

A FINEPRINT BOOKCLUB FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

# READ

Jan-March 2007 | Issue-01

**What  
Kathmandu  
is reading**

**Sarubhakta  
shares his  
experience of  
growing up with  
books**

## Nepali publishing How is it faring?

Despite its limitations, the Nepali publishing industry has started to produce some quality books. Now it should build on the good works being done, if it wants to have a major share in the Nepali book market, which is being dominated by foreign books



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# LOOKING BACK, AHEAD



Essays on the Sociology  
of Nepal

Chaitanya Mishra

**THE FIRST BOOK IN ENGLISH BY ARGUABLY THE  
BEST SOCIOLOGIST IN THE COUNTRY.**

Essays on the Sociology of Nepal brings together for THE FIRST TIME ESSAYS WRITTEN OVER THE LAST TWO DECADES but which had remained scattered in edited volumes and journals in and outside the country. The book contains some of the essays like "Development and Underdevelopment" which have become classics in the field of sociology and the most recent essays on the Maoist Struggle and the 2006 political transition. The last essay explains that the transition in Nepal was inevitable, only the army and the king and, to a certain extent, the Maoist delayed it, and why the future transitions are fraught with uncertainty.

The book in its entirety helps one understand the sociological landscape of Nepal and will be indispensable to academics, researchers, sociology students, development activists and to anyone interested in Nepali politics.

Releasing early february 2007

**FinePrint**  
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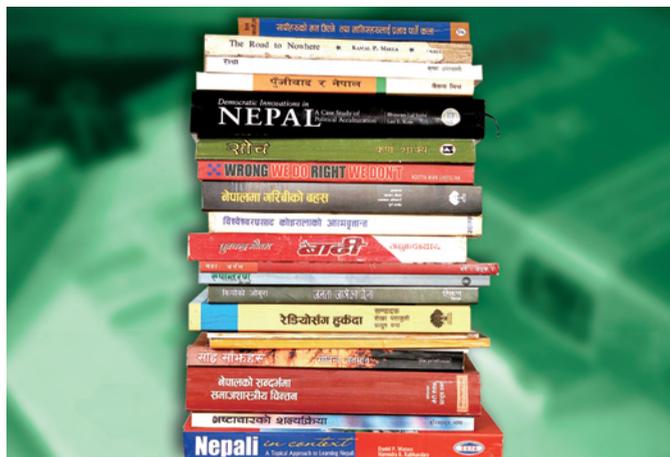
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Readers can send in their views to [fbbookclub@wlink.com.np](mailto:fbbookclub@wlink.com.np) or at P.O.Box: 14432 Anamnagar, Kathmandu

## COVER STORY

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The Nepali publishing industry has grown in leaps and bounds in the last 15-16 years. The number of books published has jumped off. The production quality—though not yet first-rate—has gone up considerably. Disappointingly, the content hasn't improved a great deal. It's time our publishing industry did something about it

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## Dear Reader,

When we started the Book Club we had no idea that we would publish **Read**. We had thought we would bring out 500 copies of an 8-page newsletter containing some book related articles, reviews and information about new releases. But when we started to work on it, we had other ideas. This is our first issue let's make it thicker, said one colleague. Why not bring it out in colour, added another.

We decided to give it a go and started approaching the advertisers. Some responded positively, others didn't. At the end of the day, however, we knew we can gather enough ads, at least for the first issue, to cover the expenses of the magazine even if we added a few more pages to it. Ambitious Niraj became more ambitious and said let's print 5,000 copies and splash Kathmandu with **Read**. We agreed, thrilled about signalling our arrival with a bang. That's how we ended up bringing out an ambitious, full-fledge colour magazine.

And the response has been overwhelmingly good. Many have personally congratulated us for what they think is a wonderful initiative. We have come across at least three persons who said, "I am dying to read books after reading the magazine." It gladdens us to hear that **Read** is inspiring people to read.

There were, however, a few shortcomings. There were quite a few editorial oversights that we could have avoided, if we didn't have to go home for Dashain rushing the magazine to print. We could have also improved the layout and the cover design. Niraj in particular was not happy about them and had wanted to redo them and bring the magazine out after Dashain. We on the other hand were adamant that it should come out before Dashain, as some of the ads had to do with Dashain.

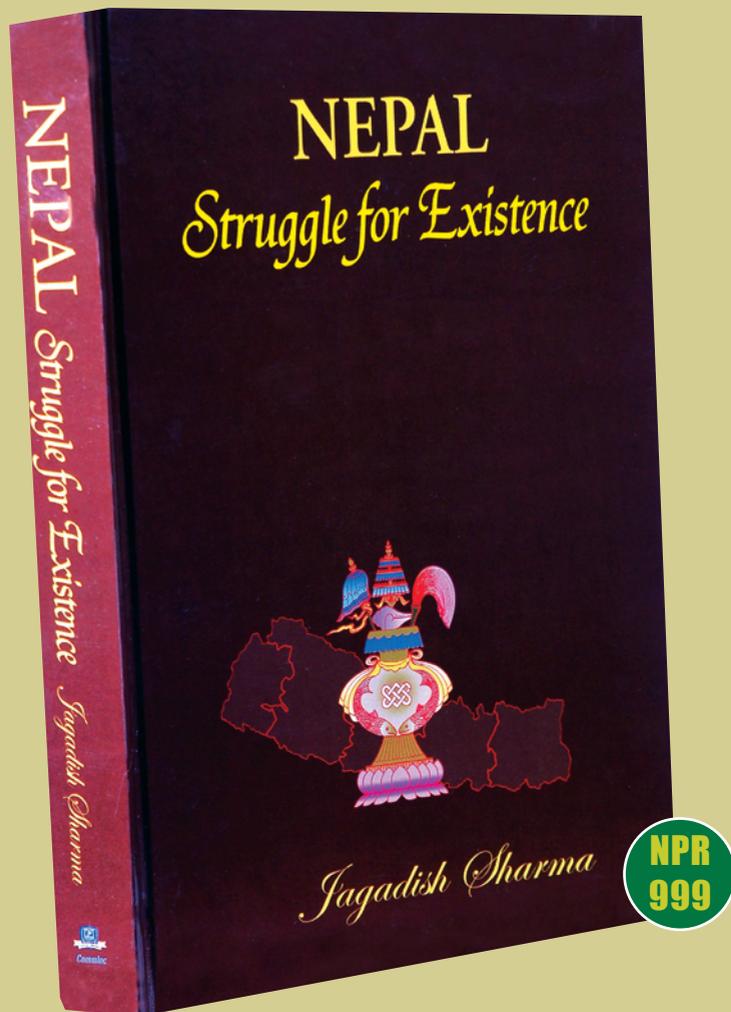
Also the content was not as weighty as we would have liked them to be and thus the magazine made for a light (though entertaining?) read. We promise you that **Read** will be better, sleeker, weightier and, hopefully, thicker in the subsequent issues.

Write to us—please, please—and tell us what you think of **Read**.

## Read Team

Ajit Baral  
Jagannath Lamichhane  
Kalyan Bhakta Mathema  
Maheshwor Acharya  
Niraj Bhari  
Rukesh Shrestha (Photography)  
Subarna Humagai (Layout/Design)

The struggle continues...



Now on sale

“...a better account of Nepali politics and society.”

Bhuvan Lal Joshi

“...a balanced presentation.”

Leo E. Rose

“...an extremely readable book.”

Rishikesh Shaha

For more info

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## NEPAL Struggle for Existence

*Nepal: Struggle for Existence*, a seminal work being also the first of its kind, is reprinted to meet public demand. The epilogue updates the book with a view to find measures to those who may want to continue the struggle for Nepal's independent existence.

The role Nepal has played between the Chinese and Indian civilizations and the impact it has had in creating a symbiotic culture are mentioned. Relations with China have been well depicted along with an extensive coverage of relations with India. Movement away from a satellite relationship with India to a more independent status is the hallmark of the Ph. D. thesis written under the guidance of Leo E. Rose and constitutes the first part of the book.

Unification of Nepal, the 1950 Treaty with India, Revolution launched against Rana oligarchy, Delhi Compromise, resurgence of Nepali nationalism, Anti-India movement, General Elections insetting parliamentary democracy and its ouster in 1960, *Panchayat* era, Restoration of Democracy in 1990, Royal Massacre, King's Coup and *Jana Andolan* are highlighted.

Measures include the urgent need for assimilating the Maoists in the political mainstream.

Sealing the border by revising the 1950 Treaty with India is prescribed along with the need for treating each other as the Zone of Peace.

A proposal for declaring Nepal as Free Port is made to generate massive inflow of tourists from both India and China.

Nothing empowers a person as much as a weapon. With the cue derived from the Maoists' success in mobilizing the masses by giving them guns, a national campaign to empower the downtrodden by providing military training with basic entrepreneurial skills is recommended.

*Prachanda*, the fierce one, does not seem short of leadership potential, if the record of his leading the Maoist movement to present dominance is any guide. He may in fact possess the most charismatic personality in Nepal's history since *Jung Bahadur* in 1846.

*GP Koirala* is to be duly credited for having acted as the medium for helping the Maoists and the nation to reach the present juncture of peace and respite, howsoever ephemeral.

A live instance of democratic exercise emanating from the synergy created by aligning the SPA with the Maoists may act as a trendsetter for South Asia. A contrary scenario of a very dreadful kind could emerge if the entire Himalayan subcontinent does have to pass through the present Nepali ordeal and the trauma the Chinese themselves have had to undergo in the last century. The American and Indian authorities would do well to take this factor into cognizance.

A ceremonial role to the monarchy, if the Constituent Assembly so accords with the authority to determine the line of succession fully reserved in the Parliament, would not just forge national unity but also boost Nepal's existence as a sovereign nation-state with an identity separate and distinct from that of India.

The political moves initiated by India have benefited the Nepalese but may have also led to creating problems the Indians themselves are forced to rectify afterwards.

In view of the impact the prescribed measures may create, there does exist a risk among readers for the epilogue to read first.

## About Us

The FinePrint Book Club Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation established to promote reading culture in Nepal. It does a variety of book-related activities.

### Objectives:

- Encourage people to read for pleasure and knowledge
- Bring together a community of readers in one place to discuss on books regularly
- Provide a forum for young aspiring writers where they can share and critique each other's work
- Widen readers' public sphere

### Activities:

- It organises discussion on (a) book(s) once every month and invites national and international authors for talks and reading sessions
- It brings out a quarterly books magazine called **Read**
- It sends out articles about books, reviews, news from the publishing world, etc., to its members via email
- It provides books to its members on 10 to 30 percent discounts
- It organises writing and editing workshops, short-stories/essays competitions
- It does researches on different aspects of reading

### Why become a member:

- You will get a copy of **Read** magazine for free
- You can browse books on our website and buy them on 10 to 30 percent discounts and have them home delivered to you for free—and save time and travel expenses
- You can intellectually benefit by participating in our monthly book discussions
- You can receive exclusive invitations to talks and reading programs with international authors
- You will receive our regular book and reading related e-postings
- You can be part of our young writers' forum and learn from each others

### How can one be a member ?

One can be a member by filling up a membership form. There are two types of membership: annual and life membership. The annual and life membership fees are Rs. 200 and Rs. 1000 respectively.

Tel: 4255500

E-mail: [fpbookclub@wlink.com.np](mailto:fpbookclub@wlink.com.np)

## Book Club Events

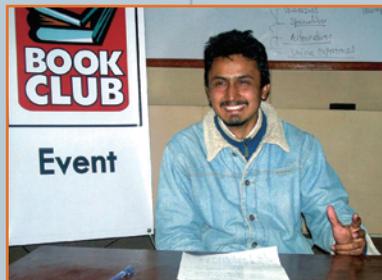
### “The Inheritance of Loss”

The FinePrint Book Club organised a discussion on “The Inheritance of Loss” by Kiran Desai at the British Council on Nov 4th. Author Manjushree Thapa led the discussion. She said the novel begins from where “Aaja Ramita Chha”, a novel by the Darjeeling writer Indra Bahadur Rai, ends, that is, just when the Gorkhaland Movement begins. For a novel, which was pruned down to 350-plus pages from the original 1500 pages, she said, the novel does not lose its narrative thread. Among others, Sujeev Shakya, a columnist with the *Nepali Times*, shared his opinions about the book which is mostly set in Kalimpong—a town where he has spent some years as student.



### “Radha”

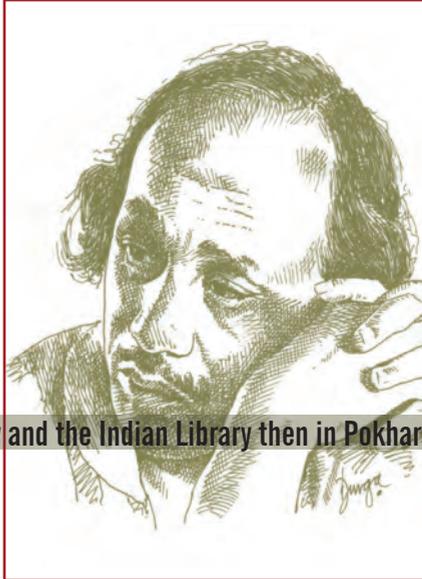
On Dec. 3rd, the Book Club discussed on “Radha”, the Madan Puraskar winning novel by Krishna Dharawasi at Martin Chautri. Pushpa Acharya, who led the discussion, analyse the book from different theoretical perspectives. The novel, he said, is good in that it tries to rewrite a mythical story from the feministic perspective, but is otherwise weak—craftwise. Other participants also pointed out weaknesses in the craft and technique and said that the novel doesn't twist and turn and is predictable.



### Editing and manuscript selection

The Book Club in association with Martin Chautri organised discussions on editing and the manuscript selection process in Nepal during the Alternative Book Fair (Dec 20-24) in the Art Council, Babarmahal. The panel for the discussion on the manuscript selection process—Tulsi Bhattarai, Bishnubivu Ghimire and Roshan Thapa Nirab—talked about how manuscripts are selected in the organisations they are/were associated with. In the second discussion on editing, Sharad Chandra Wasti and Ananda Aditya talked about the importance of editing and shared their experiences —both savoury and unsavoury—of working with different writers





“We had the British Library and the Indian Library then in Pokhara. I used to frequent those libraries as well and read western classics. I think all these readings created my literary foundation. Our character is shaped by the books we read or are influenced by in our childhood and teens”

How I came to books

## Sarubhakta

When I was a child, Pokhara was a small bazaar town. In our tole, we had only a few scattered houses. In a house further up from ours, there lived two brothers. The older one, though not dumb, was slow in everything. He used to read the Sosthani in a slow, leisurely pace and we used to listen to him, enthralled. This must be the time when I first started to become fascinated by books.

There was a vedantist, called 104 Swami Devananda, in Pokhara. He used to recite the Mahabharat in different places and we used to bunk school just to listen to him. He would recite loudly and clearly, his hands moving like that of a choir, his face as expressive as that of a dramatist, and we would listen to him rapt in attention. He was such a good orator that I have yet to come across and orator better than him. I would go near him and see the pictures in the book. His *bachan* of the Mahabharat influenced me immensely. I have read it many times over since. And I would rate it as the best book that I have read.

My father never went to school, but somehow he had learned to read and write a bit. He wanted me to study and enrolled me in class 2. I don't know why I was enrolled in class 2, instead of class 1. I was not good at study and used to hang around with friends. Later, worried that I would become a loafer, he admitted me in class 5 in a school which is now called Gandaki Boarding School. We were the first batch students. I was poor at studies and did not do well in class 5. But I started doing better and stood first in class 6.

Some of our teachers were interested in literature. I recall one of our teachers, Shanti Isaac Subba, reading out “Munamadana” to us. Americans and the British would come to teach English and some of them would read out from the Bible. They would carry books around and read them. This kind of had me in awe of books.

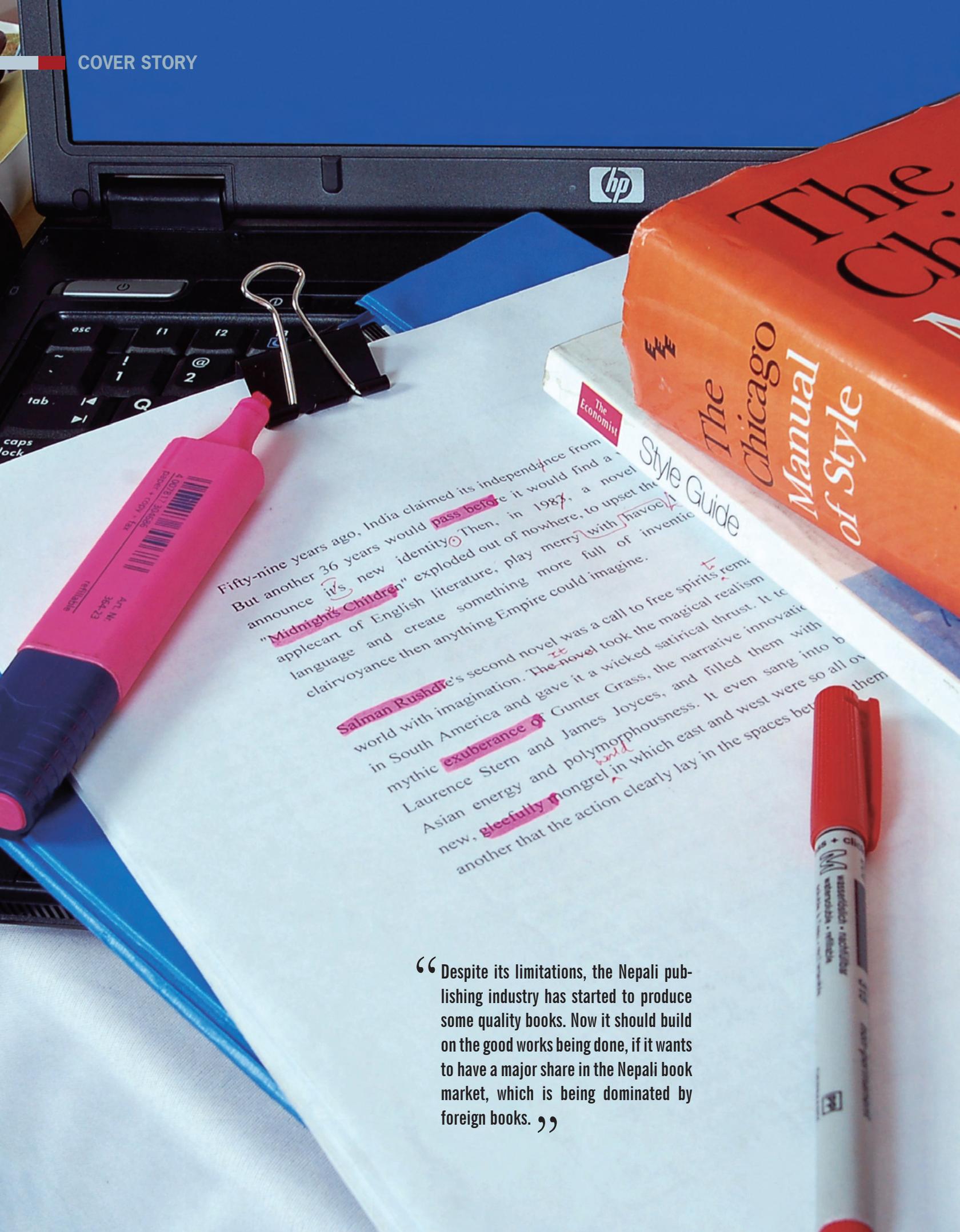
Reading outside the school hours was unheard of then. Once after dinner I went to our classroom, which was a long hall, its walls made of *bhakari* and roof thatched, carrying a lantern to read. My friends saw me going there and followed me to the hall, and we read there in the light of the lantern. Seeing us read at night in our classroom, one of our foreign teachers established a sort of library for us. Our British and American teachers would leave *Time*, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic* and books in the library after reading them and we would read them later.

We left the Gandaki Boarding School when in class 10 to protest the expulsion of Shanti Isaac Subba. At home, freed from the necessity to read textbooks, I started to read literature. There were two bookshops in Palikhechowk, Pokhara, then. I used to go there daily and scour old literary books. Books were not expensive in those times and I used to buy and read them well into the night.

After SLC, I joined Prithivi Narayan Campus but left it soon and got myself enrolled in Amrit Science College. I used to edit a literary bulletin and go to the Nepal-India Cultural Library while in the college. I read books by Gandhi and Nehru and Hindi and Bengali literature and some western classics in translation there. One of the seniors used to come to the library and issue out books from the library. But I never saw him read; he would always be seen talking. He was intelligent and a topper. Surely, he read books. I was in awe of him.

We had the British Library and the Indian Library then in Pokhara. I used to frequent those libraries as well and read western classics. I think all these readings created my literary foundation. Our character is shaped by the books we read or are influenced by in our childhood and teens.

*(Sarubhakta is an eminent writer. He has published over two-dozen books and is based in Pokhara)*



Fifty-nine years ago, India claimed its independence from  
But another 36 years would pass before it would find a  
announce its new identity. Then, in 1987, a novel  
"Midnight's Children" exploded out of nowhere, to upset the  
apprecart of English literature, play merry with havoc with  
clairvoyance than anything Empire could imagine.

Salman Rushdie's second novel was a call to free spirits rem  
in South America and gave it a wicked satirical thrust. It te  
mythic exuberance of Gunter Grass, the narrative innovat  
Laurence Stern and James Joycees, and filled them with  
Asian energy and polymorphousness. It even sang into b  
new, gleefully mongrel in which east and west were so all ov  
another that the action clearly lay in the spaces bet them

“Despite its limitations, the Nepali publishing industry has started to produce some quality books. Now it should build on the good works being done, if it wants to have a major share in the Nepali book market, which is being dominated by foreign books.”

# Nepali publishing

## How is it faring?

■ Read Team

The first printing press arrived in Nepal in 1852, four hundred and two years after Gutenberg invented it, when Janga Bahadur Rana brought it after his visit to Great Britain. It took a long time thereafter for many printing presses to come to Nepal, as the successive governments clamped down on the press, fearing the free flow of thoughts and knowledge. There was only risk, and no incentive, in printing. Not much was therefore published in Nepal before it opened itself up to the world in 1950. And what little was published (for and by Nepalis) was published mostly from Banaras.

Even after 1950, the Nepali publishing Industry didn't get an opportunity to develop itself fully as the state, even as it went about establishing a *desh sumbhaudo prajatantra* in the country, set a *karke aankha* on the press. And it's only after the promulgation of the 1990 Constitution which guaranteed the freedom of expression, among others, that the Nepali publishing industry started to grow. Each year more and more books are coming out. In 2001, 949 books were published. The number increased to 1083 in 2002. And in 2006 more than 2125 books were published (data received from the ISBN Office). These data show that the Nepali publishing industry has been making quantitative leaps. But is it making headway qualitatively? Many would say yes, but an unqualified yes.

Suman Shakya of Beesants Trading Co and Pvt. Ltd., the authorised dealer of the Heidelberg Press, thinks that printing quality has definitely gone up. He says, "Within the limitation that we have, we can bring out international quality books." Deepak Thapa, editor of Himal Books and Director of the Social Science Baha, however, is not so sure. He says, "The production quality of Nepali books has improved, but it is not quite up to the best in the world." He adds, "Only the trained eyes can spot the weaknesses in production quality."

The production quality of Nepali books, though improving, hasn't gone top notch because we are not conscious about production quality. Ramchandra Timothy of Ekta Books blames printers and publishers for it. He says, "Both printers and publishers should be conscious about quality." It is a common practice in the west to dump books with even a small technical fault, like when the cover is scratched or when a text is printed slightly offline. But here in Nepal we don't set such high standards. And put books, without hesitation, on sale even when we are well aware that they are technically imperfect.

Also, we don't have the state of the art printing machines. Timothy says, "We are still using plates and negatives where as else-

## A short take on Nepali fiction

■ Manjushree Thapa

“At most our publishers will pay someone to copy-edit or proof-read a manuscript. But they will not have in-house editors; nor will they pay for the services of one. As a result, writers are left to their own devices”

It's only over the past few years that Nepali fiction moved from being typeset by hand to being laid out on computers: suddenly, fiction has become much more pleasurable to read, at least in terms of the fonts and layouts of the books that are being published.

What has not changed much is the content. It has generally been my experience that in a collection of 10 short stories, about 3 are great. The others are mediocre or bad. You would have to place the blame for this on publishers, who do not invest in editors. At most our publishers will pay someone to copy-edit or proofread a manuscript. But they will not have in-house editors; nor will they pay for the services of one. As a result, writers are left to their own devices. Some consult their peers; others do not. Generally, Nepalis have a hard time being critical: it feels like an insult. So most of the feedback a writer receives will be positive and full of praise. The result is the publication of books that are very uneven in quality—and a readership that is loath to waste time reading these books.

But we do need publishers to understand that there is a direct link between investing in editors and finding loyal readers. There is no reason to wait ten or twenty years. This can start immediately.

*(Manjushree Thapa is the author, most recently, of Forget Kathmandu: An Elegy for Democracy)*

where they print directly from CDs.” Most of our printing houses are still using either second hand machines or first hand check machines. These machines cannot print well over a long period of time. This affects printing quality. Also, we lack trained technicians—graphic designers, layout persons. And what few trained technicians we have cannot give free rein to their creativity because we don't have 6-, 7-, 8-colour presses. Timothy says we still have some distance to go before we can compete internationally in terms of technical expertise.

The fact that publishing hasn't been still seen as an industry hasn't helped either. Shakya says, “Two or three people/groups are working at it seriously, but the rest doesn't see publishing as a serious business proposition.” Small surprise that publishing, despite its growth, hasn't been able to become as professional, and as Shakya says, one has to deal with 50 different people while publishing a book.

There are other constraints as well. For example, we don't have many varieties of paper. Papers of only certain sizes come to Nepal—and that too of indifferent quality. Also, binding is not that good. Binding is still being done manually and, therefore, there is no consistency in the work.

That the bulk of the books being published in Nepal are self published also hasn't helped. All who can put pen on paper wants to get published, satisfy their vanity. In their overwhelming enthusiasm to get published, most Nepali writers don't submit their manuscripts to publishing houses because it's usually a long and difficult process of getting published: Publishing houses will first read the summary and a sample chapter of the manuscript, judge its merit and commercial viability and then decide. This can take anywhere from 6 months to a year, even then one isn't sure that one's manuscript will be accepted. So, Nepali writers prefer to publish themselves. (It sounds strange to hear that even writers like Dhruva Chandra Gautam self-publish.) As one cannot hope to sell one's book after self-publishing

it, one wants to bring it out as cheaply as possible. Consequently, one uses low quality paper, doesn't invest in cover design and layout and production quality suffers.

Promotion is important to the sale of books. But our publishers hardly invest in promotion. Timothy says, “Ten percent of the publication cost should be allocated for promotion, but that is not happening here.” That's probably because, as Timothy says, promotional material is expensive in Nepal. And the free medium of book publicity like book reviews, columns about books, etc., are not available to us as our media is loath to give space to books-related writings. Publicity cost increases the price of the book, which undercuts the sale of the book. Since Nepali publishers cannot hope to boost the sale of their books through promotion, they have to willy-nilly contend with selling a few copies of substandardly produced books.

Having said that, it is important to state that new publishing houses like Nepalaya have started to change the face of Nepali publishing with aggressive and innovative marketing. But not many have liked the brand of aggressive marketing it used to promote Narayan Wagle's novel, “Palpasa Cafe”. Some have even branded it as “marketing terrorism” and said that this kind of marketing overshadows real talent. Kiran Shrestha of Nepalaya, however, doesn't agree. He says, “We should not undermine the intelligence of the reader. One cannot boost up sale by hype alone; the book needs to be good as well.” Ramchandra Timothy, however, is not really perturbed by the brouhaha over the Nepalaya-style of marketing. He says, “The success of “Palpasa Cafe” was a fluke. Such kind of promotion doesn't always click.” Whatever be the merit of the kind of marketing Nepalaya did, it has definitely set a trend in book marketing. And now Nepali publishers will be forced to think of innovative ways of promoting their books, which in turn, will help improve the production quality of our books.

# Will to Growth

Now to get back to the quality of the content. If production quality has shown a marked difference, there has been only a marginal improvement on the quality of the content. That's because we sorely lack the practice of editing in Nepal. Our publishing houses don't peer review the manuscripts and do the copy editing. The most they do is proof-read. No wonder then that Thapa says, "It's difficult to move from one page to another, especially for us editors who spot the mistakes." But it is unfair to blame the publishers alone for the poor content quality of the books being published in Nepal. There is a realisation among the publishers that editing is important. In fact, some publishers have even tried to hire in-house editors. But they haven't been able to because there are not many good editors around. And the few there are are extremely busy, editing reports for I/NGOs. Even if they are not that busy, they will not edit for our publishing houses as our publishing houses can't afford to pay them the kind of amount they get from I/NGOs for their editing service. This perhaps is the reason Thapa says, "I have to do everything—commissioning, copy editing, proofing and even cover designing. So, mistakes do creep in."

Our publishers also cannot have the manuscripts peer reviewed for financial reasons. The average print run of Nepali books is so small that it's financially foolish to invest in peer review. As a result, books which could have turned brilliant with a few peer comments, remains at the level of mediocrity. Also, most of our writers don't allow what they have written to be edited. Nepali books, therefore, more often than not, get facts wrong, have less than dazzling sentences and weak arguments, are riddled with small technical mistakes like wrongly used punctuations marks, just tells and don't show... Any surprise then that one has to wade through the whole book to find two-page worth of information. Which reader will have the patience to do that?

Despite the limitations, some good books—just to name a few, "State of Nepal", "A Kingdom Under Siege", "Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal", "Palpasa Cafe", "Soch", "Nepalma Samajsashtriya Chintan"—have been published in Nepal over the last few years. These books look sleek, with good cover designs, layout and quality paper. Now the Nepali publishing industry should build on them. More so because Nepali readers will no longer lap up everything thrown at them, as access to alternative mediums of knowledge have made them more knowledgeable, their taste more refined.

■ Niraj Bhari

“Doing less or nothing is always an option. And it is often an attractive option as it doesn't involve any risk. So, most of our publishers settle for what works, involves minimum uncertainties and is reasonably successful and predictable”

Don't judge a book by its cover, goes a saying. Of late, however, this cliché is getting irrelevant. People have started to realise the importance of the cover (and the overall design of the book) and that good production quality adds value to the book.

Some Nepali publishers also seemed to have understood the importance of good production quality. That's perhaps why we have seen a fair amount of changes in the way books are being packaged in Nepal in the last few years.

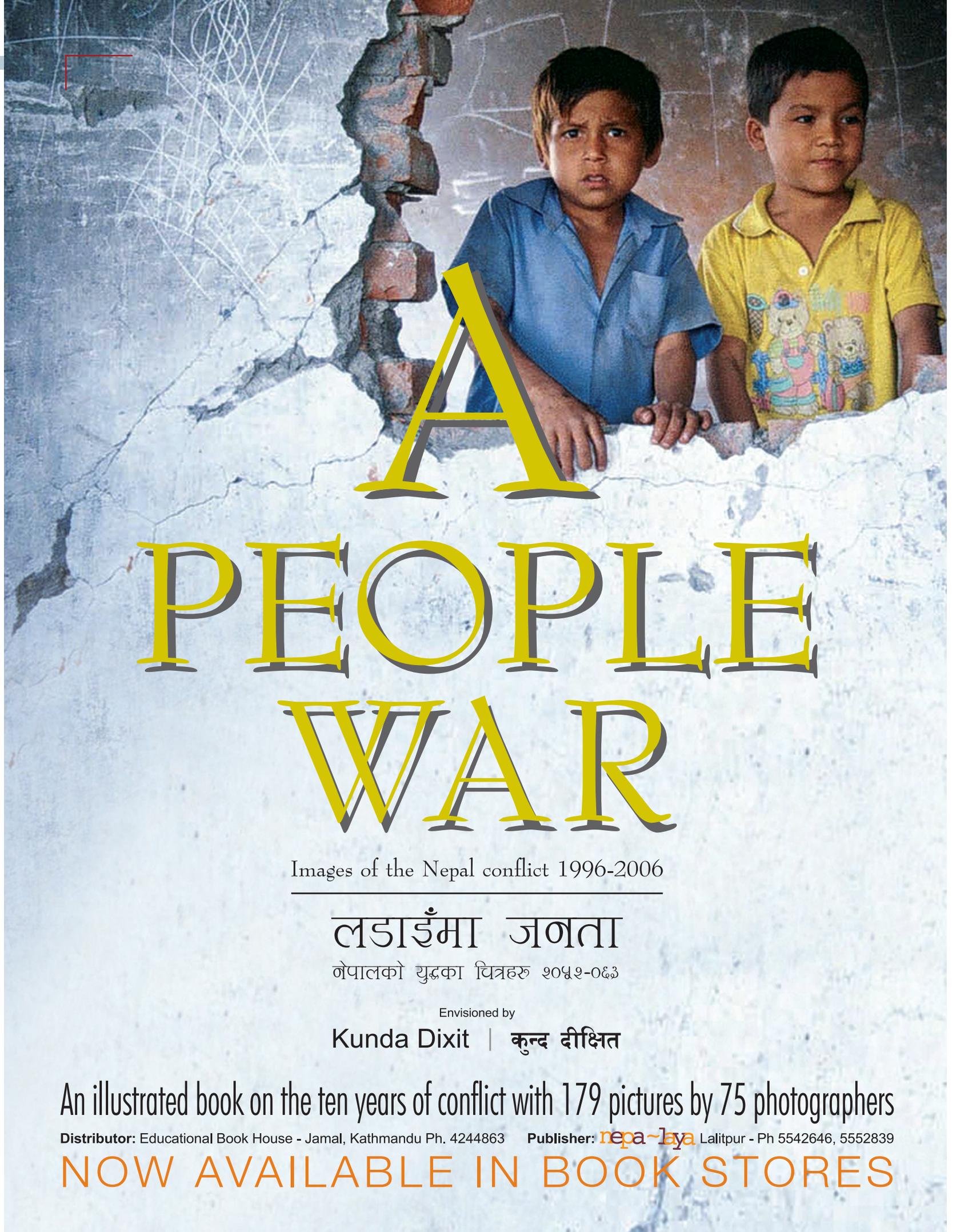
But are these changes enough? No. We need more changes, more improvement. Production quality needs to get the kind of attention it deserves. Historically, Nepalese publishing has undervalued the importance of innovation, differentiation on book packaging (the reason given for the lack of it is, *marketai sanno chha*). The reason I think is the lack of will for growth. The *chalchha* mentality.

Doing less or nothing is always an option. And it is often an attractive option as it doesn't involve any risk. So, most of our publishers settle for what works, involves minimum uncertainties and is reasonably successful and predictable.

What can then be done to get out of this rut? Focus on value added products? Yes. Continuous quality improvement hasn't got adequate attention, which is one of the reasons why we lag far behind by international standards, and why, as Ramchandra Timothy of Ekta Books says, even as the readership for English book is increasing the readership for Nepali books is going down.

Our publishing industry will have to start upgrading the production quality of books. And that can be done, to a certain extent, even with the available resources. For example, we still bind books with staplers and normal gum. By spending a few rupees extra on crease binding, we can give books a sleeker look. But we don't. Compare, for example, "Radha" and "Palpasa Cafe". Both these novels have more or less the same number of pages and there is not much difference in their prices as well, but there is a marked difference between the two in production quality. If Nepalaya can bring out a better quality book, Sajha surely can? But Sajha and company doesn't want to chart the uncharted territory.

Look at the books published in the last 20 years and you will find, give and take a few exceptions, that not much has changed in terms of aesthetic quality. Designs are important. But we hardly invest in cover designs. Also, in an attempt to cut down costs, we don't even use the available separation and CTP technologies and use the tracing technology instead. We shouldn't economise at the cost of compromising production quality. Instead, we should think about how we can make books more pleasing to read.



A photograph of two young boys looking out from a hole in a brick wall. The boy on the left is wearing a blue shirt, and the boy on the right is wearing a yellow shirt with a colorful cartoon design. The wall is made of red bricks and is heavily damaged, with a large hole in the center. The background is a textured, light-colored wall.

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# Publishing in Nepal: A cameo institutional history

“After 1990, the most successful publishers pushed their textbooks in the curricula of the ever increasing private schools and to add some prestige to their publication portfolio, they ventured to publish a few works of other types”

■ Pratyoush Onta

For over a century now, three institutional forms have played major roles on the Nepali book publishing scene: commercial outlets, the state and not-for-profit groups or organisations.

## For-profit

The first significant commercial outlets of Nepali publishing were started in the north Indian city of Banaras in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, tens of thousands of copies of many Nepali language books had been published from Banaras by unscrupulous publishers not all of whom were Nepali nationals. These were consumed by variously exiled and educated Nepalis, Gurkha soldiers and migrant workers in India and a small section of the educated class inside Nepal.

Fearing the subversive power of the printed word, the Rana rulers did not really allow “independent” commercial publishing ventures inside Nepal until well into the 1930s. However, even the few publishing houses that did operate in Nepal published compromised texts. The few magazines and books that were published often contained long passages in praise of Rana rulers. Given the small readership and limited political freedoms, commercial publishing did not really take off under the Ranas.

After the Ranas were ousted in 1951, for-profit printing rocketed, especially in the genres of textbooks and journalism. However, in a country where less than two percent of the population was literate in the early 1950s and where there was virtually no road network outside the Kathmandu Valley, this growth in printing activity did not mean that commercial publishers became millionaires overnight. Most published school or college textbooks as they were the least risk products and other items, if published, had a print-run of a few hundred at most.

The growth noticed during the 1950s was subjected to strict censorship laws and other means of control after the rise of the Panchayat system in the early 1960s. As a result, the publishers could not take risk with non-textbook type materials. No wonder that before 1990 our publishers published mostly textbooks. The market for other types of books was limited, and only publishers who had earned plenty of money from textbooks ventured to publish liter-

ary works. Given this scenario, it is no surprise that the for-profit publishing industry did not invest in peer reviewing and copyediting.

Prior censorship and confiscation of printing hardware were made illegal by the 1990 Constitution. This provided a boost to the publishing industry during the 1990s. The most successful publishers pushed their textbooks in the curricula of the ever increasing private schools and to add some prestige to their publication portfolio, they also ventured to publish a few works of other types.

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, some established publishers risked publishing a few literary and social science works. Some new commercial outlets have also pushed the terrain of the possible in both literary and non-literary genres. In so doing both these for-profit outlets have begun to pay serious attention to good publishing protocols: peer review, serious copy editing, pleasant layout, attractive cover design and some amount of publicity for their books. One can only be hopeful that the erstwhile tendency of for-profit outlets to externalise all the costs of publishing (mostly to the author and editor) and internalise all the profits is coming to an end.

## State-owned

The Rana state got into publishing texts useful for pedagogical purposes in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That state’s involvement in publishing was motivated in part by the Rana desire to counter what the then rulers considered “subversive” texts that were finding their way into Nepal from north India. It was also a response to a gradually increasing demand from teachers for materials useful in the classroom of the few schools that were allowed to operate during the fag end of Rana rule in Nepal.

State publishing began to take off after the political change of 1951. When the imperative of state-led *bikas* entered the political rhetoric of the ruling classes of Nepal in the 1950s, new forms of written products were created as evidence that Nepali society had left behind the “dark ages” of Rana Nepal. An experiment with multiparty democracy meant that materials used for political education also became the staple of state publishing.

“By engaging peer reviewers and copy editors within their limited budgets, not-for-profits publishers have forced for-profit commercial outlets to rethink their publishing protocols. This trend will result in uniformly high standards of copy editing before too long”

After the advent of the Panchayat system in 1960, the state invested a lot in the publication of various types of political propaganda. It also published a lot of materials that contributed to the creation of the cult of the Shah monarch, first King Mahendra and later his son King Birendra.

Apart from these crass items, state-supported institutions also published results of research into Nepali society and various works of literary and social scientific merit. Some of these works became standard works of reference in some fields.

After the political change of 1990, we saw an end to the publishing of Panchayat propaganda and panegyrics of Shah rulers and state-institutions continued to publish literary and other works. However, the basic model for state-owned publishing in Nepal in the post-1990 period continued to be the one that prevailed in the pre-1990 period. As a result, unsold copies of books published by state-owned outlets continued to pile up in their storage rooms. State-owned publishing languished in the quagmire of its own bureaucratic imagination.

### Not-for-profit

Not-for-profit Nepali publishing is probably as old as Nepali publishing itself. While we know little about the motivations and desires that led groups of people and sometimes their organisations to publish books and other items in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, we can be certain that some version of the idea of “service to society at large” through the printed word must have been at play. Well into the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the religious highway of this service idea dominated the motivations of not-for-profit publishers. Some time after the 1920s, the agenda for material self-improvement of Nepali society and the gaining of freedom from Rana tyranny began to dominate the imagination of social leaders and these publishing became a tool for self-improvement and the search for freedom.

After the political change of 1951, the explicitly political agenda of change pushed groups of individuals to engage in publishing activities that had a political education and social engineering edge to them. This contributed to an explosion in the volume of the printed word. However,

in a landscape where even for-profit publishers could not really benefit massively, the efforts of not-for-profit publishers were too dispersed to make a transformative impact on how publishing was to be pursued in Nepal. During much of the Panchayat era, not-for-profit publishers went big on the *bikas* theme, but despite the growth in volume, it would be an exaggeration to say this provided any new models for the organisation of not-for-profit publishing in Nepal.

The political change of 1990 was an important milestone in the development of not-for-profit publishers in Nepal. The number of NGOs engaged in advocacy and academic research started to increase slowly and at the moment, more than 120 such organisations are involved in some form of publishing. In most of the cases, these NGOs have managed to find funds within project budgets to support their publishing work. These funds have come from foreign donors. Some not-for-profit groups have had relatively rich Nepalis and companies fund their publishing ventures.

While the number of not-for-profit organisations engaged in serious publishing of books is rather small, they have managed to push their publishing ventures into the mainstream of book publishing in Nepal as far as literary and social science genres are concerned. This conclusion is based on not only the top production quality of the books published but also their contents. By engaging peer reviewers and copy editors within their limited budgets, not-for-profits publishers have forced for-profit commercial outlets to rethink their publishing protocols. This trend will result in uniformly high standards of copy editing before too long.

Unlike in India where mainstream publishing is overwhelmingly dominated by the for-profit commercial imagination, this mix of commercial and not-for-profit publishing in Nepal will provide both diversity and a different flair of competition in our publishing landscape. As for state-owned publishing, if its current operation were to be completely stopped, it would not make much difference to the book publishing industry in Nepal.

*(P. Onta is a historian associated with Martin Chautari)*

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# A bibliomaniac

“All his life, Sailendra Kumar Singh has spent his savings on books. Has it been worthwhile? Yes. Singh says, “Books are my assets””

■ Kalyan Bhakta Mathema

I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library—George Luis Borges

One day, a man with receding hairline and a wrinkled face came to the counter of the Educational Book Shop carrying a clutch of books, paid for them and said to the bookshop owner, Anjan Shrestha, “I am really happy today, but I cannot express my happiness.” His eyes were glowing and his face beaming, as if he had found something precious. We suddenly got excited and craned our neck to see which books he had bought. They were all bulky hardbound books on art, music and theatre.

When he left, we asked Anjan dai if he would read all those books. He said, “He is a book collector and buys books indiscriminately.” We were surprised.

A book collector in Nepal! It was then and there that we decided to profile him, Shailendra Kumar Singh, in **Read** magazine.

We hunted down his number and called him for an appointment. And on a Saturday afternoon we found ourselves at his gate, knocking. Mr. Singh opened the gate and gave us warm handshakes. We went in wondering if he is the same professor a relative of ours had once told us about, a professor who lived alone, with only books for company, in the house opposite hers. To us, minor book lovers, this tale of the bibliomaniac professor had sounded mythical and we had thought what it would feel like if we were to meet him. As it turned out Singh was the same professor that our relative had talked to us about.

He led us into the house, through one room, past rows and rows of books, to another with rows and rows of books, which, we guess, acted as a sitting room. There were three chairs and a small table in the centre, sitting regally. And from there he led us to his bedroom, through the corridor lined with books. A couple of paintings were hanging in the bedroom. In the centre of the bedroom was a bed—it could have been a makeshift bed fashioned out of a leather sofa—covered in white cloth. In front of the bed was a bookcase, about to be filled, where he kept the recently bought books to read. Pointing to the bookcase, he said, “This too will be full in a few days.” To the east of the bedroom was a shelf, containing a couple of antique cassette players, a

gramophone and a sizable collection of music—Nepali, Indian and western. To the other side of the corridor, which was lined with Nepali books, was a kitchen, a throwback to the eighties. On the shelf nailed on the wall were jars containing snacks—biscuits, kurkare, etc., a singleton's staple diet. The kitchenware looked un-scrubbed. The bottoms of his pressure cookers were tar-blackened and his rice cooker looked old and rickety. One of the tiles had come unstuck and the ceiling had an about-to-be-peeled-off look. The contrast couldn't have been sharper—the wealth of books and the poverty of the kitchen.

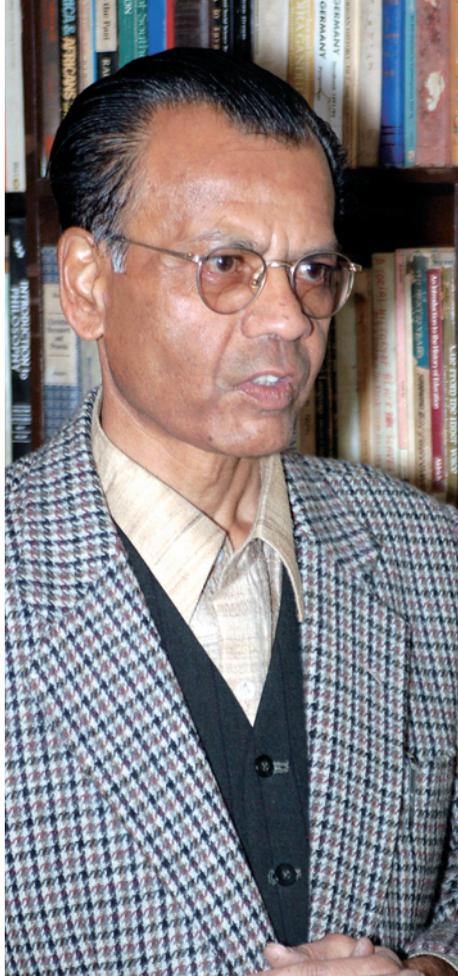
As if anticipating our amazement, he said, "The kitchen needs renovation, but it's functional. He added, "I would rather buy more books than spent money on renovation."

He requested us to be seated on the chairs and went to the kitchen to prepare tea for us, saying I will be back in two minutes while we kept looking at books around us with pleasure, picking books from the shelves and putting them back in, blowing off the dirt settling on the books for want of care.

Presently, he came with a plate of biscuits and tea. And over tea we talked about his passions for books.

He started to buy and read books early on, while he was still in school in Bihar, India. Each month he would buy 40 to 50 books of Indian classics, which would be cheaply priced at 5 to 10 paisa. But the most of those books got lost, as his friends who borrowed them failed to return them. When he joined Trichandra College in 1965 to do an intermediate in science, a "mahapurush" promised to give him three rupees for every purchase of ten rupees worth of books. To avail this opportunity, he bought 10 to 20 books every month.

After doing an honours degree from Patna University and a master's in English



**“When we came out of his house, we felt as if we were coming out of Paradise. But even in that happy mood we could not help thinking what a thief would do if he broke into the house. He would of course curse his luck. There was nothing else in the house, only books—too many to make a count of them—to steal”**

from Tribhuwan University, he started to teach. Singh says, "I took to teaching seriously and wanted to know all dimensions of the subject I was teaching and that had me interested in all kinds of subjects—from history to sociology, psychology and philosophy." The more he read the more pleasure he would get. This is how he got addicted to books and started buying books not of only English literature, his primary preoccupation, but also books on art, music, cinema. And everywhere—during the clearance sales or his travel to Indian cities, on the footpath and in the book shops. Taking out drama books by Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles, he said to us, "I bought

these at 5, 6 rupees each in India," a couple of rupees less than the price quoted in the title pages of the books.

He kept going to the shelves to tell us how and where he had bought this and that book. He got up again, the tea cup in his hand, ran his hands over a multi-volume encyclopaedia on the shelf and said, "Once a man asked me if I would like to buy a 13-volume encyclopaedia for Rs. 2, 000. At that time I was planning to buy a motorcycle. I couldn't decide whether to buy the encyclopaedia or the motorcycle. After a week, I decided to buy the encyclopaedia, for Rs. 1,700, after some bargaining, thinking that I could buy another motorcycle later but not the encyclopaedia."

Singh seems a man of modest means. Where does he then get the money from to buy books? He says, "Every body takes risk on something. I spend most of my saving on books. Books are my bank balance. I have spent many years collecting books. To me collecting books is almost like rearing a child. I have stopped meeting people in my house for fear of losing my books, and this has affected my social life. I have invested so much time, energy and money on books that taking care of them has become my top most priority." Any surprise that he is thinking of establishing a trust and giving the public access to his library.

A couple of hours we spent with him felt edifying. So, when came out of his house, we felt as if we were coming out of Paradise. But even in that happy mood we could not help thinking what a thief would do if he broke into the house. He would of course curse his luck. There was nothing else in the house, only books—too many to make a count of them—to steal.

*(Besides being a books collector, Singh is Associate Professor of English at Padma Kanya Campus, art critique, translator and poet)*



# A pilgrimage for book lovers

“It has such a large and stunning collection of books that you will get tired browsing through them,”

■ Maheshwor Acharya

A pilgrims for tourists from around the globe, Thamel is a little world. Here you find everything—intercontinental foods, wonderful hospitality, multicultural environment, people of all strips, instant nirvana, pimps and prostitutes. And also books of all genres. A famous writer—I don't now recall who, maybe Tom Raabe, the author of “Biblioholism: A Literary Addiction”—has even said that you would find books in Thamel that you wouldn't find anywhere else.

So, if you are looking for a book you would definitely want to go to Thamel. And if you are going to Thamel, just sneak into the Pilgrims Book Shop, a few metres up

from the Kathmandu Guest House—there is a sea of books out there.

The Pilgrims Book Shop was started by Rama Nand Tiwari. Tiwar entered the book business at the age of 18 when he started working for a big bookshop in Banaras. Later

when the bookshop owner died of a heart attack, Tiwari started on his own selling books on a blanket outside the Government Tourist Bungalow, Banaras. When he had enough money for a small bookshop, he rented a room next to the Bungalow and started the Pilgrims

Book Shop. His brother, Krishna Nand, would man the bookshop while he would go looking for books. With time, the bookshop grew and the brothers made friends with people like Paul Wagner of the Australian Book Company and John Synder who helped them with merchandising and retail. The bookshop moved to Nepal in 1984, gradually expanding itself. Now it is the largest bookshop in Nepal.

It has around 70,000 titles. The titles are neatly arranged under genres—fiction, art, architecture, music, spirituality, yoga, travel, religion, homeopathy, history, biography, memoir. As you entered the bookshop, you



come across a rack containing international magazines like *International Herald Tribune*, German national newspaper *Die-Zeit and Londe Diplomatique*, *National Geographic*, *Forbes*, *Vogue*, etc., and publications of the bookshop displayed on a table. Past the books on religion, there are travel books and next to them books about Nepal. A student from Tokyo University was taking books out from the shelves of the Nepal section, reading the blurbs and putting them back when I happened to be there. She was looking for books for her research on the Gurung community and she said shyly, "I found many good books on Nepal here."

There are more books upstairs. Loitering in the maze of books I came across a section on children books and instantly my face lit up seeing Roald Dahls, Ruskin Bonds, Dr Seusses, Enid Blytons, "Jataka Tales". Though not a child anymore, I felt like spending some time there. There is something naïve and beautiful about children books that keep drawing me to them. If you are taking children to the bookshop, don't forget to have them look at the section.



“ It has also a sizable collection of about five thousands antiquarian and rare books ”

The bookshop has so many books that one is bound to get tired wading through them. If you get tired, or hungry, you can always go to the adjoining Feed and Read Garden Restaurant and read a book tucking into the food or drinking beer (or still better tongba in this winter). But don't take the book from the bookshop, unless you have bought it; it's a no no.

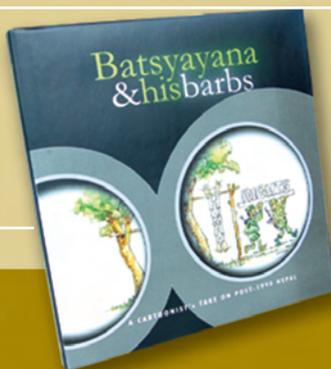
It has also a sizable collection of about five thousand antiquarian and rare books. No wonder that Sanjog Thapaliya, a student from TU, said, "We find books here that are not available anywhere else." The bookshop also provide personalised services as well. For example, if requested, it leather binds the book and inscribe your personal message in golden letters.



The Pilgrims Book Shop has an outlet in Pulchowk; it was opened in 1999. The Pulchowk outlet houses the Inner Eye Art Gallery and a rare book collection of over 25,000 volumes and an extensive collection of new books specialising in Himalayan subjects. Spreading on over 9,000 square feet of floors, it in itself is one of the largest bookstores in South Asia.

The Pilgrims Bookshop, however, is more than a bookshop. The Pilgrims website says, "Success of handicraft sales at the Pilgrims Book House led to the opening of Didi's Boutique. Didi's product line has since expanded into antiques, perfumes, handmade stationery, oils, jewellery and fabrics." So, you can buy souvenirs, handicrafts and garments as well there. It has allocated five rooms for the display of handicrafts, thanka paintings, herbal products, post cards, music albums, musical instruments.

With so many books to choose from, the Pilgrims Book Shop is a Mecca for book lovers—a Mecca every book lover should visit at least once a week, not once a year.



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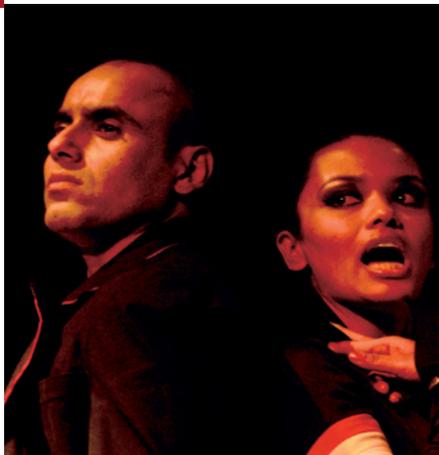
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The above picture is from the play Virtual Reality, a play written by Shivani Singh Tharu, and performed by the 1st batch students of the Actors' Studio. The play has been staged in Nepal and various theatre festivals in India.

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# “Radha” and revisionism

■ Pushpa Raj Acharya

Literature sometimes draws symbolism from myths and sometimes even rewrites them. When myth is re-textualised, the resultant intertext shows up the possibilities of reassessing a society and its values from a new position. Madan Mani Dixit does this in his magnum opus “Madhavi”, taking a story from the Mahabharata. The novel, reconstructing the society of the post-Vedic period with a Marxist twist to an extent, presents the plight of a woman who sacrifices her life to the cause of a man only to find her desires crushed under the weight of patriarchal values.

Like Dixit, Krishna Dharawasi, in his Madan Puraskar winning novel, “Radha”, tries to rewrite a tragic love story of a woman in the Mahabharata, but from a feminist perspective—a perspective so feminist that the writer wants to call the resultant story “Radha Purana”. A male writer’s overtly avowed feminist position calls for an evaluation of his claim on discourse, both conscious and unconscious. But I will leave it to feminist writers to do the evaluation (justifiably so) and discuss the novel in the context of postmodernist, revisionist historiography, which uncovers the embedded elitist, patriarchal ideologies of canonised works.

But first the story. Krishna (a character, not the writer) goes to a night-picnic with his *gopini* friends. The innocuous looking picnic creates a scandal in the village—a scandal that affects Radha the most. Then, Krishna leaves Braj promising Radha that he will return. He lives in the jungle, raising militias, Maoist style, to fight King Kansa. Later, Krishna attacks Mathura and kills Kansa and his allies and lives a relatively halcyon life in his new capital, Dwarika, with 16,108 wives (Krishna not just conquers geography but also women).

Radha stays in the village pining for Krishna with a hope that he will return one day to keep his promise. But he does not come back. Finally, she decides to go on a pilgrimage with a friend. At a holy place, she meets him who tries to affirm his love for her. But, she refuses to be his wife number 16,109 as she realises that Krishna is the manifestation of the male

ego, or the libido, and continues on her pilgrimage.

This story of Radha written by Radha herself is unearthed during an excavation at Kichakbadh—a place in the eastern part of Nepal which is a real excavation site. But no one can read it, as it is written in a different script. A yogi is then called upon to read it. It later turns out that the yogi is Aswatthama, a character in the Mahabharata, who is believed to be still alive and at large. This sudden appearance of Aswatthama, a mythical character, has us believe that Radha’s story is historical and that, by implication, myth is history. If that is indeed so, the novel successfully blurs the boundary between history and literature, as both history and literature are narratives shaped by the power-play of society: The Mahabharata is a history that marginalised the female characters and “Radha” is a work of literature that subverts the power structure in the Mahabharata from a feminist position.

Aswatthama’s appearance in the novel verifies the mythical belief that he has a very long life. However, other characters live in the distant past affirming their situatedness within the historicity the novel tries to construct. The novel also brings into play the elements of intertextuality and anachronism: During their visit to Muktinath, Radha and her friend hear a poet reciting three stanzas from Madhav Ghimire’s famous poem “Kali Gandaki”, which has the line “Kali ganga! bhana na kasari kunddachhyau shaligrama.” But here the novelist mistakes that the Kali Gandaki River originates in Machhapuchchhre.

The novel’s significance lies in its appropriation of postmodernist techniques—revisionism, intertextuality, feminist vision—the techniques which situate him at the vanguard of Leela Lekhan, a Nepali literary movement that emphasises on rewriting and intertextuality, among others.

(P. Acharya is with the Department of English, Tribhuvan University)



## “Radha”

by Krishna Dharawasi  
Sajha Prakashan, 2062

Radha successfully blurs the boundary between history and literature, as both of them are narratives shaped by the power-play of society



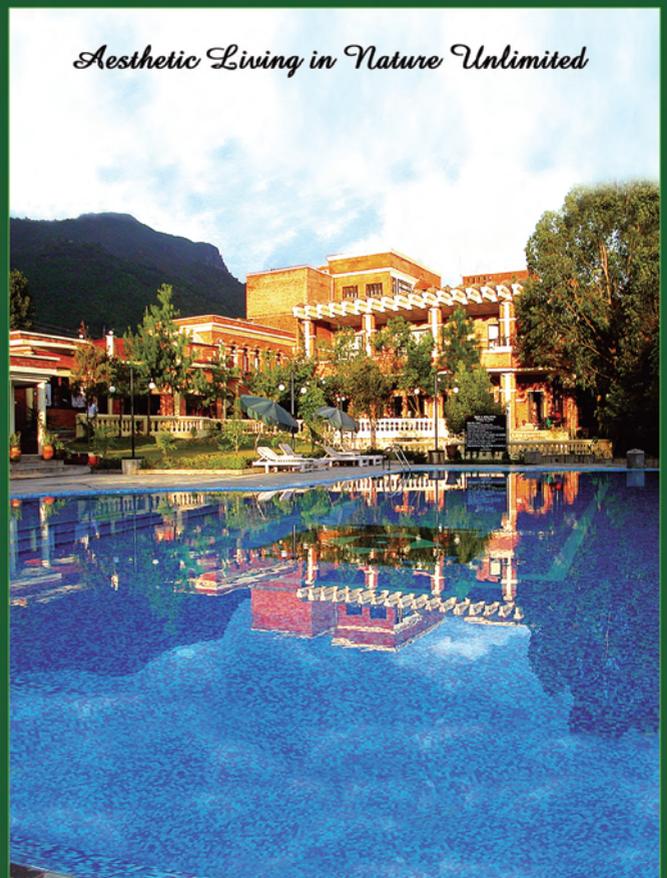
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# The tail that wags the market

■ Ashutosh Tiwari

Early this year, the Bhatbhateni Supermarket broadened its premises. Despite this expansion, there is a limit to what it can stock and sell. Bhatbhateni will therefore continue to stock only those goods that it is most likely to sell. This means a fewer choices for customers. What if Bhatbhateni went online?

Internet shelf space cost almost nothing. So, Bhatbhateni online could display hundreds of thousands of more goods, whose details could be had at the click of a mouse. And you could choose one from an array of choices and place an order. When you do this, the market, as it tends to reward scarcity, starts to behave differently because of the effects, as Chris Anderson says in “The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More”, of the long tail (TLT), which he defines as unlimited online markets.

According to Anderson’s TLT model Bhatbhateni’s physical store might carry up to only 15 varieties of, let’s say, imported beer, but its online store could well carry 1,000 more varieties. Yes, even online, many customers would still buy only 15 to 20 most popular or “hit” brands (say, the Heinekens of the world). Anderson’s insight is that the online store makes substantial money when it adds up the revenues from the sales of the remaining 985 to 980 “niche” beer (that is, Kenyan, Brazilian, South African, etc.). In other words, in a physical store, “hits”, as in what sells, matter. Online, with its unlimited shelf space, “niches”, as in what could also sell, become a surprisingly big revenue-generator.

One reason why that’s true is that online stores are free from the “tyranny of geography”. People sitting in Jhapa or Jerusalem can buy goods after checking out a huge selection of items on Bhatbhateni’s webpage. Collectively, they will buy not only the popular items, but also quirky, odd ones in large numbers—thereby driving up the sales of the latter. To illustrate this, Anderson gives an example of Bollywood movies in the US. Many American movie theaters do not show Bollywood movies because viewers of such

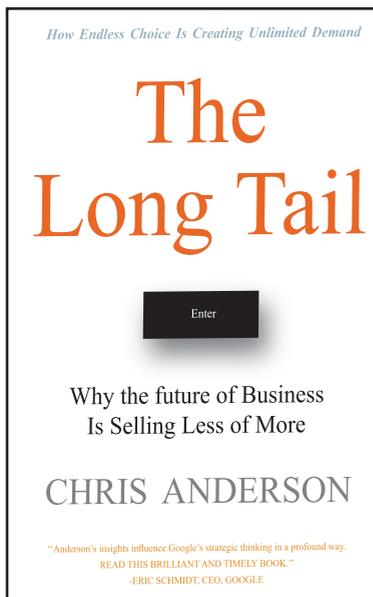
movies are too scattered to be big enough to sustain profitable two-week runs.

The result is that Bollywood movies don’t get shown. Enter Netflix, an Internet-based DVD rental company. Anderson finds Netflix making serious money by supplying—along with the usual Hollywood hits—niche creations such as obscure documentaries, art films and Bollywood movies to customers living all over the US. So what if theaters don’t show Bollywood movies as long as there’s Netflix informing customers about Bollywood by supplying DVDs?

Anderson explains the rising importance of niche products as the result of the convergence of three technological factors. First, invention of digital cameras, desktop music editing and blogging software have made it easier to create information and put it online. Second, proliferation of information-aggregating sites such as Ebay, Amazon, iTunes have made it is easier for customers to find specifically relevant information quickly. And third, Google, blogs, and online purchase recommendations have acted as filters to help customers find the goods they are likely to enjoy, but might not have found in physical stores. That means, to cite an extreme niche example, if Sanskrit-chanting punk rock music is what you like to listen to on your iPod, chances are high that you will not find it in Tik’n’Tok, Bhatbhateni or even Walmart. But you are most likely to find it on iTunes, which carries unlimited tracks. The Long Tail of massive online inventories helps you keep up with your relatively obscure interests while finding like-minded communities online.

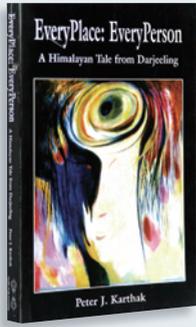
So, what lessons can Nepali businesses draw from “The Long Tail”? First, think global. Use the insight of TLT and the Internet as ways to access global customers. Second, don’t rush to create web sites. Instead, find ways to be on Google, Ebay, Epinions and others in ways that add to your products’ visibility and credibility. Having customers endorse your products is more important than what you create. And third, don’t worry about creating “hit” products. Producing niche goods is fine, for it will give you a long advantage when you sell online to global customers.

*(Ashutosh Tiwari, a business columnist for the Nepali Times, lives in Dhaka, Bangladesh where he is with the International Finance Corporation)*



“The Long Tail”  
by Chris Anderson  
Hyperion, 2006

Producing  
hit products  
is fine, but  
one has to go  
online if one  
is to compete  
globally



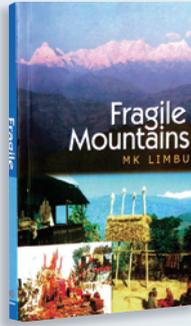
## Every Place: Every Person

Author-Peter J Karthak  
Genre-Novel  
Price-Rs 300  
Published by-Vajra Publications  
Phone no-4220562  
www.vajrabooks.com.np

Peter Karthak's prose burns with energy in this dark, compelling novel that is simultaneously a meditation on postcolonial displacement and the nature of good and evil. It also marks him as a potent voice in Nepali literature in English.

## Fragile Mountains

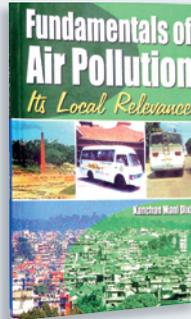
Author-M K Limbu  
Genre-Novel  
Price-Rs. 450  
Published by-Vajra Publications  
Phone no.-4220562  
www.vajrabooks.com.np



Fragile Mountains is a story of three generations of a family who hope and dream and live an ordinary life until they find themselves trapped in the midst of a bloody Maoist rebellion. It's also about the tradition and culture of the Limbu people, an ancient and proud race of Mangoloid stock who have made the eastern hills of Nepal their home for countless centuries.

## Fundamentals of Air Pollution: Its Local Relevance

Author-Kanchan Mani Dixit  
Price-Rs. 225  
Published by-Ekta Books, Phone no. 4245787  
www.ektabooks.com



This book is a concise presentation of the main issues of air pollution and addresses the topic. It attempts to acquaint the reader with the current status of air pollution, its concepts and proper management. Abundant examples relevant to the

local context are incorporated.

## Media Adhyayan

Edited by Devraj Humagain et. al.  
Price-Rs 150  
Published by-Martin Chautari, Phone no. 4240243  
www.martinchautari.org.np

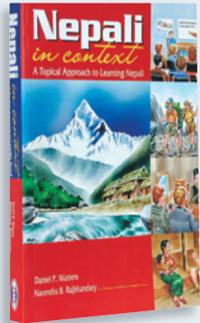
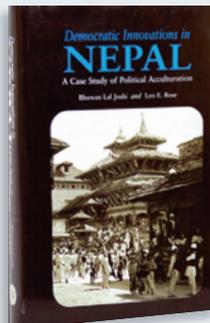
First of its kind in Nepal, Media Adhyayan is an annual media journal. This first issue contains articles, commentaries on the media—both print and electronic—memoirs of media personnel, book reviews and an interview with the president of the Nepal Press Council.



## Democratic Innovations in Nepal: A Case Study of Political Acculturation

Author-Bhuwan Lal Joshi & Leo E. Rose  
Price-Rs 890  
Published by-Mandala Publication  
Phone no.4227711  
www.mandalabookpoint.com

When in 1950 the country was suddenly jolted out of its reverie by a revolution, partly induced by exigencies of international politics but firmly committed to the establishment of a democratic form of government, the Nepali elites became preoccupied with a mammoth political experiment in adapting a modern, essentially Western, concept of government to a social context that lacked most of the basic prerequisites. The present study is a detailed, objective examination of this political process during the first fourteen years of the experiment.



## Nepali in Context: A Topical Approach to Learning Nepali

Author-Daniel P Watters /Narendra B Rajbhandary  
Price-Rs 750  
Published by-Ekta Books, Phone no.4245787  
www.ektabooks.com

Useful of common topics encountered in everyday life, Frequent and current vocabulary, Useful phrases that are basic, yet practical, Creative texts that illustrate grammar and vocabulary usage, Clear and concise grammar explanations, Conversation tools

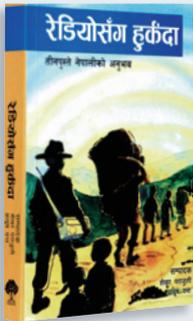
such as role playing, games, discussion topics...

## Radiosanga Hurkanda: Tinpuste Nepaliko Anubhav

Edited by- Shekhar Parajuli & Pratyoush Onta  
Price-Rs 225  
Published by-Martin Chautari, Phone no.4240243  
www.martinchautari.org.np

It is a compilation of memoirs by sixty four people—from three different generations—about the experience of growing up listening to the radio. The memoirs depict different dimensions of the radio hearing procedure and also provide a glance of

the socio-cultural and economic environments of the contemporary period

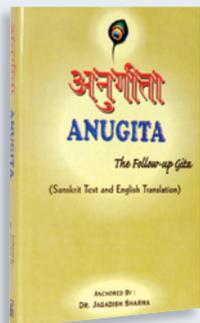


## Anugita: The Follow-up Gita

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

When Arjuna expresses a desire for the repeat recital of Gita, Shree Krishna obliges him with a version known as Anugita. By virtue of its being Shree Krishna's last exhortation, it may subsequently come to be known as his own gita bhasya. Anugita may help deepen the understanding of the actual message Shree Krishna tried to impart to Arjuna when he

first recited it and ultimately also help facilitate the settlement of the on-going debate on karma, bhakti and gnana yoga. The book has Foreword by Dr. Karan Singh and Commentary by Madan Mani Dixit. The next edition due to be out soon will include Exposition from Atal Bihari Vajpayee.



# The book I have loved the most

■ Suman Joshi, CEO, Laxmi Bank

I read “The Tipping Point” while on a trip to Singapore last year. I took the Thai flight via Bangkok. I surprised myself when I finished reading the book before I touched down in Singapore.

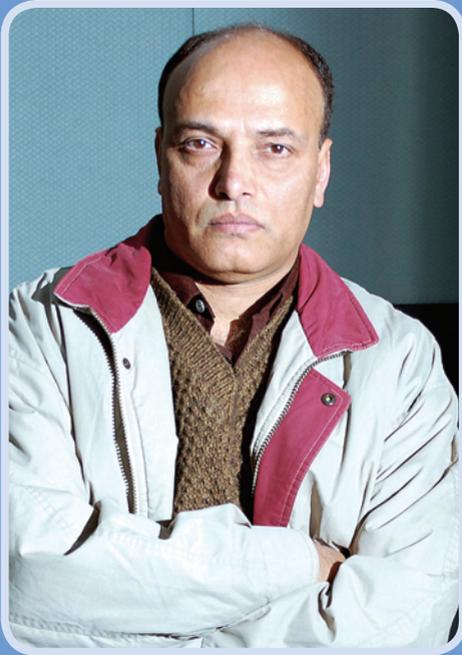
This book explains how ideas or behaviours take shape and cross a threshold beyond which they become phenomenal “hits”. The threshold or the “tipping point” is that magic moment when seemingly wild ideas become “natural” behaviours and wacky products become trendy. Malcom Gladwell, the author, analyses and goes deeper into the surface of many familiar successful products and occurrences in the world to explain the phenomenon of the “tipping point” and the ensuing widespread social behaviour comparable to an epidemic of a contagious disease. The book is a deeply researched and well argued piece of work. The presentation is full of interesting data, anecdotes and real-world examples that make it readable and enjoyable, and leaves a lasting impact. For example, after having read this book, I think of how the tipping point phenomenon worked in relation to revival of this brand of shoes every time I visit a Hush Puppies store and it makes me feel that one could pull off similar successes in his/her area of business, profession or community. One almost gets the confidence to “change the world”.

Gladwell convinces you that it is possible for individuals to play pivotal roles in selling a product, idea or spreading a piece of information. His formula for winning appears so simple that you wonder why more products and ideas haven’t sold like hot cakes. The concept of Connectors, Mavens and Salesmen is truly convincing and it’s worthwhile for management executives particularly in communications and sales areas to embrace it. This book got me thinking for several days and I find myself discussing it with my colleagues every now and then.

A truly fascinating book that makes you see the world in a different light. Don’t miss it.



## > What Kathmandu is reading?



> **Ajaya Ghimire,**  
Chairman  
Ace Institute of Management

I am not a regular and disciplined reader, even though I love and enjoy reading. I never finish or take months to finish many books. However, there are times, seldom though, when I finish three or four books in a week.

The last book I recall reading from cover to cover is "The Wisdom of Crowds" by James Surowiecki. The book, as its subtitle suggests, is about "why many are smarter than the few". I enjoyed the book in terms of both its value and the pleasure of reading. I am presently reading three books. First, "The Monk and the Philosopher: East Meets West in the Father-Son Dialogue" by Jean Francois Revel and Matthieu Ricard, translated by John Canti. The book is about philosophical aspects of life. Second, "Man and His Symbols", conceived and edited by Carl Jung, and it is a collection of essays especially on how to understand the unconscious human mind. Third, "Montessori Today" by Paula Polk Lillard. This book discusses an approach to children education and my recent involvement in a school motivated me to pick this one from the book store.

I would like to finish them early but each one of them needs to be read with concentration.



> **Prateebha Tuladhar Rajbhandari**  
Editor, English News Desk,  
Kantipur Television

When it comes to books, I stockpile. Although I've owned V.S. Naipaul's "Beyond Belief" for two years now, I've only just started reading it. The book takes the reader on a journey through Indonesia's society of Islamic converts. It provides an insight into a section of the country which I am familiar with only by name. The best way to write about a journey, Naipaul writes, is not to talk about the place but the people one comes across. On the basis of what I have read so far I can say that Naipaul has done that remarkably well.

Ornate writing bores me. Naipaul's is anything but flowery. His language is simple and his description of the people and places he traverses vivid and gripping. The book talks about how the converts are unable to easily abandon their roots of what one may call pagan practices.

I'm a lazy reader. I read books slowly, sometimes re-reading certain parts I relish. I'm also in the habit of reading more than one book at a time. I'm also reading Vikram Chandra's collection of short stories, "Love and Longing in Bombay." Chandra's urban characters are like the people I am acquainted with. It's been fun reading the book.



## Q&A

A rookie reporter with the English newsmagazine in 1984, Deepak Thapa has come a long way in a little over two decades. Presently, Director at the Social Science Baha, Thapa has worked for *Himal Souths Asian* and the *Nepali Times* and Himal Association as editor. He has edited a couple of books and written “The Kingdom Under Siege”, a book about the Maoist insurgency.

### On how much and when you read

Not as much as I used to or would like to. And the reading is generally confined to just before going to bed. Unless, of course, I am travelling which is when all I do is read, whether newspapers, magazines or books.

### On the kind of books you read

Used to be a lot of fiction, but now more of non-fiction, although I do make it a point to catch up on a novel now and then.

### On the importance of reading

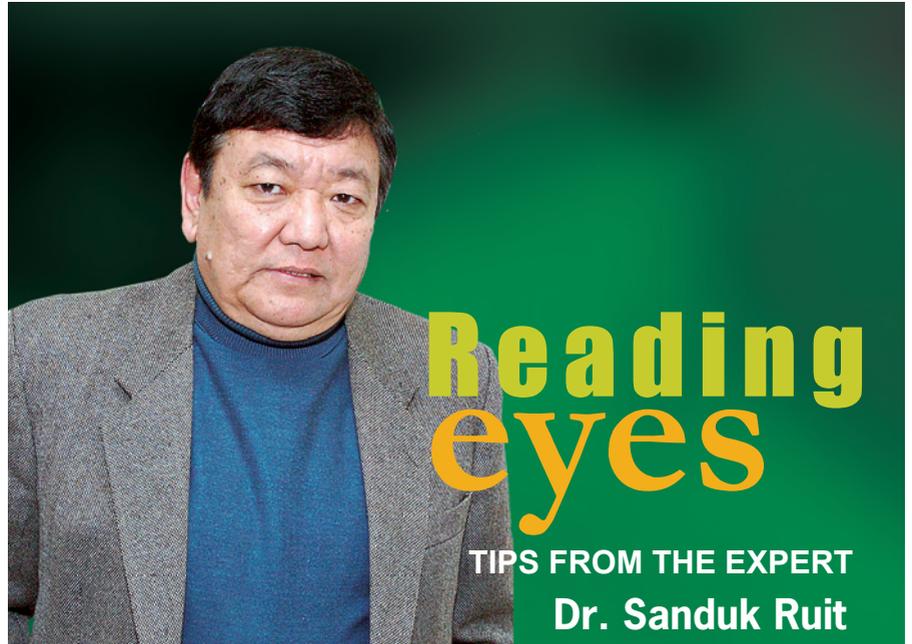
Can't be overemphasised. No matter what one reads, it opens up a new world on viewing life. Even trashy novels do that even if they oftentimes provide a rather skewed picture of the world. But reading is certainly much more enjoyable any day than soaking in whatever comes on TV (although one has to remind oneself time and again of this fact).

### The books you would like to recommend and why

Too many to recommend. One's frame of mind at the time determines what one picks up to read. But the measure of a good book certainly is that it should grip you once you get into it. Or, at least it works that way almost all the time.

### On how the technological changes are affecting the way we read

I guess we are affected in multiple ways. For someone like me, besides spectacular events which are always better on a visual medium, unless we see news in print, it becomes quite difficult to filter in the information. And it doesn't matter whether the print is in the form of newspapers or over the internet. Besides, the internet has made accessible a whole range of reading material that one could only dream of till just a few years ago. Imagine being able to read in real time the op-eds in *the Guardian* or the commentaries in *the Nation*. Take the site Arts and Letters Daily. I just wish I had the luxury to surf through it every day. There is no bit of information that one can't get over the internet. Wikipedia is a wonder. But, of course, nothing like sitting down with a good book in hand. Old habits die hard, I guess.



In ophthalmology, reading is defined as symbols detected by the eyes and identified by the membrane.

You can read 2-6 hours a day, according to your requirement. There is no specific reading time. You should read when you are most fresh. Some feel fresh in the morning; others in the evening. The important thing is to be particular about the reading hygiene.

People think that there is enormous pressure on the eyes while reading. That's a wrong perception: Eyes work normally while reading. However, while watching TV and working on the computer, there is pressure on the eyes as there are lots of movements on the screen. You need to continually gaze while watching TV. If you watch TV continuously your eyelids blink less and your eyes go dry. You need to keep blinking your eyes as it moistens the eyeballs. Continuous gazing dries up the eyeballs and weakens the eyes. You therefore need to give your eyes a rest after every 25-30 minutes while working on the computer and avoid watching TV for a long stretch of time. Watching TV and working on the computer doesn't decrease eye power, but you should not watch TV and spent time at the computer unnecessarily.

It is better to read staying upright than lying supine. You should sit on the floor and read, the book placed on the low lying table and parallel to the ground. You should also be careful about the light while reading. You should not read in the bright sunlight, as the reflection (on the page) of the bright sunlight decreases the power of the eyes. You should, therefore, keep the book in the shade and read.

The light should come from your back and you should avoid reading in the dim light. You can use a table lamp to read and write. But you have to put it on your right side. The colour of the room also affects the eyes. So, the walls of the room should be white, sky blue or light green.

Normally eyes don't go moist while reading. If your eyes do, you should consult a specialist. Blocking of the gland passage or some other things might have caused your eyes to go teary.

Eyes are part of the body; if you maintain your body your eyes will be fine automatically. So keep yourself healthy.

(As told to Maheshwor Acharya)

# Chaitanya Mishra

Arguably the best sociologist in the country, **Chaitanya Mishra** has published scholarly articles in many national and international journals. He has co-written, among others, the Human Development Report, 1998 and co-edited “Development Practices in Nepal” and published a book, “Nepal ra Punjibad” and his collection of essays on the sociology of nepal is coming out in early February 2007.



## When did you start to read ?

Depends on how “reading” is defined. I started with reading the Nepali “Varnamala” and the English “First Book” early on, probably at three. Not on my own volition though. The first “text” I enjoyed reading was a book of maps—of Nepal, India and the world. The “Oxford Atlas” was the first and powerful lens which opened, as it were, the universe to me. “Nehru’s Letters”, which we had to read in Grade 9-10, was an eye-opener as well. But I really started enjoying the formal curricula only in college.

## Which is your favourite children book ?

I am not sure about this. I did enjoy reading the Panchatantra stories and the Aesop fables

when I was seven or eight. I also enjoyed the comic books like “Superman”. I also read a large volume of the Mahabharata and found it exhilarating. Then, slowly, I graduated to Hindi and English detective novels.

## Which books are you reading at present ?

A book on the causes of conflict in Africa (“The Political Economy of Armed Conflict in Africa” edited by Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, London: Lynne Rienner) and a book on development and democracy (“Active Social Capital: Tracing the Roots of Development and Democracy” by Anirudh Krishna, New York: Columbia University).

## What kind of books do you usually read ?

I am interested in books on modern world history; books that trace out relationships among human lives, current events, social structures and historical patterns; books that explain diversity and inequality.

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

Possibly two, without claiming that I read them cover-to-cover.

## Which book has influenced you the most ?

Many have. Illustratively, Karl Marx’s “Capital”—the first 100 pages—and Immanuel Wallerstein’s multi-volume “The Modern World System”.

I also found Mahatma Gandhi’s “My Experiments with Truth” fascinating.

## Which is your favourite international writer ?

Among contemporary “academic” writers, Immanuel Wallerstein.

## Which is your favourite Nepali writer?

Mahesh Chandra Regmi.

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

“Nepalko Sandarbhamasama-jshastriya Chintan” edited by Mary des Chen and Pratyoush Onta (Kathmandu: Social Science Baha, 2004). It covers a wide canvas in social studies. It is also written in the Nepali language.

# Wow! Words

“Each new word I would come across would excite me; give me some sense of achievement. No wonder I would plough through books when most of my friends would flung aside the books they were reading because of the sheer boredom of having to flip the dictionary over to see the meanings of unfamiliar words they would come across in each paragraph,”

■ Ajit Baral

I read full time partly because I have no other thing to do and partly because I am hooked to books. But surprisingly for a compulsive reader like me, I came to books late—after my school, well past the age when I should have been reading Enid Blytons and Hardy Boys. It was my fascination with new words that brought me to books.

When I was in class seven, we were given a long list of big words which we had never heard before to mug up in preparation for an inter-school spelling contest. We came second in the contest, thanks to a mistake I made in the final in spelling a word beginning with the letter “s”—sur-reptitious, perhaps. Each of us was given a diary for coming second. Out of nowhere I thought of jotting down the meanings of the unheard of words on the list, and started writing them down in the diary. Often when I was bored or I had nothing to do in particular, I would flip over the pages of the diary, hide the meanings of the words with my palm and see if I still remembered their meanings. This was the start of my fascination with words. But while in school I was too busy playing card or playing football and cricket, and had little time for books. And I don’t think I added any new words other than those I learned from school textbooks to my vocabulary. However, that changed when I passed out of school.

I joined college, but was very irregular in attending my classes, which gave me more time than I could possibly while away playing cricket or football. Naturally, books began to observe the rest of my time. Somehow my fascination with words had remained with me and I kept reading books just to run across new words. Each new word I would come across would excite me, give me some sense of achievement. No wonder I would plough through books when most of my friends would flung aside the books they were reading because of the sheer boredom of having to flip the dictionary over to see the meanings of unfamiliar

words they would come across in each paragraph. Not just that, I would also try to find ways to use each fanciful word that I would run into in my articles—to seem learned.

Fortunately, we had a few books to read at home. My brother was doing a master’s in science, but was trying to get an additional degree in English and was reading English novels prescribed in the BA syllabus. That was the period when I read Ernest Hemingway’s “A Farewell to Arms”, Charles Dicken’s “Oliver Twist”, Jerome K Jerome’s “Three Men in a Boat” and Dostoevsky’s “Crime and Punishment”. These books whetted my appetite for books. And I started to buy books.

However, I never used to have enough money with me. So, I would go to Lakeside, Pokhara, and look for second hand books, and invariably buy tomes because I could read them longer. I read Tolstoy’s “War and Peace” and “Anna Karenina”, DH Lawrence’s “Pickwick Papers”, Tom Clancy’s “Executive Orders”—all more than 800-page books—during this reading orgy. I am glad I read them then. I don’t think I have the patience to read 800-page books now. Who has in today’s world of the instant?

I may not have the patience to read a tome of a book now, but I am happy that I am as voracious a reader as before. Sadly, it’s been some years since I stopped writing down the meanings of new words. That’s probably because of complacency. I have come to believe that I have enough vocabulary to express myself. Moreover, I encounter very few new words these days and can continue reading without compromising the meaning of a sentence or a paragraph. But I am beginning to wonder if my smugness is justified. A huge vocabulary may not necessarily be a great advantage, but it doesn’t harm you to have it, either. So, of late, I have started going through the book “A Word a Day” by word maven Anu Garg and enjoying it immensely. After all, words, as Garg says, are something more than just a string of letters to memorise for a test.