now. I have evolved a lot as a person and as an actor since! When I was turning 20; I was full of hope, full of life and excited to learn. I would just tell her to keep doing what she is doing, don't change and keep believing what she believed then. I always knew what I wanted in life and I worked hard to be it- for professional part of my life or personal because it takes a lot of work to maintain your relationships with your family and friends too.

**Some of our young readers who have been living in the UK for a long time have lost interest to watch Nepali films because they say that it's boring or unoriginal because it repeats the same dramatic romcoms storylines rather than addressing wider issues, what do you have to say about this.**

I would like to ask them to watch Nepali films





**Imagine this, a fresh graduate from the UK wishes to go to Nepal for a break, where should she or he go?**

Gokyo! It's around the Everest region so you will have to walk and hike a little. But it's hands down, one of my favourite places to go to escape, unwind from the chaos in Kathmandu. So, I would suggest that person to go there at first and enjoy...the beautiful Nepal and then go to the city craze!

**If you could start a university degree all over again as an undergrad, which course would you pursue?**

Psychology because that is actually what I am now planning to study online. I can only study online because, I will need over 90% attendance for a psychology degree which I cannot devote due to my schedules as an actress, film producer and restaurant owner. Especially after visiting Oxford yesterday I really wanted to go back to being a student. Damn, I really do miss it.

**What did you study in the university?**

I studied Double Bachelors of Mass Communication and Sociology and Culture.

**What are the three traits that you look for in people you choose to work with?**

Professional, Passionate and Hardworking.

**What are the three words your friends would use to describe you!**

Loyal, Friendly and Fun.

**If you have a superpower, what would it be?**

Wonder woman.

because things are changing. People love to assume quickly and make harsh judgment from just watching the trailer or hearing stories from somewhere maybe but I have been in the industry for the last 10 years and I don't do the same project again and again every year. There are movies like Kalo Pothi and even Prasad which are touching on unconventional topics and social movements that is all original in the craftsmanship. Things are definitely changing.

**Is there gender pay inequality in Nepal?**

I don't think so. I have not experienced it myself but there might be for some people out there who I don't know yet so I cannot speak for the whole industry of female actress in Nepal. But from the conversations that I have had with people I know, I don't think there is existence of pay gap between gender specifically. In fact, there are cases when leading and experienced actress get paid more sometimes. I have also got higher pay than my fellow male actors because of my experience and I deserve it.

**Do you think the #MeToo is important in Nepal?**

There is a very thin line. There are of course serious stories of female victims that needs to be shared and heard of but I am not an advocate of because I am a female, I need to support female. We need to understand the consequences and situations as well there are people who are misusing this movement and hashtag as an opportunity to just join and fuel fire and get attention; I don't think that is fair. And, there are stories of male sexual harassment victims that needs to be heard too.

“

*We need to understand the consequences and situations as well there are people who are misusing this movement and hashtag as an opportunity to just join and fuel fire and get attention; I don't think that is fair.*





**Text or hard written note?**

Text, it's easier and faster. Who has time for hard-written letters in this time and age?!

**Tea or coffee?**

Tea.

**Do you have a nickname that you don't like?**

Moti. All of my friends used to call me Moti in school. I used to be really fat, 65 kg. And when you are fat, you don't like to be called fat. I used to hate it a lot.

**Wow that's unexpected! Do you think there is now any new narratives or social/online movements opening in Nepal like we see here in the UK to encourage less body shaming in Nepal with plus size models for example?**

No, I don't think we see anything like that happening in Nepal. Even when I started working in Nepal, "healthier" looks were accepted in general. Because in Nepal, it's quite different then here. If you lose weight and look thin and frail, then they will think that you haven't been able to eat well and look poor. But if you look fuller in shape, you look like you are from richer family background and looking after yourself well. I personally got a lot of pressure when I started working in films to gain weight because I was really skinny at the time.

**What makes you excited to wake up?**

Every day is a new beginning.

**What is the first thing you do when you wake up?**

I listen to music, meditate for 10 minutes and then freshen up.

**When do you feel the most beautiful?**

Whenever I am happy. I don't really care about makeup and how I look, I feel the most beautiful when I am happy.

**Ok let's say, you wake up as the President of Nepal in 2076! What 3 changes would you like to make with the power you now have?**

Stability within the government first foremost. Add more young people in the team. Develop strategies for the problematic roads.

**What's on your 2076 travel bucket list?**

Greece and Bali.

**May fierceness always be by your side Namrata.**

Love, Tina. <3



# NEPSOCS

## STORY



B I B E K C H H E T R I

**B**irmingham; otherwise known as the Second City of England is home to Aston University Nepalese Society located in Aston St. The society was officially established in 2014, from 10 members with Mohit Malla leading the charge into ensuring the Nepalese students in Aston had a place that felt like home.

Nasif is the current President with Denisa as the Vice President. Raksha is working as the Social Media Manager and as an MNS ambassador. Dipesh is our Treasurer. There are currently 20 members from around the UK.

It started from a common idea of uniting all the different University Nepalese Societies and create a network platform for both academics and young professionals. To explore this idea, we decided to contact a few universities around Birmingham to hold a meeting where we can discuss this topic further. On 18th October 2017, what would later be known as Merging Nepsocs had its very first meeting in Aston University, with over 60 attendees from Manchester, Coventry, Nottingham, Leicester, Keele, Wolverhampton and of course Birmingham. It was a pleasant revelation to connect with so many individuals that had similar aspirations and this gave us a spark of hope and vision of what MNS can be.

Merging Nepsocs has given Aston Nepalese Society an opportunity to get involved in different events but also connect with different universities and create a bond that gives a sense of belonging. Being able to network on such a national level, get involved in projects that would not be in the radar before is a massive plus.

There have been many noteworthy events over the years the society has been active, but the one that stands out the most would have to be our Snowdonia trip in April of 2017. It was a trip where we got to bond and share an achievement of summiting one of the highest peaks in UK, truly a memory of a life time. Other events that stand out for us is our yearly visit to the German market, where we enjoy the food and mulled wine and then go for Ice skating afterwards, which has become a tradition for us.

Like many other Nepsocs, MO:MO definitely is the one thing that can get all of us together. But much beyond that it's the memories that we share of a country we had to leave, the sixth sense in us that just attracts us to each other, the comfort we get just by being with each other, it is a feeling that doesn't compare to anything else. The Nepsoc is a home away from home, a space where everyone can just kick back and not worry about all the stress that comes with university.





# BHAKTA BAND



**T**happen when people meet and - 'amazing' things happen when 'amazing' people meet at the right time with right attitude. Bhakta Band happened when these five people with different shapes, sizes and stories met - through **Merging NepSocs**.

A very short conversation between Ashutosh (Ash) Thapa (lead guitarist), Dilip Thapa (rhythm guitarist) and Subit Gurung (lead singer) occurred during a Nepalese Society event in East-Midlands. This particular discussion took place at Loughborough University's men's wash room at 1am. They gathered that their musical taste and skills matched. Subit Gurung, a childhood friend of Dilip has always been interested in singing. Subit was Dilip's personal singer when Dilip was learning to play guitar in his early years. So, the three youngsters started to play songs together. When Merging NepSocs came calling to request them to play, they realised they needed a drummer and then came to the scene, Stiphan(Kaji) Gurung (drummer). As luck and coincidence would have it, they meet Ojesh Singh, a bassist after one of the

Merging NepSocs' events and then the 5-piece band was complete. The newly formed band performed first time in the Summer Ball organised by Merging NepSocs in November 2019. The band has also performed in various other events organised by Merging NepSocs, Acoustic Nights organised by universities across the UK and other Nepalese organisations like Kosheli, Third Eye.

Ash, Dilip and Subit would generally have musical session where they would experiment with songs. Dilip would come up with some fantastic pieces, Subit would give his vocals and lyrics, Ash would add solo pieces to the song and Stiphan would overlay it with his beats. In this process, an ambitious idea of recording an original piece germinated. After the guys met up and rehearsed for few days, they finalised the song and stepped into the studio together. As 2020 hit, they got their first song 'Hey Maya' recorded.

'Hey Maya' is slated to be released on 14 February 2020. Stay tuned!

You can follow Bhakta Band on

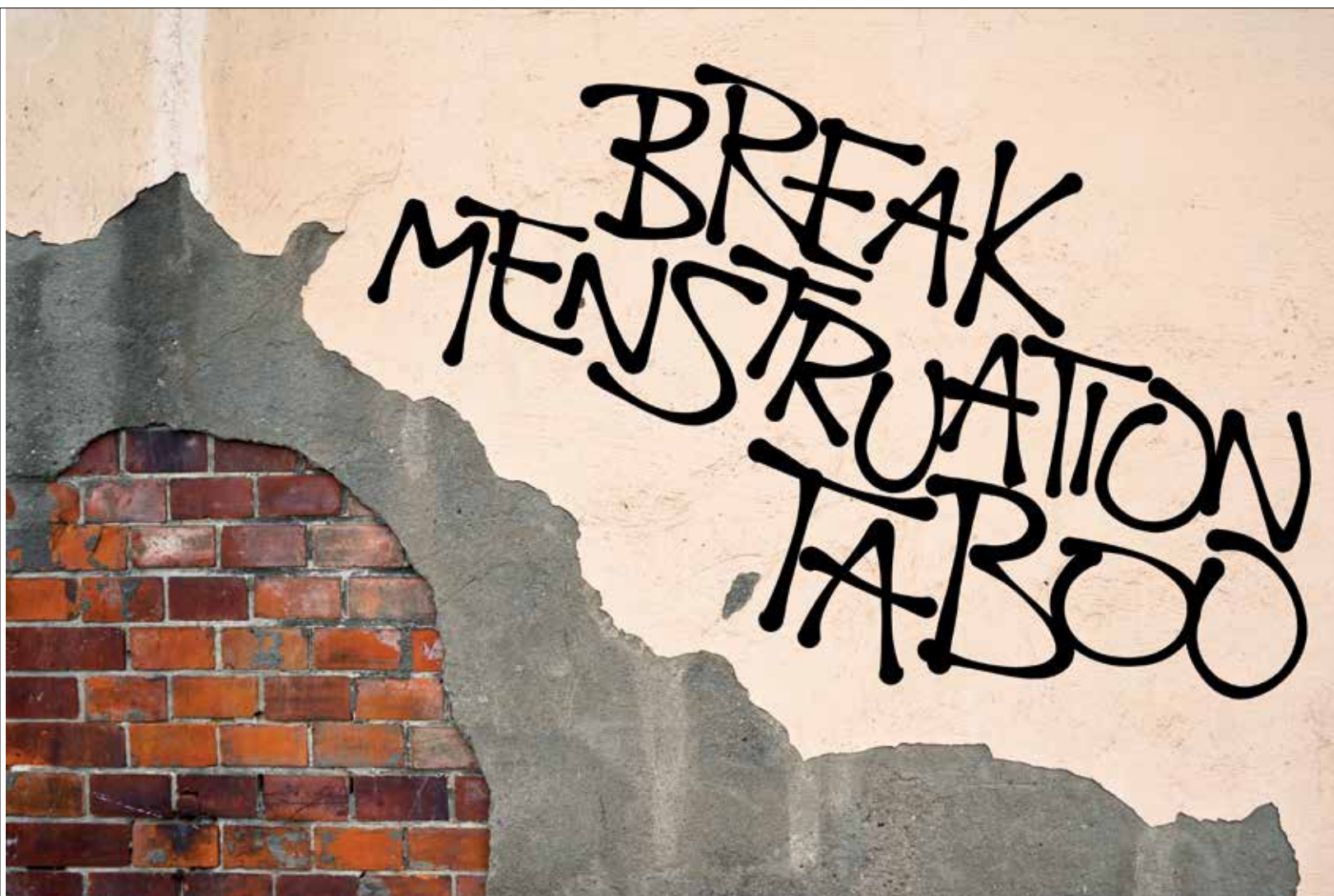


**Line Up**(L-R): Ashutosh (Lead), Dilip( Guitars), Subit(Vocals), Stiphan(Drums), Ojesh(Bass)

# Chhaupadi

The death of women's dignity one menstrual cycle at a time

WORDS BY NILAZA ADHIKARI



"Extreme forms of Chhaupadi dictates what and when a woman can eat, where she can sleep, with whom she can interact, where she can go, and whom she can touch. Women in such cases are denied proper food and basic sanitation. They are also forced to purify themselves of their sins with cow piss and cold water. But what sins? We should not tolerate the existence of a society where a female's menstruation, a natural process, is classified as a sin. When a girl gets her period, it's the universe saying, you are now a woman, you are capable of wonders so magnificent that should you choose, you can bring another life into this world. How foolish of us to shame the women who give birth to us! How hypocritical of us to pray to all our female goddesses only to treat the real goddesses in our lives with such disrespect and humiliation."

- *Closing lines of Bloody Hell, a play on Chhaupadi performed at Kent Enlightens Nepal, 2017, UK.*

**W**hen I wrote the above words for our play on Chhaupadi at University, I would have never predicted that we would receive the amount of support, attention and encouragement we did, so much so that we would later be invited by the Nepalese Ambassador to perform the play at the Nepalese Embassy in London. I write on Chhaupadi once again because despite efforts made by Nepalese youth, the government, NGOs and other bodies to end Chhaupadi, injustice, torture and murder due to this practice continue. In an attempt to offer a refreshing view on Chhaupadi, I hope this article helps us scrutinise the justifications given for Chhaupadi, and



not just its extreme form but also its manifestation in modern Nepal, in cities and educated households. In doing so, I hope we are able to identify problems stopping the eradication of Chhaupadi and that we can continue our strong efforts to indefinitely stop this practice.

### The current status of Chhaupadi

Chhaupadi in Nepalese translates to menstruation and it is the extreme exclusion and segregation of women when they are, you guessed it: menstruating. This practice is deeply rooted in Hinduism and advocates that women must be separated from their family and society whilst she is bleeding due to her 'impurity'. Chhaupadi is popularly recognised for its extreme form in villages where women are shunned into menstruation huts or cow sheds. This monthly menstruation exile is not only a severe violation of human rights but for a woman it often serves as a one-way ticket to death. Last year, 18-year-old Tulasi Shahi was pronounced dead 7 hours after a snake that entered the menstrual hut she was banished to, bit and poisoned her. Not long after Tulasi's death, Gauri Kumari Bayak lit a fire inside a hut to keep herself warm, only to be found dead in the morning due to suffocation from the fog. Gauri, as reported by the New York Times, was an educated and ambitious woman high school student, who was teaching illiterate women to read. Most recently, Amba Bohara and her sons, Ramit and Suresh were found dead in a hut in Bajura because their blankets caught on fire from the flames they lit to keep themselves warm. These are only a few select cases of death caused by Chhaupadi that have captured both national and international media attention, but the reality is that Chhaupadi claims several dozens of women victims each year while causing hundreds of women to suffer in silence every month.

The most alarming fact about Chhaupadi is that death tolls continue to rise because of this practice despite its legal ban. In 2005, the Supreme Court of Nepal outlawed this horrendous practice followed by a call for its effective implementation. In 2017, after a pile of death reports and loud cries for help to punish those who practiced Chhaupadi, the Criminal Code Bill passed by the Parliament criminalised Chhaupadi and allocated a three-month prison sentence or a fine of 3,000 rupees (or both) to anyone who forces a woman to adhere to the practice. The bill also states that during her menstruation a woman should never be kept in Chhaupadi or treated as an untouchable. Yet, implementation of this bill appears to be ineffective.

### A deeper look at the justifications for Chhaupadi

With current women empowerment movements, it is unsurprising that Chhaupadi is often employed as tool to impose authority and power over women in general but especially towards the younger generations. A report submitted to the committee of the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) highlighted that a large portion of men in Nepalese society continue to believe and advance the idea that Chhaupadi is a necessity. These are the same men who think that menstruation is impure, unclean and that banishing a menstruating woman and prohibiting her from sharing common village resources will keep the environment and houses clean, thereby also ensuring health and safety in households. They even argue that if a woman is menstruating and she dares to touch a man, then the man will get sick, contaminated him with her 'impurity'. Protecting the society or more so patriarchy against

a dirty bleeding woman seems to be a popular argument used to justify inhumane treatments against women.

This idea of associating a minority with "disgust" or "impurity" is often used in our society. For instance, in the past and even now, highly educated academics and politicians term homosexuality as a disease that will infiltrate our society with HIV AIDS and germs. This sort of tactic is used to make a minority/group, or their particular actions and characteristic repulsive and so appalling that it manipulates people into thinking that these groups do not belong in society because they pose a threat to our health and sanitation. This is also the same tactic used for widows in Nepal, where widows from poor families in particular are persecuted and often tortured for once again being impure and get this – witches who bring bad luck. In the context of Chhaupadi, associating a women's menstruation with impurity and disgust is saying that she is a danger to society and is less than everyone for bleeding. Quite bizarre, isn't it?

Chhaupadi is also grounded on religious beliefs and tradition. A bleeding woman is considered inauspicious and therefore she is treated as an untouchable. For example, Kumari, who we know as the living goddess, who in reality is a young girl 'chosen' to be Kumari, is deemed not to be a goddess once she begins menstruating. So essentially, the discussion here regarding women being impure and inauspicious all boils down to blood: its nasty and you keep it away from the realms of the gods, who are holy and clean. This is an easy explanation for a girl who has been told not to enter the puja kotha [prayer room] at home. What is ironic however is that if blood is so impure then why are animals massacred in temples as offerings to only female goddesses, and in due process why is their blood smeared around as liquid gold? In Hinduism, we pray to female goddess such as Saraswathi (the goddess of knowledge) and Laxmi (the goddess of wealth) and in certain religious occasions, they are even worshipped as the highest of all the gods. I truly believe that these goddesses would be disgusted and ashamed of how women are treated during their period. Frankly speaking, I hope Saraswathi is reading this article right now and she remembers to dust some much-needed knowledge on those who enable and support Chhaupadi, even in its most minor forms.

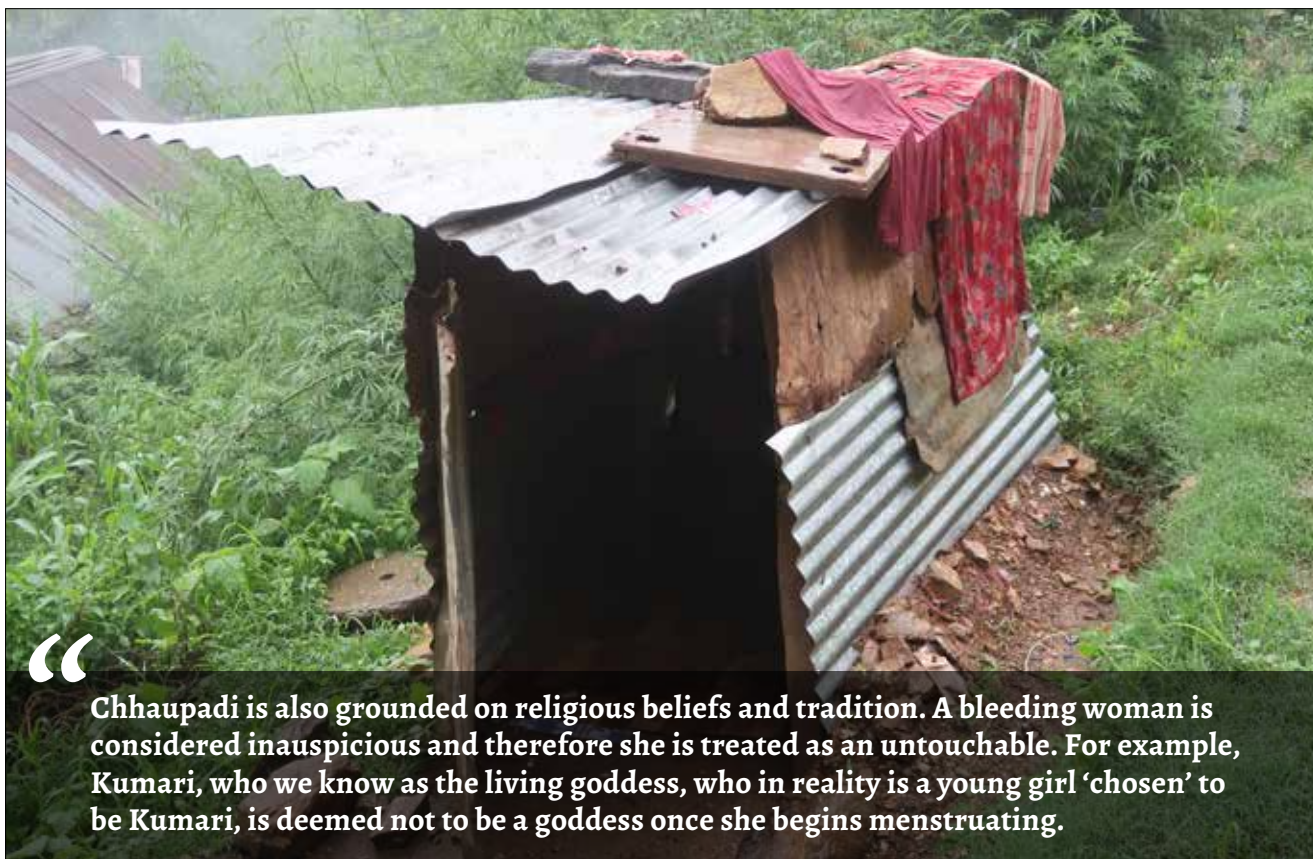
In my view, regardless of its so-called religious sources, I find all justifications for Chhaupadi to be highly illogical because nothing can justify inhuman practices. What I also find deplorable, is that a considerable number of Nepalese women themselves often encourage and justify Chhaupadi, thereby contributing



to the behaviour of suppressing women and girls, consciously or unconsciously. Various reports on Chhaupadi by the Unrepresented Nations and People's Organization highlights that mothers and mothers-in-law play a fundamental role in upholding Chhaupadi, often for the sake of tradition. Mother-in-laws especially were said to be using this practice to establish their dominance over their daughters-in-law. Women in households in Kathmandu, Pokhara and other cities, who practice fewer extreme forms of Chhaupadi (which are still unacceptable) may think that preventing their daughters from entering the kitchen during her period is harmless, but what they are actually doing, whether they mean to or not, is teaching girls to value themselves as both impure and burden. They are also encouraging girls to be subordinates and accept, unacceptable rules as to what they can or cannot touch, where they may or may not enter and so on without even questioning why they are being penalised for

modern houses, women practice different forms of Chhaupadi and they are also imposed with different restrictions...some women are even obliged to stay in a separate room."

An extremely important thing that I have learned and must emphasise is that just because a family is educated or financially well off does is no way guarantee that Chhaupadi is not practiced in that household. The ongoing hypocrisy in our society that we must pay attention to is that exclusion of women during their menstruation happens even in the most educated households. The very communities that call Chhaupadi extreme will not hesitate to stop their daughters from entering the kitchen or puja kotha when they are on their period. Chhaupadi happens in cities too! Unfortunately, the sad reality of our world is that a women's pain is always assumed to be tolerable, up until the pain seriously harms or kills her.



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menstruating – a natural human function. This situation is worse for girls who do not have the ability and resource to be empowered enough to value their dignity and voice what they feel is right.

### **The Manifestation of Chhaupadi in Modern Nepal**

When interviewing Kelly Gurung, a student at Hampshire College, Massachusetts and an advocate for abolishing Chhaupadi, on Chhaupadi in Nepal, Kelly said:

"I remember telling my uncle that I would be traveling to Achham, to gain a better understanding of Chhaupadi and visit the menstrual huts. I was surprised when my uncle told me that if I wanted to understand Chhaupadi, there was no need for me to travel that far, for I could easily find menstruation huts in villages near Kathmandu and even within Kathmandu, in

### **Tackling Chhaupadi**

In December 2018, Gesellschaft Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Menstrual Health Management (MHM) Alliance hosted Nepal's first consultative workshop on menstrual health titled 'No time to rest: Ensuring every girl can thrive on her period.' The workshop, as highlighted by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, aims to provide a platform for all actors working on menstrual health to push their MHM agendas forward. In particular, one of the main objectives of the workshop is to help advance national policies and strategies pertaining to MHM, in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, to help women and girls in Nepal truly live their best life even whilst on their period!

There are also various organizations such as Ruby Cup, Water Aid, The British Academy who are working both individually and





in cooperation with Nepal's Ministry of Water and Sanitation to ensure that Chhaupadi can no longer undermine a women's right to live with dignity. A successful method thus far has been to educate women and young girl about managing their menstrual hygiene and the process of menstruation itself. Ruby Cup for instance donates Ruby Cups (menstrual cups) to young girls in rural Nepal and organises workshops that teach the girls how to use the cups, along with much needed education on sexual education and MHM.

Almost all women and girls in Nepal face severe challenges when menstruating as they lack sanitary materials such as pads, tampons and often do not have access to clean, safe and gender-segregated toilet. Here, legal advocacy, education and grassroots initiatives, as seen above, can act as a vessel for change. In this case its advocating for free pads, tampons and the construction of clean gender-segregated toilets can help alleviate period poverty—a problem that we must prioritise and tackle. Period poverty is particularly prevalent amongst low income group and rural areas in Nepal. Imagine feeling shame and embarrassment because you're bleeding, and you don't have sanitary access to help yourself and then having to skip school because of your period and even being encouraged to do so by your teachers! This is the case of many girls in Nepal. Educating girls on MHM has proved to be equally helpful, especially in terms of empowering young girls to be safe, smart and responsible when it comes to their menstrual health.

However, educating our society on MHM however is different to educating them on why Chhaupadi is deplorable. When Kelly visited Achham to advance her social enterprise idea on Chhaupadi and menstrual health she told me that:

"Everyone [MHM volunteers and youth activists] was sick of people just not understanding that Chhaupadi should not be practised. Up until now, many bodies, including our government, have worked on changing people's perception, yet they have not been entirely successful as a majority of the women still practice Chhaupadi. Keeping that in mind and also considering that

I am an outsider to the people in Achham, advocating to stop a practice that is deeply rooted in their religion and which has been practiced for years... at times it seems like us helping out would not bring immediate impact. The situation felt more uncomfortable when people in Achham questioned why they should listen to an outsider."

Kelly also highlighted that when menstrual huts are destroyed by either the government or grassroots initiatives, once authorities leave, plastics are often used to tape cover the damaged area of the huts and it does not stop families from banishing their menstruating daughters to the now broken huts. What is the solution to this? Do we put cameras and supervise villages 24/7? What about inside houses in Kathmandu, if a girl is told to stay in her room for 4 days? There comes a time when the law, the government, NGO's cannot reach people. And while speaking of laws, yes laws and policies are rising and there have been attempts to implement them, but I am shocked that till now, I have never read or heard that someone has actually be imprisoned or fined for practicing Chhaupadi. Have you?

Although efforts made by activists, youths and organization in particular, to eradicate Chhaupadi must without a doubt be applauded, we must also remember that our responsibilities do not end here. Our efforts to combat Chhaupadi must continue! As I end this article focusing more on the extreme form of Chhaupadi because the cries and death of women and girls suffering in Nepal call for immediate action, I also want to remind everyone of modern Chhaupadi. To all the girls and women, let us empower one another and stop excluding women, both physically and mentally when they are menstruating. To all the boys and men, let us support MHM and this movement to end Chhaupadi, not just because someone you care about happens to be a woman and you feel obliged to, but rather because women deserve to live their life with dignity, and it is truly a human thing to do. I stand by those that are joining the fight against Chhaupadi and its enablers. Together, we will ensure that tradition, religion and culture will never again be accepted as an excuse to strip women of their human rights. More power to us!

## LOST AND FOUND

FINDING ONE'S <sup>LOST</sup> SELF

WORDS BY LASATA SHRESTHA



**S**tanding on the street of Oxford Circus with people rushing around me to catch up on their hustles, I look at the sky above me with dark clouds and realize the ground beneath me rumbling with the network of rails underneath it. I had flown 4553 miles away to a land of the unknown leaving behind the place I call home; home where I had my family and friends around me along with a decent job that I believe was leading me to a bright career path. But as someone said, don't be afraid to give up the good for the great, I took this leap to pursue my dream of doing my post graduate studies.

My first night in London, as I slowly pass through Clapham junction witnessing the city lights and weekend vibes that I could feel from inside the window pane with little rain drops tearing down the window, I believed myself to be watching a movie with 3D technology so advanced that felt surreal. It took me some time before reality hit me and I had to let it sink in. In fact, till date, even after 6 months of living in the UK the great City of London, I still feel dreamy at times. In this unfamiliar land, I seem to find myself lost time and time again. Lost in the underground, lost amongst the identical lanes in the neighborhood, lost in the forest of tall buildings and umpteen number of streets and mostly I find myself lost in the pool of my own. As for my knight in shining armor I guess Google map could be considered as such. And for the times that I feel lost

in life, even the London sky doesn't have stars to navigate me hence, I wait to be found.

Being lost in London has given me opportunities to find myself. I didn't come to London unprepared; just a little underprepared. There is a difference! While feeding my brain with the feeds of people celebrating their lives abroad and building up unreal expectations of what to expect from London, somewhere I was still aware of the reality that life was going to get tougher. Besides the weather of London, the only thing that terrified me was imagining me stepping out of the airport with no idea of where to head to. Mehdi, a close friend to my close friend came to pick me up at the airport along with his eight-month-old pregnant wife and a year-old son and saved me from the nightmare. Croydon became my first home here as Mehdi's family, who had never seen me before embraced me with all love. The time frame of one week that I had given myself was passing by in the bat on an eye, room hunting turned out to be much more challenging than I had anticipated. Somewhere around the time when my plans were failing and I vanished in the worries of the unforeseen, I got a call from an unknown number. The voice on the other side of the phone was my savior. Bhawana didi and I have our ancestral homes next to each other; technically making her my neighbor for the times I went to Sankhu during my school breaks. I had not a slightest idea that she had been living here in





the UK for past 10 years and currently in Wembley. You can probably guess how close we were! Nevertheless, this woman of firm ethical values and a compassionate heart adopted me for almost a month and became my first guide to life in London. Rajan, a school friend of mine who I had never met after school found a place for me in Welling and helped me put a stop on my room hunting quest. Amidst feeling lost with ever changing address, I felt blessed for London had offered me love from people I had never met before and people I once had lost touch with.

As I started a new chapter of my journey, the solitude helped me discover myself. Living alone comes with the freedom to do all that you want, but what if you don't know what you truly want? The feeling of wanting something but not quite knowing what. When you know that you are stuck yet you, yourself are the only person that can help you get through the situation. That is when you have no choice but to force yourself to break your own limitations you had created for yourself and start making decisions and take control of your life. Although it might be tough and stressful to begin with, it was this very hardship through which I learned to cope with the turbulences on my own and made me a confident and self-reliant person. For a person who loves the company of family, living away from them can be a scary idea. Time taught me that living alone doesn't necessarily mean loneliness. It gave me an opportunity to pay attention to my feelings, interests, weakness, strength and become self aware.

Walking with my friends in Farringdon, I look at the clear sky above me with soft clouds floating and realize how rare it is to see the London sky without the trails left behind by jet planes. I have spent a total of 162 days in this new place which is a little less unfamiliar to me now. London has given me a chance to make new friends, meet inspiring people, break out from my comfort zone, broaden up my perspectives on certain things and helped me grow as a person. Although I still feel lost at times, I now know that for the days to come, whenever I shall get lost, I shall find myself more.





ARTICLE

# The journey of a Brit-Nepali through Hinduism

WORDS BY SHOBHA SHARMA KANDEL



**S**peaking from personal experience, as a first generation Nepali who was born and bred in the UK. It seems quite confusing when faced with many religious, cultural ideas and superstitions that abound in our society. Growing up in a time where there were hardly any Nepalis in the UK, it was maybe even more isolating than now and sometimes there was an identity crisis. Going to school speaking English and donning an English persona to fit in socially and culturally but then at home adopting a totally Nepali way of life was a big culture clash. When going to Nepal for the first time, it was a major culture shock, and being a curious soul that I am, I constantly bombarded my parents with innumerable questions on everything to do with religion and culture.

My parents being good devout hindus just explained well that's the way it always has been, and your forefathers did this or that..... BUT WHY? I would ask. Faced with impossible questions my parents took me to a priest who also could not answer my innocent queries to my satisfaction.

Maybe it was the British education system that forced me not to memorise and learn something and simply follow instructions like a mechanical robot but I wanted to actually understand WHY am I supposed to do this or that. Coming from a family of high priests I was able to ask some relatives for explanations, but all answers were unsatisfactory. There were a lot of contradictions in our culture and I wanted answers. It was a very frustrating and confusing time. Maybe this is the way the youth of today feel, maybe this is how my kids also will one day feel, especially if I am not able to answer their innocent questions, especially if I am myself practising these huge contradictions in my own life.

In the name of religion there is so much inequality in our culture. Gender and caste discrimination were two things that really made me think that something is really wrong in our society.

Nowadays the Nepali youth will probably see social injustices in our society and turn away from our religion and culture and embrace other religions or even become atheist/agnostic. They may think that religion is the root cause of poverty and suffering and in order to be successful they must embrace modern thinking.

However I chose an alternative way Instead of relying on people with incomplete knowledge I thought the best way to tackle the problem is to read the scriptures yourself and do your own research. This is what I found out on the two topics that disturbed me greatly.

### 1. Gender discrimination

In Hinduism the status and role of a woman is not only high but she is deemed as "shakti" or power, for she holds the power of creation. Hindus worship God in the form of divine mother. The goddess Saraswati is the goddess of learning and knowledge, music and creativity. Goddess Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth and prosperity and Goddess Parvati is the goddess of fertility, the three holy trinity of goddesses form the ultimate power known as Devi.

In the Rig veda it states that wife and husband are equal parts and should respect one another and both should join and take equal parts in all works, religious and secular. It is also stated that where a woman is honoured the gods preside there and

there will be prosperity but where a woman lives in grief, the family perishes and there is no prosperity hence men who seek their own welfare, should always honour women.

A mother is given the highest status of all- maitri devo bhava- Let your mother be God to you.

Despite all these teachings it is a shame to see that Nepalis still give women a low status in the family and society. Being a mother and a housewife are seen as menial roles, when in fact the mother is the primary teacher, health educator and caretaker of the whole family. If the woman suffers then the children suffer and then the future generations suffer and hence the society and the country suffer. What is the situation of Nepal today? Could it be due to the low status of women?

It is a huge contradiction isn't it? On one hand we are being told that woman is a goddess, supreme mother of the universe and how a woman should be equal and on the other hand in real life women are given a lowly status and are not respected. You can see numerous evidences of this- especially in Nepal where a male child is desired first and foremost, it is a superstition that only a male can help the parents attain so called heaven after death by performing the last rites and only a son can carry the lineage. I found out that Hinduism is not rigid in any way, it offers many paths to salvation, not only a son but also a daughter can perform last rites. In Vedic times, there were incidents of the putrika--a daughter who could assume the role of a son.

There are other wrong beliefs too as far as a woman having the right to chant the Gayatri Mantra is concerned. Many in Nepal believe that women do not have the right to study the Vedas and hence she has no right to chant the Gayatri Mantra that has emanated from the Vedas. This is a very deluded belief. Amongst those Rishis who are said to be responsible for the manifestation of Vedic Mantras, many have been female Rishis. We find many such evidences from which it is clear that females too performed and helped others perform Yajnas like their male counterparts. They were Masters of Spiritual Sciences, many women directed either their husbands or fathers in these Spiritual Sciences, including Manu's daughter Ida.

In the ancient times, females ran their households and were immersed in meditation on God too. Those who ran their households were called "Sadyovadhu" and those women who were immersed in Vedic studies, meditation on God and other spiritual practices were called "Brahmavadini". Amongst them,





the Brahnavadinis were adorned with the sacred thread (janai), they were initiated into Agnihotra (fire sacrifices) and studied the Vedas and begged for alms/food. Sadyovadhus too were ordained with the janai (sacred thread). This sacred thread ceremony for women was conducted during their marriage ceremony. There is evidence of women becoming Brahma and Upadhyay (classes of priests) during Yajnas. In the Rig Ved, women are ordained to attain the Brahma status via their pious character. So it is clear that both men and women have equal rights over Vedic studies, conducting Yajnas and chanting the Gayatri Mantra.

## 2. Caste discrimination

According to the ancient Hindu scriptures, there are four “varnas.” The Bhagavad Gita says varnas are decided based on Guna and Karma. That means your constitution and your actions. Manusmriti and some other shastras mention four varnas: the Brahmins (teachers, scholars and priests), the Kshatriyas (kings and warriors), the Vaishyas (traders), and Shudras (agriculturists, service providers, and some artisan groups). Offspring of different varnas belong to different Jātis. Another group excluded from the main society was called Parjanya or Antyaja. This group of former “untouchables” (now called Dalits) was considered either the lower section of Shudras or outside the caste system altogether. Passages from scriptures such as Manusmriti indicate that the varna system was originally non-hereditary, that is not based by birth.

So who is a Brahmin? What does it really take to be a Brahmin?

In fact that question was put to Yudhishtira by the Yaksha -

*rajan kulena vrttena svadhyayena shrutena va  
brahmanyam kenabhavati prabruhyetatsu nishcitam*

King, how does one become a Brahmin: by birth? character? study of the Vedas? education? Tell me precisely.

*shrnu yaksha kulam tata nasvadhyayo nacashrutam  
karanam hi dvijatve ca vrttameva na samshayha*

Listen, Yaksha, it is neither birth nor education, nor even the study of the Vedas. Without doubt, it is character alone that marks a Brahmin.

Yudhishtira’s answer is crisp, clear and unambiguous when he replies, ‘Na samshayaha ... there is no doubt about it: it is not birth, it is not education, it is not the study of the Vedas but it is vritta (character) alone that determines a Brahmin.’

What is Yudhishtira’s definition of character?

He has already answered the same question in a previous passage in the Mahabharata, the dialogue with King Nahusha:

“He is known as a Brahmin ... in whom truthfulness, liberality, patience, deportment, mildness, self control, and compassion are found. And he may gain knowledge of the Supreme Brahman, beyond happiness and unhappiness ... on reaching which they grieve no more.”

Therefore is today anyone a true Brahmin? I doubt it.

In the Vedas it was accepted that even one of unknown lineage (caste) was considered capable enough to imbibe Spiritual Science. Aitereya the son of Itara became the Seer of Aitereya Upanishad. Maharshi



Vedvyas, the son of a fisherwoman, attained the highest slot in the Rishi tradition. The Kshatriya King Vishwamitra attained the Brahmarshi status only after pursuing Gayatri worship. Hence by giving up deluded concepts, one should imbibe Gayatri worship and encourage/allow everyone else to follow suit.

As you can see the caste system as it is present today is a corrupt version of the original, the bhagvad gita also states that in kali yug- this age of darkness- everyone is a sudra.

As you can see through proper research of the Vedic texts one can conclude that Hinduism is a open minded and practical religion but unfortunately the misinterpretation of the scriptures has brought about superstition in our culture and unfortunately caste discrimination.

So many so-called hindus did not know the basics of the religion, so how can they teach their own children?

Just reciting mantras and doing pujas doesn't mean you are a hindu, observing fasts and conducting elaborate rituals also does not mean you are a hindu, especially when you practise social injustices every day of your life. Being born a Brahmin also does not mean you are an automatic Brahmin, just like a son of a doctor is not automatically an MBBS. The son has to study and qualify and practise the profession. The son has to display the characteristics of a doctor. The caste system is flexible, it allows one whose constitution and actions is like a Brahmin to qualify as a Brahmin but unfortunately this practice is not common.

Even a girl can have the bratabandha ceremony done, it is stated in the Vedas that it used to be done but I guess women were dominated by men somewhere down the line.

The essence of Hinduism and in fact any religion is compassion for fellow human beings and being a good person with high moral standards. The pujas, fasts and rituals are there to give you a spiritual discipline and help you focus just like a student needs to study daily to perfect their knowledge and prepare for their exam, thus Hinduism has it's own way of life but just following the religion/culture blindly and not understanding why the rules were there in the first place and then not acting as a good human being is against the very moral fibre and essence of Hinduism.

In Nepal it is easier to say you are a hindu because it is a way of life there, everywhere you go there are temples and every time there seems as if there is a new festival going on, even if you do not understand the whys and hows of it, you would be obliged to partake in them.

In UK, it is a different scenario, as a parent now myself, I keep on thinking how can I make my children be good human beings and be able to distinguish right from wrong and be compassionate to their fellow human beings. The answer is teaching them our religion and culture, from the day they can understand.

I would like to urge nepali parents who fear that their children will lose their identity, is to teach the children the language first and foremost, the mother tongue will connect them to their motherland and also to teach them our scriptures. Inevitably difficult questions may be asked but please do not give them simple answers, they

need to know, for they are our future and in this day and age there is a big need for high moral standards and compassion in the world. The parents themselves must first realise that today's youth will not accept answers like "our forefathers did it that's why we do it" they would want to know why. The best thing is to read the scriptures together and explain them, even show the children religious movies and cartoons. During storytelling, you could tell hindu fairytales to the children. When following festivals like dashain and tihar instead of focusing on food and drink, it would be nice for the children to know the real reason of the festival and the story behind it. As the children get into their teens you could give them an English translation of the Bhagavad Gita.

I went to the university of London and met many British Indian students on my course, they seem to know so much about their culture and religion from a very young age, the parents regularly take their children to the temple, they learn their language up to GCSE level and also their religion. The parents regularly make the children attend cultural and religious activities. At university it was amazing to see them actively take part in cultural shows like divali functions, navratri functions, Hindu students association, ISKCON etc.

These students were modern, intelligent and successful but they also knew about their culture and religion which gave them a head start in life. We can see how successful the Indians are in Britain and I believe that this is a direct result of their faith and hard work and spiritual discipline.

The family of a friend of mine from university recently did a week long saptah in the UK which was shown on the Aastha tv channel. Some of my friends are not only first but second and third generation British Indians. I hope our children also will follow this route and that us Nepalis can also pass on our great culture and heritage and the true meaning of Hinduism to the future generation so that they can prosper and the world can be a more peaceful place than it is today. What is the point of being educated if we do not use the education for the betterment of self and society?

### **Fact file For the Nepali youth- Be proud of your culture and heritage**

#### **In language**

Sanskrit (meaning "cultured or refined"), the classical language of Hinduism, is the oldest and the most systematic language in the world. The vastness and the versatility, and power of expression can be appreciated by the fact that this language has 65 words to describe various forms of earth, 67 words for water, and over 250 words to describe rainfall.

Sir William Jones, speaking to the Asiatic Society in Calcutta (now Kolkata) on February 2, 1786, said:

*The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong, indeed, that no philologist could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists.*

All but one European language derives from Indo-European

(Basque), and the oldest Indo European language of all is Sanskrit.

English	mother	father
Sanskrit	matar	pitar
Greek	mater	pater
Latin	mater	pater
French	mere	pere
German	mutter	vater
Armenian	mair	hair

**In mathematics**

Pythagorean Theorem principle discovered (Baudhayana, Baudhayana Sulba Sutra, 600 BC, 1000 years before Pythagoras)  
Decimal System (references dating back to 100 BC)  
Prefexes for raising 10 to powers as high as 53 (references dating back to 100 BC)  
Time taken by the earth to orbit the sun calculated as 365.258756484 days (Bhaskaracharya, Surya Siddhanta 400-500 AD)  
Law of Gravity (Bhaskaracharya, Surya Siddhanta 400-500 AD)  
Calculation of Value of pi as a ratio of 62832/2000 (Aryabhata, 497 AD)  
Earth’s rotation about its axis, orbits around the Sun and is suspended in space (Aryabhata, Aryabhateeyam, 500 AD)  
Discovery of Zero (mentioned in Pangala, Chandra Sutra 200 AD)

**Why Do Hindus Worship Many Gods?**

Human beings through history have formulated many different names and forms for the Divine or Eternal. Just as we have many

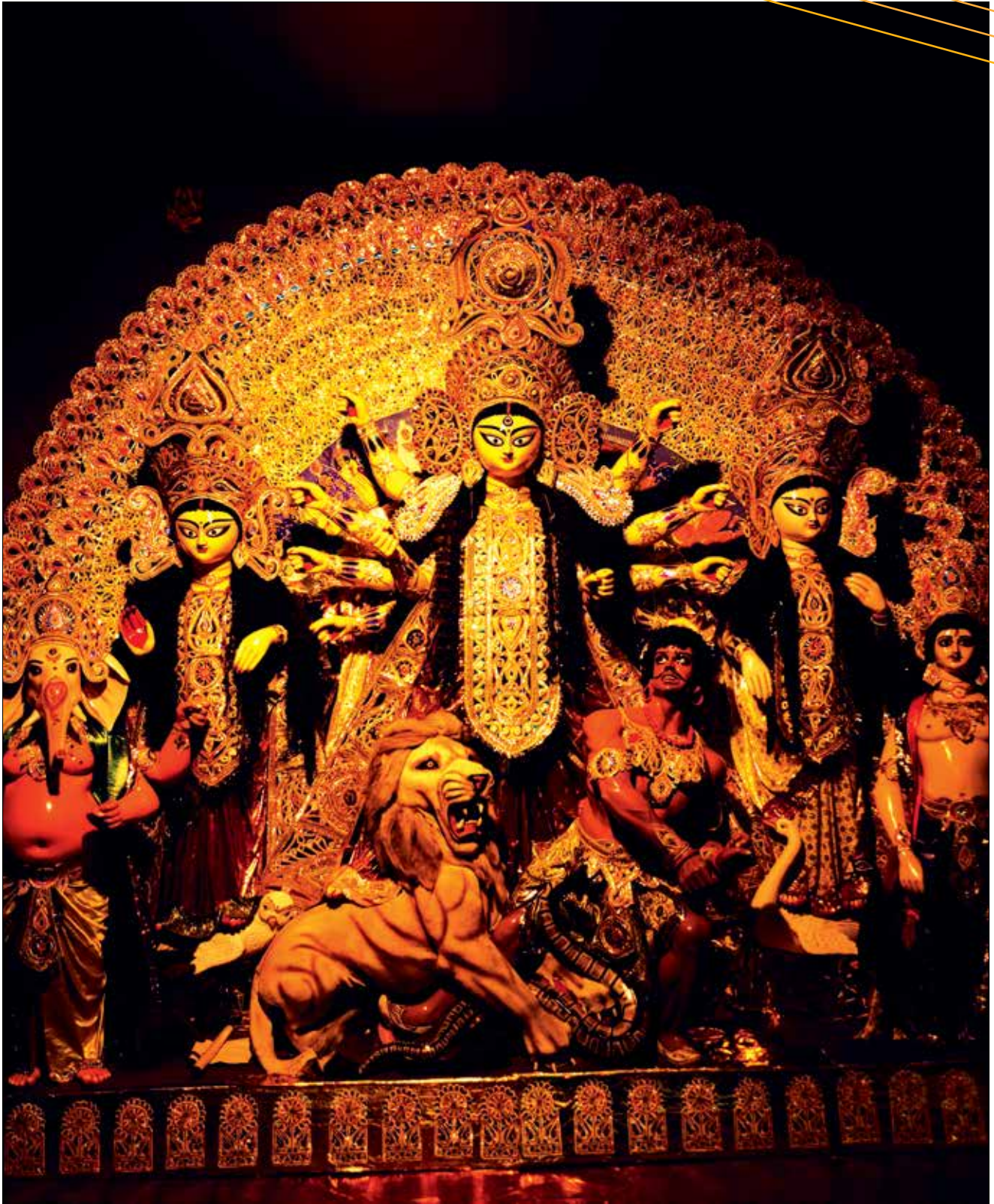
names and forms for other things, whether it is foods, or types of art, so too, in religion a similar great diversity has been created.

The Western world has prided itself in monotheism, the idea that there is only One God as the highest truth. Western religions have said that only the names and forms which refer to this One God are valid but those which appear to worship another God, or a multiplicity of divinities, must be false. They have restricted the names and forms they use in religious worship, and insist that only one set is true and correct and others are wrong or unholy. As a universal formulation Hinduism accepts all formulations of Truth. According to the universal view there is only One Reality, but it cannot be limited to a particular name or form. Though Truth is One it is also Universal, not an exclusive formulation. It is an inclusive, not an exclusive Oneness - a spiritual reality of Being - Consciousness - Bliss, which could be called God but which transcends all names. The different Gods and Goddesses of Hinduism represent various functions of this One Supreme Divinity, and are not separate Gods.

Having many names for something is not necessarily a sign of ignorance of its real nature. On the contrary, it may indicate an intimate knowledge of it. For example, Eskimos have forty-eight different names for snow in their language because they know snow intimately in its different variations, not because they are ignorant of the fact that all snow is only one. The many different deities of Hinduism reflect such an intimate realization of the Divine on various levels.







### Why Does Hinduism Portray God as a Woman?

Hinduism contains many feminine forms of the Divine like Kali, Durga, Lakshmi and Sarasvati. These represent different feminine qualities and functions of the Divine which contains both male and female energies. For example, Kali portrays the destructive energy, Lakshmi the nourishing, and Sarasvati the creative, while Durga is the Divine Mother in her protective role. Hinduism also has many dual male-female forms like Radha-Krishna, Sita-Rama, Uma-Mahesh, and Lakshmi -Narayan in which the female form is usually addressed first. The different

masculine forms of the Divine in Hinduism have their feminine counterparts. As Sanatana Dharma or a universal tradition Hinduism recognizes that the Divine contains both masculine and feminine attributes. Without giving proper honor to the feminine qualities a religion must be incomplete and one-sided, which must result in its teachings having negative consequences. Without recognizing the feminine aspect of Divinity one cannot claim to know God. To recognize the feminine is necessary to restore wholeness, completeness and universality.



# “WHEN WILL YOU BUILD *MY* HOUSE?”

WORDS BY PRAKRITI PAUDEL



**F**rom the mud-houses to the extravagant skyscrapers, architecture has been a way of life. It embodies our culture and shapes the way we socially interact. But for many, architecture is not yet part of their lives but simply a luxury that they cannot afford.

As part of my course, BA architecture, we got an opportunity to work with an international project set up by the University called the DMU Square Mile India. In this, we were working with an organisation called Manav Sadhna based in the Gandhi Ashram, Ahmedabad, India. The mission of this NGO is to serve the unprivileged following Mahatma Gandhi's teachings of love, truth, peace, non-violence and compassion. Manav Sadhna

serves more than 8000 children and women through more than 35 projects. Some of their projects include providing health and hygiene education and trainings for residents of the slums so that they can get employed to a dignified job as opposed to having to beg on the streets, with the uncertainty of making enough money to take care of their families.

In groups of 7-12 students, we were taken to India for 8 days so that the construction site had volunteers throughout the project. As second-year architecture students, we were given the chance to volunteer at one of Manav Sadhna's projects called the Loving community. This community dates back to 1975 when many people were outcasted by their native villages because of leprosy,





with nowhere to call home and the nature of the untreated disease being easily spreadable, these people faced unemployment which led to them begging on the streets for survival. The government had given these people a piece of unwanted land near a river for them to live in and the local organisation, the Lion's club had built them basic houses with very little ventilation on a plot that they received. Lion's club also treated the patients with leprosy, now, their families live there. The main problem faced by the community are the floods that happen every year during the monsoon season. Alongside the damage done to the physical dwellings, the river also brings in diseases carried in by the dirty water. People lose hope in getting out of poverty as the little money they have gets used to temporarily repairing their houses.

The funds raised by Manav Sadhna and De Montfort University from various donors across the world goes towards demolishing the old houses and building new houses. The new houses are designed by an Indian Architect called Anand Sonecha. The designs of the new houses ensure that the houses are raised up from the ground by 90cm so that the houses avoid getting flooded. When we visited the homes in the community, we found even more problems with the existing houses; the heat. India's temperature rises to 40°C and the tin roof adds to the hoarded heat. It was almost impossible for us to stay in the house for more than 5 minutes even in October where the average temperature was only 36°C. The new houses have many environmental strategies to keep the houses cool in Ahmedabad's climate. Aside from building proper roofs with concrete the houses are designed to have wide openings that allow cross ventilation. Another environmental strategy is that there is also ventilation higher up on the wall of the houses, this is because hot air rises therefore the accumulated hot air can escape through this opening. The doors of the living room and the kitchen can be opened fully so that the courtyard is exposed, this creates an open floor plan making the space seem bigger and freer, it also accommodates for an Indian diet with enough storage space. It was also very important to observe how people socially interact with each other in the community so that the design of the houses can facilitate the interaction rather than intrude on it. For example, in the evenings, we saw that many people sat on their front porches to talk. This was an important way for the people in the community to come together therefore the designs of the houses should have an area in front of their houses for people to carry on this way of socialising.

The first thing that stood out to me when we arrived at the community was that even though the land plot sizes were the same, each and every home had its own identity. Some people painted the exteriors in bright vibrant colours and others decorated the walls with beautiful patterns. This alone made me realise that no matter what conditions we are living in, the need to have a space that we feel connected to is very important to our livelihood and happiness. This is the main reason that the Architect Anand Sonecha set up workshops to teach the women of the community how to make tiles. The tiles are made from the by-product of the fly ash brick power stations. This means that they are made from recycled material that would otherwise be unused and in addition, makes the material affordable and sustainable. The fact that the women of the community make the tiles themselves for their houses gives them a sense of contribution when designing their homes, which many of the women were excited to tell us about. We were also taught how to make these tiles and helped with the process of making new batches of tiles. To ensure that the owners also had an active role in the development of their homes, they were able to pick the colours of the interior and exterior surfaces.

Due to the fact that my group were the second group to be on the site, we focussed on the structure of the building. We worked with an architect, a contractor and two other builders who were hired by Manav Sadhna from another similar community. Our group were given two main tasks to do on the construction site.







Half of us helped with the brickwork and the other half of us had to carry soil and sand back onto the construction sites. This soil needed to be returned to the construction site so that the foundation is covered and a certain height is achieved to make sure the houses are less vulnerable to flooding. In the construction process, we were taught many techniques about how the builders worked to get things done efficiently. The builders were hired to get the job done as fast as they could and they were paid on job-completion rather than on an hourly basis. We were inspired by their strive to efficiency and were able to adapt this into our work by creating a chain to pass the bags of sand and soil which was a less time-consuming method.

In this loving community there were around 450 residents, many of which were young children. In our time at the community we saw some children who were in school uniforms ready to catch their bus but astoundingly, more of them were in ordinary clothes, who were either too young to attend school or couldn't afford education. Beyond this, the biggest concern was how inaccurate we were when

predicting their ages. This was due to the fact that the children were malnourished thus very small in comparison to the average size of healthy children their age. Regardless of the misfortunate conditions, when they came running to us with nothing but smiles we could see the strength and love which were the foundations of their survival. Some danced and played around, accompanying us while we were working, meanwhile, others even created their own chains and helped us carry some of the bricks. We could see how much understanding and maturity these children carried, they had endless ambitions regarding their future- one wanted to become a Fashion Designer, one a Teacher and one a Pilot. As they grew more attached to us, they started asking us many questions to tame their curiosities, for example: "What is an Architect?" and "Where are you from?". I tried to give the best answers I could and communicate in my broken Hindi, which led me to discover their boundless aspirations, goals and the hope instilled in them for their lives to get better. However, when a little girl asked me when I was actually building her house, I had no words but only a vision for how my future can help theirs.w



# Mentoring with MNS

WORDS BY PRATIK KANDANGWA



**M**any students enter their graduate programs with little understanding of the complex landscape of higher education or how different dynamics of job market drive ideal career pathways. In fact, despite very articulate and promising statement of purpose in their applications, many students are unsure of what they will do with a graduate degree. Sophisticated 21st century and cut-throat competition means that the need to support one's learning in order that they maximise their potential is a matter of utmost importance. You may be a rising star and have track record of success but having a mentor to guide you will help succeed in the long haul. Mentors bridge academic and pastoral support roles ensuring that individuals engage more effectively in learning and professional development. Furthermore, research shows that students who experience good mentoring also have a greater chance of securing high profile jobs and greater career advancement potential.

At 'Merging NepSocs', we aim to achieve this through Mentoring Scheme which is free of cost and one of our five projects. With two schemes, namely Sixth form to University and University to Graduate job/ Further study, it is a platform whereby both mentors and mentees can elevate knowledge-sharing to a practical level. For Sixth form to University scheme, mentors will primarily focus on UCAS applications i.e. choosing Universities and courses, personal statement and interviews. On the other hand, for University to Graduate job/ Further study scheme, mentors will emphasize on employability skills i.e. CV, cover letter, interview techniques and aptitude/psychometric test. The scheme is open to all Nepalese students (A level equivalent and University) and young professionals; and interested individuals can join the scheme by using the mentor and mentee sign up form in our website.

Our mentoring scheme is now up and running and was launched on 10th August 2019 with first batch of 7 mentors and 8 mentees. Matching was done based on the profile and needs of individual mentees and availability of relevant mentors. During the event, mentors and mentees had the opportunity to learn more about the scheme and know each other via one to one interaction. Moreover, activities such as brainstorming ideas, mock interview, drafting personal statement and psychometric test made the day very productive with positive feedback from those involved. Having successfully launched the scheme, we now plan to release a new batch after every 2/3 months.

Finally, we would like to urge students and professionals to use this platform and register as mentors/mentees. Likewise, if you would like to be actively involved in planning and organising events for the scheme, you are more than welcome to contact the mentoring panel.







# Dilemmas facing Heritage Conservation in Kathmandu Valley

WORDS BY TEJAL RAYAMAJHI

**W**hen I first visited Nepal in summer of 2016, after moving to Scotland in 2009, I felt like I had time travelled. Kathmandu had changed so much, and the background of my childhood memories - the buildings and the roads had changed significantly. Even as I walked through Baneshwor, the neighbourhood I grew up in, what remained of my childhood memories, represented just a few brushstrokes in the overall painting. Mainly the temples remained, but the grounds I raced around on my bicycle as a child had been replaced by a sprawl of cramped houses that got taller and taller. That's when nostalgia hits, the places I remembered though so vivid inside my mind did not exist or had changed and instead existed as an intangible form within the depths of my memories, its physical tangibility a forgotten history.

Since I wasn't there to see the progress but only witnessed the end results, it was an odd real-life experience of seeing those before and after pictures, with the juxtaposition between the memories of my past to the physical reality that surrounded me in the

present. This sense of time travel, left me quite upset, especially one day when I visited Patan Darbar, which was a completely different site to the massive process of gentrification occurring in my neighbourhood. Patan Darbar, the temples that stood strong in my memories had been reduced to rubble, due to the Gorkha earthquake. Later that evening from the rubbles in Patan Darbar, I went to Durbar Marg and witnessed chains of international brands such as Pizza Hut, KFC and Zara opening. Suddenly, I felt this nostalgia but also, more importantly, grief for the Kathmandu Valley it once was to the Kathmandu Valley we have now. There was a conflict within me, what does modernization mean in Kathmandu Valley and what will we lose with it? In comparing the two sites I kept thinking, where is Kathmandu Valley heading to and as someone who lives in the UK, should I even care? Therefore when I next visited Kathmandu which was the summer of 2018, I realized I should care - at least enough to question and investigate it. In light of this motive, I interned for Spaces magazine, which is an art and architecture magazine based in Lalitpur and worked with them on heritage conservation.



Working with Spaces magazine really filled me with optimism for the future of Nepal, I met so many young architects, writers, photographers and artists. The passion they exhibit for conservation and sustainable development gives me hope, it motivated me to think of my own privileges and my social responsibility towards Nepal especially being part of the Nepali Diaspora. How can I gear my academic knowledge in helping Nepal? Became a question I now ask myself regularly to guide me through my university experience.

I'm currently studying Global Health therefore, coming from a science background, it's an understatement to say that I didn't know much about architecture. I still don't. But what I learnt from Spaces, is that architecture should not be seen as prestigious and belonging to the higher class, which I find is often the viewpoint in the West and that architecture should be promoted as being accessible to everyone, fighting for everyone. A building is not just a building but actually, the structure binds the community and leads interaction. It was only through talking to architects and going through numerous building plans for articles, that I learnt how intertwined

often abstract and intangible aspects of life is with the tangible and physical structures of buildings. An example of this would be when I worked on an article on Shrinkhala Khatiwada's thesis, for her dissertation, which aimed at designing a Manav Sewa Ashram, a rehabilitation centre for the homeless who suffer from mental health disorders through incorporating environmental psychology. The thesis counteracts the stigmatization of people with mental health disorders and the immense isolation suffers feel through its design, which at every point focuses on annihilating that isolation and promoting interaction. Similarly, I read many designs from young architects and engineers, who helped pushed my imagination to what Nepal in the future, through careful planning, could look like. My main interest when interning for Spaces magazine was the Rana palaces more specifically how they are being used in the present. Rana Palaces were predominantly constructed in a neoclassical style inspired by the structures prevalent in this style in Britain and France, as the Rana prime ministers such as Jang Bahadur visited these countries. Hence, the Rana palaces exhibit a unique hybrid of Nepali and European architecture, which on a personal and bizarre

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*Rana Palaces were predominantly constructed in a neoclassical style inspired by the structures prevalent in this style in Britain and France, as the Rana prime ministers such as Jang Bahadur visited these countries.*



note resonated with me, with much of my own upbringing being a mesh of British and Nepali culture. A key part of Spaces work is to document the historical background and significance of these sites in Nepal as well as the progress achieved in maintaining these sites. One of the trends that can be noticed is the rejuvenation of these Rana palaces into museums, hotels or recreational centres. However, visiting these sites left a conflict in me as when walking around the site, you can see that some of the original aesthetics had been lost due to the constant renovation that had presided. This is not a critique of the renovation projects itself but rather the conflict within myself is a reflection of discussions surrounding Heritage conservation, a discussion which presides in what preservation means and does this mean no change. But then again, barring change at the cost of what? Renovations often take place to enhance its availability to provide facilities which ensure financial sustainability. Often you can witness the struggle, between expansion and renovation to fit the needs and demands of modernization, to secure financial sustainability but at the loss of the originality of the heritage sites. Does heritage conservation mean time travel, a frozen place which exudes the past or does it mean adaptability with admittingly changes to the structure for convenience? Thus where can a line be drawn? More importantly, who draws this line?

Concepts of heritage conservation marked with the Ancient Monument

Preservation Act in 1956, followed an old school western protocol that focuses on the material authenticity through a top-down management process (Chapagain, 2019). Though the conversations around heritage conservation are turning towards a more holistic approach, with the adoption of the living heritage model, where heritage conservation does not only mean protecting a group of temples or monuments. An example of such is UNESCO with its conventions for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (Maharjan & Barata, 2018). Heritage Conservation in Nepal faces many challenges; the reconstruction and restoration processes are getting costly and with lack of funding, commercial contractors end up using cheaper, non-traditional materials as well as push for alterations on a design plan that would raise more profits. Additionally, NGOs funded by foreign aid primarily prioritise sites that garner the most attraction from tourists as they gather more donors, which leaves the lesser known monuments with inadequate support. Therefore there appears a need to balance interests between different players, and a management system based solely on western mandates (NGOs) does not appear sustainable for the longer term (Lekakis, Shakya & Kostaki, 2018).

Although heritage conservation appears constructed and influenced by the West, in the context of Nepal, it's a different story, traditionally heritage was managed by a unique system by the Newars called Guthi. Rules and regulations to be followed by



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The tangible monuments are seen as a vital part of a continuation of one’s social and personal life.





Guthi members for the collective use of a Buddhist Monastery are found written in Nepal Bhasa dated back in 1114 CE (Lekakis, Shakya & Kostaki, 2018). Guthi's both celebrated and maintained the intangible heritage (masked dances and plays) as well as the tangible heritage structures (monasteries, temples and sattal), in this way Guthis celebrate a more holistic approach to conservation, which does not segregate the intangible and tangible as different sectors to be worked on in heritage conservation. Guthis have a self-initiative practise wherein, expertise is passed through generations, Guthi membership and role is linked to having a strong attachment towards religious and cultural beliefs that govern social norms. In this way Guthis are more intimate, conservation is not seen as a part of a government programme, in which local people have no say, but Guthis actively encourage decision making and make local inhabitants the key stakeholder. Therefore the tangible monuments reinforce and give space for intangible aspects of cultures to occur, which naturally binds people towards one another and towards oneself, so that conservation and maintenance becomes a must. The

tangible monuments are seen as a vital part of a continuation of one's social and personal life. However, simultaneously as the Department of Archaeology became more established in Nepal, there became a dependency on foreign experts and a eurocentric concept of authenticity was promoted within heritage conservation, which pushed indigenous people from being key stakeholders to being an outsider within heritage conservation programmes. Guthis were given tokenistic roles and slowly people felt a lack of ownership towards maintaining tangible structures and thus the holistic approach which combines the intangible and tangible deteriorated (Maharjan, 2016).

Guthis are primarily funded through income gained from cultivated or leased lands that are part of its assets. There has been systematic pressure upon the Guthi system which has accelerated its deterioration as the lands - a vital resource for its survivability - have constantly been attacked. During the 18th century when the Malla Kingdoms of the Valley went to the Shah Kings, the new rulers then used Guthis lands to fund wars. Guthi lands were



further used to build palaces for the Ranas and in the latter half of the twentieth century, the Nepal government used more of these lands for official buildings, hospitals and airports. In 1964 the Government nationalized Guthi lands and formed the Guthi Corporation, which started to allocate funds for rituals, festivals and other events (Maharjan, 2018) . Through the establishment of Guthi Corporation, one can witness that the Government does not understand the intricacy of the Guthi system and its importance within heritage conservation- this has been made more evident from the recent proposal of the Guthi Bill. Though the Guthi Corporation has 2,335 public guthis incorporated into it and holds 1.45 million ropanies of Land, it still gives out the same amount of funds to Guthis as it did in the 60s despite high rates of inflation. Moreover, land has been lost due to embezzlement and the majority of the income generated go towards funding salaries (Maharjan, 2018; Shrestha, 2019). Hence Guthis face crippling financial pressure and heavily rely on private donations, further inhibiting Guthis unique establishment of a self-initiative process.

The proposal of the Guthi Bill led to mass protests in Nepal during June 2019, the implementation of the Bill would have been devastating, as it proposed nationalization of both private and public Guthis and the replacement of the Guthi Sansthan with a powerful commission that would regulate all religious sites. The Guthi Bill would have contributed to the further systematic erosion of indigenous Newar culture and rights, taken by the state

since it could open up a potentiality for government authorities to further embezzle Guthi lands (Shrestha, 2019; Satyal, 2019) . Additionally, the Bill would have allowed the commission to take over all the rights and responsibility of the Guthis, which is a violation upon citizens constitutional rights (Shrestha, 2019) . In response to public protests, the Government has decided to withdraw the Bill. However, even the suggestion of the Guthi Bill itself is insensitive towards and degrades the complexity of Guthis, since many private Guthis are exclusively for family members who share the same lineage hence cannot be nationalised.

This is not solely a Newar vs Government issue, this is a People vs Government issue. The proposal of the Guthi Bill highlights the disconnect of the Nepal Government towards its people, and the short-term sightedness of the government especially when it comes to development plans. It is a devastating blow to heritage conservation efforts, which is vital to sustain tourism that influences the livelihood of so many in the country. It's devastating as it shows the blatant disconnect the Government has to understand the importance of having a holistic and connected approach in regards to intangible and tangible heritage; that the two flow together and reinforce one another. That heritage conservation cannot effectively continue without the engagement of indigenous communities, who are the ones that are most connected with the heritage.







Heritage conservation is about vision, a vision that correlates to the future of Nepal. What will the future of Nepal architecturally look like? Currently, when visiting Kathmandu you see a mass of tall buildings sprawled everywhere, with minimal regards to its local surroundings. Heritage conservation should expand to be more than preserving and maintaining the stupas or temples, it should include local inhabitants and Guthi members around the sites as key respected stakeholders in the decision-making process, it should be considerate of the local residential dwellings and build a sustainable plan where the sites incorporate into community life. This approach should be mirrored in development, rather than allowing construction of buildings focused on size and height for financial profit, better regulation should be implemented, that takes into account the streetscape, local inhabitants and the environment around the proposed site. This requires the inclusion of the community, to reach a consensus on why the building is being built, why is this building being preserved? In including the local community, we build values that contribute to a shared vision of what Nepal architecturally should look like, it becomes a bottom-up project as opposed to formal top-down management.

In the end, it's really asking who are we as Nepalis? What does being Nepali even mean? Then asking what do I want Nepal to look like?

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# SOAS Nepali Society

BY SWARNIM MADEN LIMBU



**H**ello! We are the SOAS Nepali Society, a budding society at the School of Oriental and African Studies, a leading institute for the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East, located at Russell Square in central London. Our NepSoc was newly established in 2018 by five of our current committee members; Tina Gurung, Sabnam Limbu, Swarnim Maden, Bidushi Gurung and Arina Garbuja, who, at present, hold the positions of President, Co-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Creative Advisor.

Having come to SOAS, we had discovered that the previous Nepali Society had become inactive as the members had all graduated, and our team felt the need to re-establish a Nepali Society at SOAS in order to connect with Nepalis and Nepal-interested individuals.

Though the society initially started with just these five core members, our society sparked much enthusiasm and gained attention as students, both Nepali and non-Nepali, gathered to celebrate their common interest for the country we call home, Nepal. The enthusiasm shown by such students has meant that our society has grown in numbers immensely as we currently have fifty-four signed up members at the SOAS Nepali Society! Through this growth, we also acquired a new addition to our committee team with Harriet McGilvrey as our Creative Director.

Our first introduction to Merging NepSocs was at the introductory presentation that the founding members of the organisation had

conducted at City University. We were intrigued by the idea of the diasporic Nepali youth in the UK connecting and merging through our societies, in order to not only help ourselves but also the upcoming young persons in Nepali communities around the UK. The idea of building a network with Nepali organisations in Nepal in order for us to be able to give back to our home country was also very noble and noteworthy. As Merging NepSoc grew, we at SOAS Nepali society were also able to expand our own contacts and meet Nepali students, and young professionals from around the whole of the UK.

Though we have not been an active society for very long, we aimed to create a space where we could speak about all things Nepal, the good and the bad. We have held meet and greets, Dashain events and socials with other London based universities, enabling us to connect and network with so many, sometimes with the added help of momos! As a society, we feel that it is important to give back, so during our events we try our best to raise money for Nepal based charities and so far we have raised funds for Kidasha, and the Samaanta Foundation.

Although socialising is a key aspect of our university experience, we want to go beyond and create spaces, and opportunities for us all to talk about the deeper issues within Nepal and the Nepali diasporic community. In this regard, we recently held a Creators Night, where Nepali individuals from creative industries gathered to share their experiences of choosing a





non-conventional career whilst being a Nepali. The panel included insta-beauty blogger, Masna Gurung (@masnax), one of the founders of Parcha, the dancing Samir Gurung, creative media genius, Shanti Gurung, and the talented upcoming dancer Subi Gurung.

We hope to continue to create such events, where people can share experiences, gain insight and get inspired! Our

next event will be focusing on mental health, in the hopes to destigmatize the topic within us Nepalis. The event will include speakers from all avenues of life in order to help us start this conversation. Make sure to follow our socials in order to stay updated on this event and more! (@soasnepalsociety)

Through this we hope more Nepalis get to know our little university which has so much to offer. Stay woke!





# YOUTHS ARE THE FUTURE



**I**dol, a person that is greatly admired, loved, revered. We all have them maybe our mothers, our fathers, older brothers, older sisters, the famous football icon, charismatic singer, the legends of past or present. They inspire us, they motivate us, they raise the status quo and show us what we can be. They say never meet your idols, but how can we learn from them if we never get the opportunity to be in the same room as them.

With an opportunity to have attendance of a true Icon from Nepal, Merging NepSocs set out to organize a Youth Interaction Q&A panel in a matter of 48 hours.

In such a short time a strong panel was put together. Dr. Tejendra Pherali, senior lecturer in Education and International Development at UCL Institute of Education. A key individual with vast knowledge and experience, being involved in multiple research in Afghanistan, Nepal, Somalia and Lebanon, who has been an inspiration to young students and adults alike. The panel was also able to include an individual who has helped shape the very fabric of Nepalese communities across UK and abroad, the honorable Kul Acharya, a business owner, social personal but most importantly one of the leaders of Nepalese population in the UK currently the Vice President of the NRNA International Coordination Council. The panel was moderated by one of the honorable reporters from Nepal, Dil Bhusan Pathak, an individual who has been on a mission from late 90s Maoist insurgency to expose the truth out to the open eyes and to raise the awareness of local and national injustice through the instrument of media. Finally, to complete the panel an individual that has been an inspiration to millions of Nepalese lives across the world, someone who has been dearly loved and idolized,

the one and only superstar Rajesh Hamal.

With eager individuals waiting their turn, questions of belonging, achievement and life stories were presented to the panelists. Hearing the story of how Dr. Pherali got his career started in academics was truly inspiring letting everyone there in attendance know that hard work and persistence doesn't fail to pay off. One member in the attendance especially wanted to express their gratitude towards Dr. Pherali for being such an inspiring individual in their academic journey, and this was a true astonishing moment for everyone. Being able to understand the difference in education throughout the years and how we can capitalize the institution we currently study on was a big insight that Dr. Pherali was able to shine light on.

Kul Acharya was able to give an insight in how the Nepalese communities in UK has evolved over the years. With question of why there is such a massive generational gap and how we can improve it Kul Acharya was put on the spot. But with knowledge and experience he was able to answer each question and give his views on how we can improve the conversations and understanding of different generations and further developed the Nepalese communities in the UK.

Throughout the discourse, the notable Dil Bhusan Pathak was able to share his story of how the media in Nepal has evolved and how reporters today are able to bring light to issues throughout the country and how he was able to bring so many important issues out to the public eye which has helped enlighten the minds of millions. While making sure the panel was on track, always



ready to crack a joke Mr. Dil Bhusan Pathak was able to keep the whole event super engaging and give a fair and strict opportunity for all the members of audience to ask their questions in his finest professional element.

Hearing the story of Rajesh Hamal from his humble beginning, where it was uncertain if he would get another job as an actor, where there weren't many people that believed in the young man set out to capture his dream, where the whole Nepalese Film industry was an uncertain field like a bubble, to now being one of the most recognized individuals in Nepal, his perspective was very moving. Hearing that Rajesh Hamal welcomes us Nepalese Diaspora in UK to return to Nepal to do any philanthropical or innovative projects for the country sent a pulse of energy to the hearts of all at attendance. To know that someone we all look up to also has gone through all the troubles that we face as

young individuals, weather it be the uncertainty of professional ventures, or the disconnection we feel from our older generation or the anxiety of what the future holds us and has come out on top was a reassurance that it will all be okay.

At the end the excitement that was in that room was truly enchanted as people crowded the panelist to take pictures and have a chat it was definitely evident any opportunity to meet your idols you should take them because how else can we learn from them. And we often tend to hear the emphasis on “children are the future”, not so much about the young adolescence. This perhaps leaves a little too spacious room in those youthful confused minds about where do they belong in this crossroad. We believe being youthful is an exciting time to be alive, where you can drive the life you will like, and in the vehicle of your choice. Youths, along with younger children are all our future.





# Telemedicine as a potential solution to the healthcare crisis faced by rural Nepal

WORDS BY SHRADHA GURUNG



## Introduction

**T**here is an urgent need to address the lack of accessible medical services in the remote areas of Nepal. As of 2016, the population of rural Nepal, calculated as the difference between the total and urban populations, is 81.01% which equates to approximately 23.7 million people. The majority of people in this proportion have little to no access to healthcare services as a result of an unbalanced distribution of healthcare workers between the rural and urban areas of Nepal. Accessibility to healthcare in rural Nepal is constrained by the location of villages and lack of governmental funding. Because most villages are built on mountainous regions, villagers from these areas are thus excluded from the urban parts of the country where there are hospitals and other healthcare services.

The terrain in remote villages of Nepal is very rugged and often the only form of transport in most villages is via foot which again raises issues with accessibility. This creates a greater challenge for clinics that hope to provide healthcare services for local villagers as getting a regular supply of equipment and medicine without proper transportation is simply not feasible and the remoteness of these villages would create major delays in delivering treatment to patients. There is also an alarmingly large shortage of doctors in rural areas which correlates with other issues plaguing the country's rural regions, such as poor education and economic exclusion; these are the same factors that deepen income inequality in Nepal.

The few Government Health Posts around each district in the country are run by healthcare workers; nearly all of these posts lack doctors. Villagers walk miles and for hours on foot to reach their nearest health post and the least that they deserve for their long travel is a solution to their health problem. Although

healthcare workers can provide adequate primary care, the majority do not have the proficiency to facilitate secondary care for patients. Thus, in the event of an emergency situation, health posts have no means of treating the patient; this is an issue that often results in death. For instance, in 2006, the Nepal Ministry of Health reported only 10 out of 64 (16%) district hospitals were able to perform caesarean sections, due to absent, low-performing or mismatched healthcare workers.

An effective solution to the shortage of doctors in the remote parts of Nepal is telemedicine.

## What is telemedicine?

The term "telemedicine", put simply, is medicine at a distance. This approach to medicine provides healthcare over a distance through the means of technology and is usually prevalent in developing countries where access to health services can be limited to a large proportion of the population. Although telemedicine has been practiced for years, this is still a fairly novel concept for many developing countries that cannot freely access technology or internet. Given that Nepal is one of the least developed countries in the world, it has much to benefit from telemedicine.

The Char Bhanjyang Center for Health (CBCH), Swinfen House is a telemedicine clinic situated in the village of Khalte, Parbat district. The clinic was initiated by Hon Lt Chandra Bahadur Gurung and funded by directors and co-founders of the Swinfen Charitable Trust UK (SCTUK), the Rt. Hon Lord and Lady Swinfen. The SCTUK is a registered non-profit charity that aims to provide specialist medical advice on diagnosis through the use of telemedicine in developing countries to help patients with financial constraints or limited healthcare accessibility.



The charity currently has 365 telemedicine links in 78 countries including Antarctica, Haiti, Iraq, Israel, Lesotho, Niue, Syria and of course Nepal. In Nepal, SCTUK has set up 27 telemedicine links that connect patients to around 600-700 medical consultants and specialists around the world.

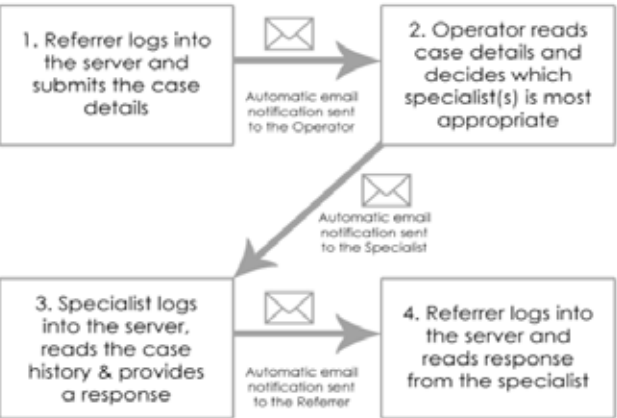
According to Lady Swinfen, “The initial goal set up by the clinic was to provide primary healthcare to patients in Khalte and the surrounding areas who travel hours on foot to get to the clinic for basic medical care.” The CBCH clinic is dedicated to achieving this goal, which is evidenced by the lengthy distance (six hours travel by foot to Kushma, the nearest town, followed by another two hours on the bus to Pokhara) clinic managers travel every month, in order to obtain medicine and medical equipment for the clinic.

Since its official opening in April 2013, the CBCH has received more than 15,000 patients and on average treats 27 patients a day who travel hours from many different districts e.g. Lamjung district (86 miles), Baglung district (80 miles), Kaski District (62 miles) and Shyanja (30 miles). The clinic is also visited by many patients from urban towns and cities, e.g. Pokhara, because even in the well-established hospitals of Nepal there are many instances of doctors that are unable to correctly diagnose their patient’s conditions (discussed later). Given the number of patients that the clinic has successfully treated and treats on a day to day basis, it is safe to say that the clinic has achieved its initial goal.

**How telemedicine clinics work: benefits and limitations**

In order to better illustrate how telemedicine clinics work, we will look into the typical operations of the CBCH clinic.

A computer was provided to the clinic with access to the telemedicine link mediated by the Swinfen Secure System shown by the flow chart below. The email system itself is very easy to use and patient confidentiality is carefully monitored.



Despite the large number of patients treated, the CBCH clinic does not require presence of a consultant/doctor and simply functions with two local certified medical assistants and a management team equipped with the facilities and equipment needed to execute telemedicine (e.g. telephone, computer and internet, solar power and electricity).

The clinic is free of charge for all patients apart from a small fee of 20 rupees (equivalent to £0.20) during registration- though this fee is waived for a majority of patients as they are unable to

pay this amount. Proceeds of the registration fee, CBCH trustees fund, money raised through fundraising events by Char Bhanjyang Tamu Samaj as well as donations are used for subsistence of the clinic which includes staff pay, maintenance of the clinic and expenses for equipment/facilities. It is these sources of funding that allow patients with limited financial resources to receive high standard consultation from medical professionals and specialists who have many years of experience. Consequently, patients also avoid spending expenses on overseas travel for a medical specialist opinion. Of course the major benefit of telemedicine links, and the clinics that provide it, is that it establishes a diagnoses for patients’ symptoms. This is an especially beneficial aspect of telemedicine for Nepal, as misdiagnosis by doctors is seemingly one of the reasons why Nepal is falling behind in terms of healthcare standards.

The main difficulty of the telemedicine clinic, as expressed by Lady Swinfen, is poor internet. In order to submit a patient’s case and refer to a specialist using the system above, the telemedicine clinic requires access to internet. Access to internet is highly dependent on signal connection and electricity. The often tenuous and unreliable signal connection and electricity in an area as remote as Khalte, especially during monsoon season, causes the greatest barrier for CBCH and telemedicine clinics in general.

**Case studies**

One remarkable case that the CBCH has achieved through the use of telemedicine link is of a 24 year old lady who gave birth in Limithana Government Health Post, which is two hours away on foot from the clinic in Khalte. After giving birth, the young lady had retained her placenta, which is a common complication that can become life-threatening if it is not addressed quickly. The CBCH clinic was called via telephone for help, the case was referred onto the Swinfen Secure System through Swinfen Telemedicine mobile app (launched by SCT in 2014) and quickly responded to by a UK consultant. A medical assistant from the clinic walked two hours to the health post to deliver the medical instructions that were advised, thereby saving the lives of both the patient and her new-born baby. Although the patient was at



“After giving birth, the young lady had retained her placenta, which is a common complication that can become life-threatening if it is not addressed quickly.

the Limithana Government Health Post and in the presence of a health worker, the shortage of doctors at the Post and severity of her condition made it impossible for her to receive the urgent care that she needed—at least not until the CBCH took over her case. More so, telemedicine was used to resolve the patient's problem and in this case save two lives, simply by connecting the health care worker with a doctor through telecommunication. In fact, telemedicine links, used in this same way, have saved the lives of thousands of patients. Given the effectiveness of telemedicine, and the difficulties (mainly lack of accessibility) that follow the remote location of many villages of Nepal, implementing telemedicine links in these health posts should be of major consideration.

The patient and her new born baby are well at home.

Arjun Prasad Subedi, another client of a telemedicine link in Nepal, had been suffering from recurrent liver issues including jaundice and pruritus. Even after visiting many doctors in Nepal and India, being diagnosed with several incorrect conditions and going through surgery for these conditions, Mr. Subedi showed no signs of long-term improvement. He explained that he “was diagnosed with gallstones in Nepal for which I had to go for the surgery, cholecystectomy. After the surgery, the doctors said that there were no gallstones present which was very disappointing and annoying to know.”

After getting in touch with SCTUK, Mr. Subedi was assigned to liver specialist Professor Roger Williams, CBE (Authority on the Liver). He recommended Dr. Mohammed Rela at the Rela Institute and Medical Center, India where Mr. Subedi finally received the correct diagnosis followed by the necessary surgery for his condition. It was through a telemedicine link that Mr. Subedi was able to contact Prof. Williams and Dr. Rela for future advice.

Now Mr. Subedi can live in peace knowing that his “dream of getting a permanent solution [is] achievable...

Currently, [he is] on rest and until now, everything is fine with [his] health.”

Both public and private sectors of healthcare in Nepal are considered as failing to meet international standards. Mr. Subedi is just one example of many cases where patients have been misdiagnosed in the urban parts of Nepal where hospitals are well-established and healthcare should be the most adequate. Unlike Mr. Subedi, delayed or incorrect diagnosis will, for a lot of patients, lead to much more serious infections and sometimes even death due to conditions that would otherwise have been cured had there been sufficient medical advice available. This goes to show that the implications of telemedicine extend beyond remote areas and is just as prevalent in the urban parts of the country.

### Conclusion

The main purpose of this article is to inform people of a potential solution to the healthcare crisis faced by rural Nepal. In doing so, charities such as SCTUK can gain more support through donations and more recognition. This in turn would result in more telemedicine links in countries like Nepal and expand the number of specialists providing their expertise to help those in need, so that we can hear of more success stories like that of Mr. Subedi's.

The CBCH Swinfen House is a small clinic situated 6,500 ft up in a remote village in the foothills of the western Himalaya of Nepal and has saved and positively changed the lives of thousands of people. If telemedicine links were implemented on a larger scale in Nepal, this would lift a considerable amount of burden from the country's current healthcare system and its patients.

Telemedicine has great potential to advance Nepal's medical field, both in the rural and urban parts of the country. It offers a cost-effective, easy-to-implement and highly successful approach to diagnosis and treatment of patients.



The greater the amount of people that are informed about and support telemedicine, the more likely that the Nepalese government will recognise it as something that can make a substantial difference to the lives of Nepalese communities and potentially fund the establishment of more telemedicine clinics and links in Nepal, particularly in remote areas.

*Thank you to Lady Swinfen, Mr. Arjun Subedi and Hon Lt Chandra Bahadur Gurung for providing me with the relevant information and insight into the workings of telemedicine.*

Char Bhanjyang Center for Health (Swinfen House)  
[www.swinfencharitabletrust.org](http://www.swinfencharitabletrust.org)

“Telemedicine has great potential to advance Nepal's medical field, both in the rural and urban parts of the country.



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