



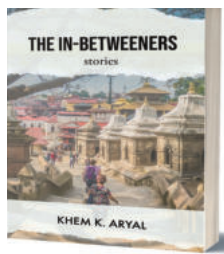
Policy Dilemma In Agriculture Sector

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THE RISING NEPAL

Friday

SUPPLEMENT



Khem K. Aryal's In-Between Sway

C

Friday, January 26, 2024

risingnepaldaily.com

Arunachal: A Sweet Connection With Nepalis



Namrata Sharma

Many provinces in India have a presence of migrant Nepalis. Many people like Nepalis in Arunachal Pradesh. Nepalis here are involved in various professions. There are also Nepali speakers from Arunachal and Assam who are responsible for the arrangement of food at the festival, the management of issues like homestays, and 'event management'.

“Number one, we look like Nepalis. We are with Nepalis at home and in the jungles, and there are many Nepalis in Arunachal Pradesh,” says Tokbom Borang, owner of the NEFA Orange farm in Dambuk, Arunachal Pradesh. Borang stated that the Arunachalis trust Nepalis because they don't lie. “Maybe out of 100, one or two drink or do otherwise, but 80 per cent of the Nepalis are very trustworthy. Indian citizens here and are very much respected, so I like Nepalis very much,” he continued. Then, to my surprise, he started singing an old but popular Nepali song, ‘Kanchi re Kanchi’. Borang told me that he enjoyed watching movies featuring Manisha Koirala and conversed a bit with me in workable Nepali. I met Borang at his orange orchid during my trip when I was invited to participate in the Orange Festival of Music and Adventure (OFAM) at Dambuk in the Dibang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh during December 14–18, 2023. There, I was pleasantly surprised to meet several Arunachalis who like Nepal and Nepalis a lot.

During the inauguration of the festival, I had the opportunity to interview Pema Khandu, the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh (AP). “There is a Buddha connection between Nepal and Arunachal Pradesh, so we can develop tourism through the Buddhist circuit,” said Pema. He emphasised the fact that PM Narendra Modi's policies have helped a lot in the development of the eight north-eastern states of India.

The geographical location of Arunachal Pradesh and its cultural environment are very similar to those of Thailand, Myanmar, other north-eastern states of India, and even eastern Nepal. Therefore, India's Arunachal Pradesh has a lot of similarities with South Asia and South-east Asia. Arunachal Pradesh is landlocked and has snow-capped mountains, hills, and rivers like the Brahmaputra, which captivate the minds of nature lovers and spiritually inclined people. It is the state where the sun rays touch the Indian soil earliest every morning and is known as the Land of the Dawn-lit Mountains. It lies on the north-eastern tip of India, bordering China, Bhutan, and Myanmar. It is, in fact, one of the remotest states in India.

The orange festival, which was started in 2015 as a tourism development strategy, has been taking place every year since then. This has positively impacted the promotion of tourism in the state. CM Khandu says that many programmes have been organised in Arunachal through the Prime Minister's Tourism Development and Dindayal Upadhyay Schemes. He said that Dambuk produced the sweetest oranges possible, and thus their focus was to export these oranges outside India. The festival helps in promoting the export of oranges and also in welcoming guests from other parts of India and other countries to boost the tourism of the state.

There are now more than 50 orange plantations in Arunachal Pradesh. Orange production is also good in Dambuk, Kameng, Lohit, and Suyang. Such festivals have helped to make the local oranges famous even abroad. Chief Minister Khandu said that the current Prime Minister's Northeast policy has brought about a big change in the roads and physical infrastructure of Arunachal. He said that in addition to receiving a lot of support from the centre for the development of the province, the local people have also started investing.

During my visit to the NEFA Orange Orchard, its owner, Tokbom Borang, informed me that he had earned one crore rupees by spending 14–15 lakhs in his orchard, which was started in 2018. “In nine years, I have been earning and recovering. ‘I hire fewer people, mainly women's groups and youth. They benefit from me and I from them; I have not taken any loans, but the government helped me set up my orange farm,’” says Borang. He mentioned that the Orange Festival was essential, and they had to acknowledge the contribution of Abu Tayeng, who came up with the idea of this festival. Before this festival, the people's economies were different. Now many youths have started growing oranges in big or small amounts, and they are earning. Borang mentioned that he exported oranges twice last year.

The buyer came to his garden with 200–300 labourers and took the oranges on 27 trucks. It took him one month to complete the task of plucking oranges from his garden. The oranges were exported to Dubai. He claims that NEFA Garden is the largest orange producer in the Northeast. “I have 4200 orange trees in my garden, and I earned 47 lakhs this year, which is a higher yield than a garden run by another farmer with 9000 trees,”



he proudly mentioned. ‘It is very difficult to work in such a difficult geographical area. I could have gone elsewhere to look for opportunities, but here the government has encouraged orange cultivation, and I stayed on to do exactly that’, says Borang.

Lakhpa Tsering, the President of the Motor Sports Club of Arunachal Pradesh and one of the organisers of OFAM, shared his experience of hosting a festival in the north-eastern tip of India. “When we started the Orange Festival with Abu Tayeng as the director of the festival, this place was like Kalapani, which was forever cut off physically from all other regions of India. That time there were no roads, so we thought of doing off-roading events, but since then and now, the same area that needed hours to be reached can be reached in minutes, so we have started motor road races too,” says Lakhpa. He further added that the NE was totally neglected earlier, but the BJP government is bringing airports, railway stations, and roads with accountability to the people of this region. He mentioned that the education system was also improving with more colleges like the NITs.

Lakhpa's family is known to own one of the best

Arunachal Pradesh. It is 9.15 km in length and is now the longest bridge in India. It has been designed to handle heavy-weight tanks. This bridge has also helped boost tourism in the region.

Apart from focusing on oranges, the festival also transformed the town of Dambuk into a vibrant hub of culture, adventure, and music. The festival was organised by the state and central government for the eighth consecutive year to enhance the production of oranges in the northeastern state. In order to make the function lively, bands such as Apache from the UK, Bombay Vi King, and POD also performed in Dambuk.

Abu Tyeng, the Secretary of Sports and Youth and Tourism Department of the province, is credited with starting Dambuk's orange festival and promoting tourism. The son of the first IAS officer of Arunachal Pradesh, he is also an IAS officer and is involved in the development of the province. Tyeng is another Arunachali who has a soft corner for Nepal and the Nepali community of Indian citizens.

He said that he has many Nepali friends, and they grew up together. As Nepali songs are very popular in Arunachal, he said that in the past, several Nepali bands were invited to perform at the Dambuk Orange Festival, and they were loved by the people there.

Many provinces in India have a presence of migrant Nepalis. Many people like Nepalis in Arunachal Pradesh. Nepalis here are involved in various professions. There are also Nepali speakers from Arunachal and Assam who are responsible for the arrangement of food at the festival, the management of issues like homestays, and 'event management'.

Rafting and road motor rallies, which are popular with tourists, are becoming popular here,' says Anand Tsering, vice president of the Motor Sports Club of Arunachal Pradesh. Tsering is an Assamese Indian of Nepali origin. He is also a successful fast car racer' and champion. He, along with several other Nepali-origin Indians, are important pillars of the festival.

Nepal can learn from the development of tourism and the promotion of local produce in Arunachal. Dambuk is located in the Diwang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh. This is the least-populated district in India. Nepal has excellent production of apples and oranges in places like Jumla, Gorkha, Dhankuta, and elsewhere. Recently, it has been seen that macadamia nuts and kiwi can also be grown, provided proper care is given. The government here, too, has policies encouraging the production and marketing of local produce. Gorkha's oranges and Jumla's apples can be internationalised in the style of Arunachal's oranges. The leadership there has won the hearts and votes of the people by developing the state. In Dambuk, where there were no hotels before 2015, now homestays and resorts have emerged.

Arunachal Pradesh and other Northeast states of India bear a lot of similarities with Nepal. Many of them have 20 to 30 per cent Nepali-origin residents who are settled there and feel very proud of the fact that they are Indians, but they maintain their Nepali culture and heritage. OFAM includes adventures involving off-road driving, zip lines, gas balloon rides, river rafting, trekking, and cultural and traditional dances. These are sports, except for gas balloon rides, that are popular in Nepal too. Therefore, a collaboration



wineries in India. “Our winery is a family business that was possible to get started only because of government policies, and I can happily tell you that it is doing well, and we sell it to other parts of India,” he said. His wines are produced from apples, kiwi, and honey ginger, all sourced from Arunachal. He says that Nepal, having the Himalayas, has mountain people, and the commonality with people from Arunachal is that we are all people with good hearts who need to work hard for our livelihoods.

The construction of the Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Bridge, inaugurated by Narendra Modi in 2017, drastically changed life in Arunachal Pradesh. This is known as a major bridge between Dhola and Sadias Ghats. This bridge joins Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, and the people of the two states feel that initiatives like these have helped in resolving land disputes between the two states and also provided a beam of hope for the people of the Northeastern states to build their economies and have more mobility within the region and the country. This bridge is the first permanent road connection between northern Assam and eastern

between Arunachal Pradesh and Nepal could be a possibility in the future.

The Ministry of Tourism should make favourable policies for promoting tourism all over Nepal, which has huge potential in the tourism sector. Besides hydroelectric projects, the government is lacking in promoting agro-tourism, which has a high potential and rate of return for Nepal and Nepalis. This could generate huge employment opportunities for the Nepali youths who are migrating at record rates to the Middle East, Malaysia, and elsewhere at great risk to their lives. The Nepali youths who have plans to migrate abroad and work, for example, in orange or apple orchards, should be encouraged to start their own enterprises with support from the central and provincial governments. After a few days in Arunachal, one returns with a lot of spiritual, mental, and physical well-being. The pristine beauty of the Northeastern Tip of India has the potential to steal the hearts of all who visit.

(The author is a senior journalist and women's rights advocate.)



Photo: Sarad Verma

Policy Dilemma In Agriculture Sector



Sagar Ghimire

The transformation of agriculture has been the most discussed issue in Nepal, marked by notable shifts in the dynamics of factors of production, including land, labour, and capital markets. The predominant goals of agricultural policies have consistently centred on modernization, commercialization, and mechanisation, aiming to propel the sector into a more contemporary and efficient state. The government's policy also envisions enhancing productivity, improving crops through breeding, ensuring input availability, and providing market assurance. In the course of modernization, issues such as germplasm maintenance, ecological agriculture, conservation of landraces, high-value crop plantation, and climate-smart agriculture are also gaining importance. Political concern has also increased regarding the growing trend of food imports. The once self-sufficient country in major staple foods is now becoming a net importer.

Due to the scarcity of factors of production, we must acknowledge that being self-sufficient in all products is not feasible. However, we can make proper crop choices to achieve sufficiency in strategic crops. Yet, unanswered questions persist concerning crop selection. What crop should I cultivate on my small parcel of land? Should I cultivate paddy to feed my family, or should I consider vegetables, fruits, or other cash crops? If I choose paddy, should I cultivate local landraces with lower productivity for better quality, or should I go for improved or hybrid paddy to increase production? Should I rely on organic production, or should I pursue inorganic farming? These are serious dilemmas in the mindset of farmers before cultivation. However, the decisions made by farmers at the household level against these dilemmas continuously impact the food production status and agricultural trade potential of the country.

Additionally, what recommendations does the government provide for farmers in specific regions? Is the government promoting crops with trade potential, or is it focusing on major staple



food crops for self-sufficiency and subsistence? What has been envisioned by our policies? What could be the best decision for sustainable agricultural development and food security? The middle way between self-sufficiency and trade, and subsequent adjustments based on the extent of influence by advocates, has been the common practice in planning and budgeting for decades. This scenario is responsible for the uncontrolled and unnatural behaviour and shifts in crop choice, production, productivity, land abandonment, and farmers' migration.

The policy dilemma is observed between achieving self-sufficiency in major staple food crops like paddy, maize, etc., or focusing on the production of cash crops and tradable commodities, leveraging advantages from microclimates and agrobiodiversity. There is a need to increase the production and productivity of major staple food crops for self-sufficiency and food security. However, the system requires government subsidies and support in both production and marketing to enhance its competitive capacity in the changing scenario of labour shortages and increased cultivation costs. On the other hand, opting for cash crops and tradable or exportable commodities is more likely to yield premium prices and enhance competitive capacity. Perennial cropping appears to be a strategy employed by farmers to combat labor shortages. The increasing trend of peri-urban vegetable farming, establishing perennial fruit orchards, and cultivating exportable commodities like tea, coffee, cardamom, etc. can be observed as evidence of this transformation. However, both farmers and government policies seem to be stuck in a puzzle when it comes to making crop choices.

Our agricultural policies appear to be well-documented, covering a comprehensive range of agricultural issues and promoting various commodities and sectors without leaving anyone behind. For instance, our policies outline the promotion of both organic agriculture and chemical fertiliser use, endorsing hybrid varieties as well as indigenous landraces for all crops without specifying

the applicable areas. However, we lack a concrete action plan for the classification of areas and budget allocation within the sector, even in the face of contradicting issues. It seems that we are content with providing material subsidies to farmers based on their requests. Consequently, agricultural development programmes seem more like political initiatives aimed at attracting votes than genuine efforts to promote agriculture. Unfortunately, we find ourselves delayed in addressing contradicting issues, such as promoting maize production and protecting monkeys in the same geographical region. These issues call for urgent action through policy review, with a focus on developing a concrete action plan and allocating fiscal resources proportionately. Recognising that a single idea cannot be universally applicable in our diverse context, it is imperative that we do not delay in deciding our priorities for specific interventions, strategic action plans, and collaborative efforts.

In the emerging trend of migration and non-farm employment opportunities, farmers can no longer sustain themselves at a subsistence level or below. Our farming population is ageing, and successors are not readily available in the rural community due to the limited appeal of agriculture, primarily because of its subsistence nature and various associated risks. The comparative and competitive advantages have deteriorated over time due to the reduced scale of production resulting from land fragmentation. Nevertheless, the increased availability of inputs and technology and the development of infrastructure such as irrigation and road networks have enhanced opportunities for the sector's development.

For example, at the national level, self-sufficiency in major staple food grains like paddy is an important parameter for food security and is also a matter of nationality and sovereignty. Self-sufficiency in rice is pivotal for measuring the sufficiency of the agriculture sector. In those conditions, we should not be behind in intervening in rice production. Limiting the low-yielding

local landraces to protection level only, we must concentrate on the use of hybrids and improved varieties along with research and development. The rice crop demands a special structure of land with irrigation facilities, so our policy must include an action plan to classify and protect rice land. This is crucial because the threat to rice land often arises more from within the agriculture sector due to shifts in crop choices than from outside the sector. Recognising the criticality and ultimate importance of rice due to food habits, rice producers must be prioritised for fertiliser distribution, mechanisation, seed replacement, automatic insurance services, and support prices.

Thus, considering budget constraints, government intervention must prioritise limited and strategic commodities to show positive results in achieving self-sufficiency and trade benefits. Identifying tradable crops that fetch premium prices and possess competitive capacity is crucial and should be promoted without compromising the areas dedicated to major staple food crop production. The haphazard crop choices by farmers, as well as the disorganized programming and budgeting by different tiers of government, need to be regulated by the federal ministry. The current federal political structure requires a comprehensive agricultural policy that serves as a guideline for all tiers of government. Urgent measures are required to halt the trend of public consumption-driven decisions following fashionable emerging commodities and try new approaches every year without a concrete analysis of the impact of policy and programmes for publicity. There is a need for clarity in policies and action plans. Maintaining coherence and consistency in agricultural development policies and fiscal programmes across all tiers of government is essential for striking the right balance between self-sufficiency and trade in agriculture, a key factor in ensuring sustainable agricultural development.

The author is an Agriculture Extension Officer, Gandaki Province.



Beauty Standards Impact Gender Equality



Shreena Nepal

How beauty brands have been corrupting the mindset of the entire world, Nomi Wolf says in her book 'The Beauty Myth', "the quality called beauty objectively and universally exists. Women must want to embody it, and men must want to possess women who embody it." The author brings to light an important issue that plagues women: body insecurity. This insecurity has such a significant impact on women's mental well-being that it leads to a host of issues, such as depression, anxiety, and other related problems. The prevalence of eating disorders among women is also a matter of concern, with studies indicating that women are more likely to suffer from such disorders than men, with anorexia nervosa being one of the most well-known disorders. People suffering from this disorder tend to believe that they are overweight, even if they are underweight. It generally develops during adolescence or young adulthood and tends to affect more women than men.

This perfect body image has been enshrined in everyone's mind in such a way that it's difficult to even be body-positive. Even in almost all of the images of gods and goddesses, there's a perfect body with pretty faces. Well, those pictures are a reflection of society. Jane Dipika Garrett became the first plus-sized candidate representing Nepal to compete for Miss Universe 2023. Well, it took 71 years to accept the fact that beauty pageants must not be made just about the so-called perfect body. Well, Miss Universe is defying the standards by allowing transwomen, mothers, and divorcees to participate in the competition. Miss World, on the other hand, has no such realisation. Well, we are now celebrating what should have been normal. These beauty standards exist only for women to make them insecure about themselves and lose confidence in doing anything other than maintaining themselves.



Structural violence manifests in various forms, including gender-based discrimination in various aspects of life. Women, for instance, are often paid less than men for the same job. They may also be overlooked for certain job opportunities, particularly those that require physical labor. However, in certain professions, such as air hostess or receptionist, women with attractive features may be preferred. Krishna Abiral, in his book Laal Chudi, mentioned how society controls women's entire lives and limits their lives to just getting married. He portrayed only one story about society.

In 2016, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Gallup conducted a survey to find out whether women across the world preferred to work in paid employment, take care of their families, or do both. The survey results were surprising, as they revealed that 70 per cent of women, regardless of their employment status, preferred to work in paid employment. Looking at the status of Nepal from the same research,

56 per cent of women desired to work in paid employment, whereas only 21 per cent of women had worked in paid employment. According to the same research, in terms of workforce participation rates, women lag significantly behind men globally. The current statistics indicate that the participation rate for women is almost 25 per cent lower than that of men. This disparity is more pronounced in certain regions, where the difference exceeds 50 percentage points.

A girl in her stand-up comedy mentioned that if a period was to happen to a male, they would have made an extremely big deal about it. If they would get periods, we would be celebrating "period day." There would be a period minister and a PMS relief fund. They would be very understanding about each other having periods. Can you believe the government imposes a tax on sanitary pads? The state really expects girls under the age of 10 to pay taxes to the government. Well, the reality was only heard because she made it sound hilarious. If you ask any

woman who bleeds if she would want to, if it was an option, then mark these words: not a single woman wants to bleed. Governments have been exempting the tax on condoms, considering it one of the most basic needs and important from a reproductive health perspective. Well, menstruation is one of the main reasons for reproduction; it is not even a choice; it doesn't have a withdrawal option. So all these laws, rules, and regulations are more inclined towards the betterment of men.

Feminism isn't responsible for double responsibility. It's a dominant mindset that refuses to take responsibility for household work. As women, we promote learning household chores as a basic human need. Every individual should possess fundamental survival skills. The notion that a woman is lucky to have a husband who helps with housework is outdated. We should be concerned that our husbands and sons lack awareness of these essential human needs.

If males are to be males, if males every man

thinks nothing apart from sex, as published by Professor Sheridan Simove, which soon became the best seller, why are women blamed for being rape victims? If males cannot keep their hands to themselves and if men can't control themselves, isn't it absurd to think that they can control the nation and the world?

Few women globally are successful because only a handful have been given a fair chance. A woman is seen as incomplete without marriage, and if she pursues a career, she must prioritise household duties first.

We have always asked instead of fighting for even our basic needs! We have worked tirelessly to distance ourselves from being labelled as a weaker section of society. We have fought for our property rights, our citizenship rights, and our right to choose when it comes to abortion. We have also fought for the exemption of tax on sanitary pads, recognising that it is a basic necessity for women. We have demanded equal pay for equal work and equal opportunities for all. We have stood up against violence in all its forms, refusing to be silenced. Although some of our rights have been codified, many still remain unacknowledged and unenforced. Despite this, we continue to fight daily for our rights and for a fair and just society.

Every year, from November 25th to December 10th, a global campaign against gender-based violence is conducted. Various organisations arrange awareness programmes, advocacy is done worldwide, different international and national conferences are held, and individuals come together, even if it is through their social media platforms. However, the sad part is that the campaign ends on December 10th, and people wait for another year to do something about it. As the new year begins, my resolution is to remind everyone time and again to take practical steps to end gender disparity.

The words of William Shakespeare resonate deeply when it comes to bringing about change. "Nothing changes if nothing changes" may seem like an oversimplification, but it is a reminder that taking action is necessary to achieve progress. Consistency, perseverance, and core values are key to ending inequality. We must unite, collaborate, and use our unique skills and perspectives to make progress. Let's keep moving forward, no matter how hard the road ahead.

(The author is pursuing B.A.L.L.B. at Kathmandu School of Law)

Khem K. Aryal's In-Between Sway



The stories in the In-Betweeners are stories of Nepali immigrants in the USA, struggling to establish themselves in the new abode.

It was 1995 or may be 1996. You tend to be forgetful, or you would not care, when you are over fifty. It does not really matter if you miss a year when you are counting the years from your past.

Having wandered on campus corridors for a while looking for my classroom, I recall, I entered Room Number 11, where some 30 or 40 semi-attentive students listened to a lecturer, whom I would later know as Anita Dhungel. It was my first day of class as an M.A. student at Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus.

On that day, I didn't know two things would happen in the future. First, out of those 40 unknown faces, I would find Nirmala and marry her; and second, I would make a decades-long friendship with Khem K. Aryal and write about him following the publication of his book in the United States, something we didn't hope could happen to us one day.

In the last 27–28 years of our friendship, you can't imagine how many hours we must have spent discussing writing, publishing, recognition, publicity, contribution to Nepali literature, and what not.

One day, during the early years of our friendship, one interesting incident happened. Khem invited me to his rented room for tea. It was a decent-size room, painted in light yellow, with a small book rack in a corner. When I was scanning the room, I saw a painting hanging on the wall over the book rack, signed by the artist as Kumar Shishir.

It was a familiar name to me. I asked Khem whether he knew the painter. He smiled and asked me back, 'Do you know him?'

I said I knew him by his name, but I didn't know him personally.

He smiled again, and I sensed that he himself could be the artist.

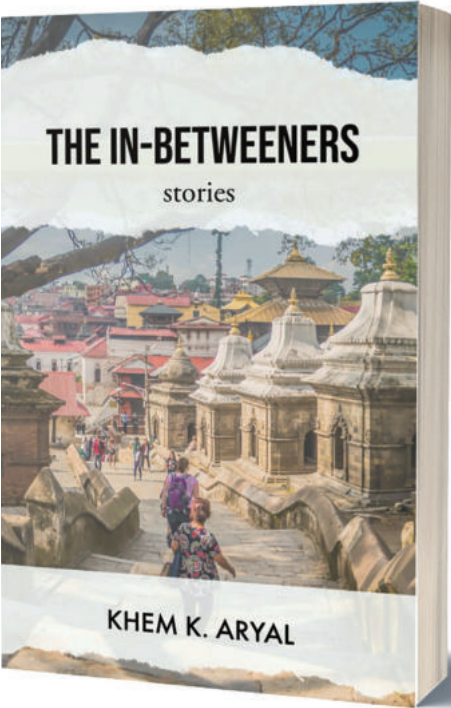
I asked, 'Are you the artist?'

He laughed, and then both of us did.

At that point, Khem had already published a collection of Nepali poems under his pen name, Kumar Shishir. His stories were getting published in Nepal's prestigious literary journals like Madhuparka and Mirmire.

As we were completing our master's degree, I could see that he was getting more into English writing while I continued to write in Nepali, though I did write in English too occasionally. Both of us were getting more serious about writing while struggling to find a space in the literary landscape of Kathmandu.

It was an interesting period in Nepali English writing. After the restoration of democracy in 1990, new English publications and English-medium schools were burgeoning, and the demand for English writing and venues to share English writing were increasing. Under the guidance of senior writers and professors, such as Padma Devkota and Shreedhar Lohani, we founded an organisation, the Society of Nepali Writers in English (NWEN), in 2000 to promote English writing from Nepal. Khem



was nominated as its president, and I became secretary. This resulted in monthly meetings in which we mostly shared poems, the publication of Nepalese clay, and liaison with English newspapers to publish creative writing pieces in their weekly supplements. These spaces encouraged writers to write in English as well as to translate Nepali writing into English. As president, Khem led the organisation's efforts very effectively, and we remained close collaborators until 2007, when I migrated to the UK and Khem was planning to pursue his Ph.D. in the United States.

During those NWEN days, Khem's two English poetry collections, Kathmandu Saga and Other Poems and Epic Teashop, were published in Kathmandu. He took the lead in publishing Of Nepalese Clay and co-edited it with Professors Padma Devkota and Hriseekesh Upadhyay for seven years. Most of the Nepalese writers writing in English were featured in the journal. The journal was also instrumental in grooming many new writers in English.

Samrat Upadhyay and Manjushree Thapa were our idols back then. Samrat's debut short story collection, Arresting God in Kathmandu, which won him the Whiting Award, and Manjushree Thapa's the Tutor of History were creating a big buzz among English readers in Kathmandu, which inspired all of us. We too dreamt of publishing our books in English from the United States or the United Kingdom one day, though that one day didn't dawn anywhere on the visible horizon.

I decided at one point, though, that I would not bother about writing in English. I was making my space in Nepali writing, with books published from the Nepal Academy and Ratna Pustak Bhandar, which were considered top publishing venues those days. I continued to concentrate on Nepali writing, whereas Khem

continued writing in English. His dedication, passion, and belief in himself have finally led to the publication of a collection of his stories, The In-Betweeners, by an American publishing house, Braddock Avenue Books, and that makes me feel that the dream we shared long ago has come true. I cannot be happier for him and for Nepali writing in English as a whole.

The number of Nepali writers writing in English is growing, both within and outside Nepal, but we have yet to see writers of significance since Upadhyay and Thapa. I genuinely hope that the publication of The In-Betweeners will be just the beginning for Khem.

Khem is a happy person in life, but when it comes to writing, he is never satisfied. The time and effort he invests in editing, crafting, and revising amazes me. It seems that he enjoys the process of writing more than the writing itself. I am envious of his patience in waiting for the publication. I remember that a novel he wrote about twenty years ago was accepted by a small publisher in Delhi, but he stepped back and never got it published.

In terms of subject matter, Khem deals with socio-political and family issues. He picks up simple but somehow weird characters from society, observes and examines them closely, and crafts their stories in carefully designed plots with artistic details, most of the time playing with their ambivalent mental states.

On the surface, the stories in The In-Betweeners are stories of Nepali immigrants in the USA, struggling to establish themselves in the new abode while still thinking of their life back in Nepal. However, you delve into them more, and the stories will open new windows to understanding human predicaments in general. I feel that these stories are more than just the stories of in-betweeners, or they make me feel that all of us are in-betweeners. They deal with human weaknesses and resilience, and they deal with the personal and social absurdities we are all part of.

Khem's stories are unique as they deal with seemingly mundane issues that most of us don't even think of writing about. While reading some of his stories, you may get irritated with his characters and feel like shouting at them for not sorting out even a minor problem. The main character in "Shopping for Glasses" suffers for a long time simply because he is unable to decide which frames to choose and the shopkeepers are not forcing him to buy any, unlike in Nepal. The stories feel so deep that readers will find it hard to come out of the fictional well that the writer has dug. I think that's the success of a writer. I wish The In-Betweeners a big success.

(Sapkota is a poet and playwright.)

FUTURE WATCH

(Based on birth names)

January 26th to February 1st 2024

- D. N. Lohani



ARIES

Initially, you may have to endure a health disorder. Circumstances will gradually improve. The study will gradually improve. Doubts and confusion can reside within oneself. Undertaken assignments will be completed successfully.



TAURUS

An ordinary day is in store for you. Health disorders are likely to slow down. It is likely to defer progress. Lack of support from others can cause challenges. Study-related expenses will rise.



GEMINI

Undertaken assignments will be completed successfully. Your opponents will succeed in delaying your progress. Business-related travel will occur. The health concerns of the family will increase expenses.



CANCER

An entertaining week is in the store. Initially, celebrations or similar events will remain ordinary. Major tasks will be completed successfully. Foreign travel is probable.



LEO

Initially, expenditure levels will rise. Celebrations or similar events will occur. You will find it difficult to save. Support provided by friends will guide you ahead. Trade will yield an ordinary return.



VIRGO

The expenditure level will rise. The technical line will turn profitable. Students will have to work harder. Indecisiveness can create some problems. Memory loss can cause some concern.



LIBRA

Social prestige won't rise. Regular gains will help consolidate your financial position. Work will keep you busy and yield a return. You will be keen to learn new trades. The task will be completed after causing expenses on Tuesday.



SCORPIO

Major tasks will be completed successfully. You will be eager to complete philanthropic assignments. Financial status will improve. You may have to handle a new venture. Business will fascinate you.



SAGITTARIUS

The expenditure level will rise. You may have to handle numerous challenges. Anxiety can arise on Friday. Doubts and confusion can reside within oneself. Circumstances will improve on Thursday. Business will yield ordinary gains. Study will take a progressive course.



CAPRICORN

Uncertainty can arise. Talks about travel can be held. Pilgrimage is probable. Doubts and confusion can reside within oneself. A health disorder is predicted. Educational expenses will rise. Anxiety can arise on Monday.



AQUARIUS

Though expenditure levels won't go down, important assignments will be completed successfully. Social prestige will rise. Distant friends will cooperate. The family will help. You may hear unpleasant news on Wednesday.



PISCES

An advantageous week is in the store. You will experience a busy schedule. Financial status will improve. Profession will yield a return. Don't expect much support from your family. Job-related problems can arise.

Stories That Propel Readers Beyond Expectation

Nepali readers get a rare chance to come across a piece of literature that deals with sexuality and talks about the issues on the topic in the societies here. Sex is taboo, as is sexuality. People hesitate to talk about it, even with their doctors. There are many couples who don't talk about it openly, even in their private spaces. However, a good number of writers have tried to tread into this genre in Nepali literature. From Bishweshwor Prasad Koirala to Saru Bhakta, Nepali literature has some precious gifts that deal with sexual psychology. Many critics consider Koirala's short story 'Chandra Badan' as an entry point to such a genre in Nepal. Saru Bhakta's 'Taruni Kheti' is a novel that talks about sexuality in imagery, similes, and metaphor, without which it would have just remained low-grade pulp fiction sold at the bus stands. Sita Pandey, Prashu Pradhan, Parijat, Krishna Dharabasi, Prema Shah, Daulat Bikram Bista, Bhawani Bhikshu, Tarini Prasad Koirala, Pushkar Lohani, Bijaya Pandey, and their other contemporaries have dealt with sexuality in their literary creations.

Khagendra Bhattarai has dared to continue the trend and picked issues from our surroundings to craft some beautiful short stories. His recent book, 'Andhyaro Kuno' (The Dark Corner), has hit the market and will certainly hit your senses as well.

It has been quite a while since Nepali literature received a creation like this, delving directly into the arena of sexual psychology and bringing issues that are of utmost importance but less talked about to the readers. Sexuality is a part of human nature. In



Modnath Dhakal

Book: Andhyaro Kuno (collection of short stories) (2023) by Khagendra Bhattarai. Publisher: Sergem Prakashan Griha. Pages: 105. ISBN: 978-9937-1-3411-8. Price: Rs. 250 (US\$5).

societies that are typical of South Asia, people use symbols while talking or communicating about sexuality or talk in a way that one has to read between the lines to get the meaning. For example, Lakshimaya didi (sister) in 'Sallako Rukh' has a pine tree, planted by her husband, in her courtyard. Her husband dies in the armed conflict, and she wants the tree to fall on her. She says the tree slowly sings and teases her. It is a strong metaphor for 'sex' as a woman wants something to press her or crush her!

'Sallako Rukh' story is a strong representation of the Maoist-led armed conflict as well. This story talks about the brutality of the guerillas cutting the vocal cords of their

comrades who were severely wounded in the attack or landmine blast. Fighters who lost their body parts in the attack would shriek bitterly in agony, which would terrify others and discourage them from fighting the war. So, a special team would cut out their vocal cords.

The book has fourteen stories that deal with sexual psychology. A couple of them have found their setting in the decade-long armed conflict. The author has used the language of everyday people, which has made the stories more authentic, and readers will immediately relate to them. Boys in the story address a beautiful girl as 'maal' (goods).

'Phulawa' is a story about the divide between people from the Tarai and Hill regions. The setting of the story is familiar, and readers will quickly understand that it is the story of a 'Pahadiya' (people from the hills) master' teaching in a school in the Tarai region of the country.

About a year and a half ago, the divide was stark. The communal hatred culminated in the Gaur Massacre, where 17 Maoist cadres were brutally killed. It highlighted the ethnic and regional tensions in the plains. However, 'Phulawa' presents a better side of humanity. Top of Form

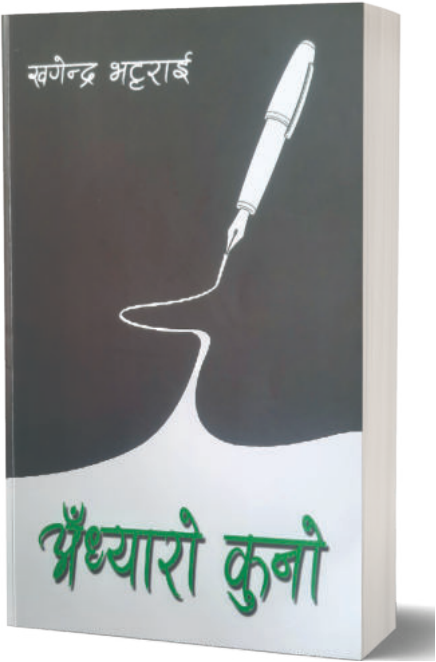
The first story of the book, 'Leela', presents the setting of a school in a typical underdeveloped village and less-sensitive teachers who control their students like a shepherd controls his sheep. Many Nepalis who completed their primary-level education at a school in a remote village surely have experienced somewhat the same situation. Without showing any sexual behaviour or a crime,

the author has vilified 'Gopi Guru'. When the story comes to an end, readers don't want to halt there and begin to further the story out of their own creativity.

Khagendra takes his readers on a journey of mixed reactions in 'Thatta'. The readers may smile, sympathise (or empathise), enrage, or laugh when they read a story bearing an anecdote about a man who takes goat medicines and never grows taller than a 'he goat'. 'Malai Surahi Banaideu' (turn me into a water jar) is another powerful metaphor for suppressed sexual desires. The story ends so suddenly that the reader feels a punch and waits for a while to get more to read. It seems that the author knows where to end his tales so that his readers will be challenged to think beyond it.

Every story in the book forces you to think beyond its ending. The author has given an abrupt ending to his creations at such a point that you might close the book for a while and just wonder what could have happened after that. Some contemplations will surely amuse you, while others might surprise you. The stories in the book will surely shake your long-held belief or fortify it. They will tell everyone about the sexuality of the 'opposite sex'.

The author has made a significant contribution to Nepali literature with the publication of this book. Readers will get a chance to have a new taste with 'sexuality spices' and might get an opportunity to peep into a part of society that they wouldn't have explored otherwise. The book can be read in one sitting, but you should consume it slowly to digest it fully.



BOOK REVIEW

Unsafe Referees Of Nepali Sports



Rajanbikram Prajapati

Referees are responsible for the general supervision of the game and have the final authority on all rulings. A referee is assisted by other officials in the game. The number of supporting officials varies according to the rules of different games. They are known by several other titles as well, including judge, umpire, linesman, arbitrator, timekeeper, and technical official. Their responsibilities usually include starting or stopping the game whenever necessary and resolving infractions of game standards. Before starting the game, they may check the equipment to ensure that it adheres to safety standards and game regulations.

It is said that a good referee should not be seen; they are constantly under a microscope when they make decisions. As referees, they must be experts in rules. They must be perpetual students of their sports. They should be calm and confident, even when the crowd is loud. Confidence is the number-one skill a referee should have. If a referee doesn't have a high level of self-confidence, he or she is not going to do well. With every call a referee makes, it is necessary that they be confident, even if they are unsure of the call. Confidence is the key to a good referee, because if a referee starts questioning himself, then the players will notice that and begin to question the integrity of the referee itself.

Referees need quick observation skills, excellent concentration, patience, and the ability to thrive well under pressure. A referee has to

watch the game carefully, track time, call out faults, and communicate with players and other officials. It's a challenging job, from passing the entry-level exam to advancing to higher levels, getting the best assignments, and doing a good job under pressure in a big game.

These are all challenges for every referee, and when these goals are met, it creates a great deal of satisfaction. Refereeing keeps the mind sharp. Whether you are a basketball referee moving along with the players or a volleyball umpire watching from a set location, acute mental focus is a must. Oftentimes, the mental demands can be much tougher than the physical demands.

In the context of refereeing in Nepal, academic qualifications aren't given much importance. But to be eligible for international refereeing, one must possess a basic level of English-speaking skills and other qualifications as well. As compared to other countries, we are very far behind in terms of resources and technology in various games.

Even though a referee is a crucial part of the game, they aren't given much respect in Nepal. The service, incentives, and facilities for referees are extremely limited. They themselves have to cover all the costs and airfares, excluding lodging and meals, even for a big international game while representing Nepal. The government should be taking care of these things as they have been doing for athletes; the government needs to set aside a platform, training, seminars, and equipment for referees as well.

Outside of international tournaments, their pay is very nominal. By doing only this job, they cannot sustain their lives. It seems like it is for pocket money only. It is also said that if you are in this job just for the money, you're in the wrong job. Of course, being a referee or umpire is not the primary means of employment for most. However, for a part-time job too, the rate of pay should be reasonable.

In a spectacular game, fans of the winning team feel joy, and those of the losing team feel sadness. And with sadness comes the need to place the blame on someone or something. The referee of the game often turns out to be an easy target of outrage. In many instances, teams and fans cite the reason they lost as poor officiating,



referencing the few mistakes they made during the game. No matter at what level, the referee is going to receive all the criticism if he or she makes a mistake, and one should be mentally ready to accept that. Even in friendly games, many participants harshly criticise referees for their calls.

There are several incidents in which the referee misbehaves during or after the match. Even in our national- or local-level games, we see such immoral activities time and again. In the 2079/80 Martyr's Memorial A Division League, the controversial match between Church Boys United and FC Khumaltar is an instance in which the referee got attacked by the players and officials. Referee Prajwal Chhetri gave red cards to four officials of Khumaltar after they attacked the referee for not giving a penalty in the injury time

of the controversial first half. Such a situation repeated itself in the match between Sporting Ilam FC and Birgunj United FC of the Nepal Super League 2080. In the match, the goalkeeper got a red card after misbehaving with the referee. Security personnel protected the referee from the outraged players of Ilam FC.

Referees are also humans, so they can make mistakes. In the volleyball match between Nepal Police Club and Help Nepal Sports Club in the 3rd NVA Cup in 2016, it was blamed that the referee took the decisions looking at the supporters.

The referee had executed her decision, but she changed it. The organisers were helpless, and the hour-long break hampered the match rhythm. Instances of biased decisions by referees and judges are not uncommon in Nepali sports. Personal affiliations, regional biases, and political

interference often cloud the judgement of these officials. Such biases can be detrimental to the morale and motivation of the athletes.

Even in court, the judge withdraws from participation in a legal proceeding to avoid any appearance of bias or impropriety. But there are so many examples in Nepali sports where referees and judges are appointed from the same club. In such circumstances, spectators and athletes may have lower expectations of a fair decision. So in such cases, they should withdraw their name from a particular competition by themselves.

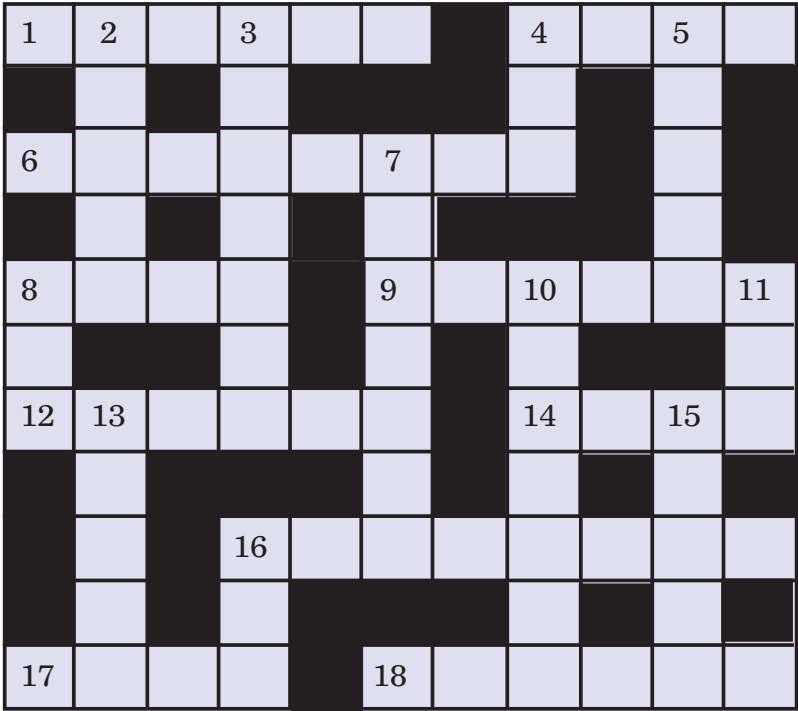
A significant contributing factor to the presence of unsafe referees and judges is the lack of accountability and transparency in the system. Inadequate oversight and regulation allow these officials to operate with impunity, evading punishment for their misconduct. Many coaches and players say that they are punished for misbehaviour, but there are no punitive measures for referees. So, there must be a good mechanism to monitor the decisions of referees as well. Unfair decisions and biased officiating can demoralise athletes, hinder their progress, and discourage their participation in sports.

There must be comprehensive reform in the officiating system, including vetting procedures, regular training, certification programmes, and refreshment courses. And of course, there should be a responsible body for overseeing referees, which promotes transparency and accountability. Winning or losing is obvious in a game, but the referee's decisions should not hamper the player's confidence.

Definitely, referees cannot be beaten because of a decision they make, even if it's wrong. There should be other measures to penalise them. The unsafe state of referees in Nepali sports casts a dark shadow over the country's athletic achievements. By implementing robust reforms and promoting a culture of integrity in sports, we can ensure the fair, transparent, and conducive growth of athletes, where referees can also feel safe. The environment should be created where all referees get good respect and feel proud of being in this profession.

(The author is an International Boxing Association referee and former national boxer.)

TRN CROSSWORD PUZZLE NO. 1775



Name
Address
Signature

Last date of entry:
January 31, 2024

Win a prize of Rs. 600. In case there are more than one correct entry the prize will be split into three sums of Rs. 200 each. The winner will be selected by a lucky draw. Only cuttings (not photo copy) that include the Crossword Puzzle no. will be accepted.

- Across**
- Annoying situation
 - Protracted fight
 - Reduced unpleasant feeling
 - Equal score (1, 3)
 - Remove from power
 - Delay the progress
 - A formal test
 - Large amount of foods
 - A medicine
 - What a thief does?
- Down**
- Valuable thing
 - Force yourself into a car
 - An arbitrary like o dislike
 - To be of use
 - Lacking determination
 - A male friend
 - Clear and accurate
 - A type of tall tree
 - An army officer
 - Messenger of God
 - Official records of events

My Snow Adventure



Zoya Ranjan



My name is Zoya, and I want to talk about snow today. It's cool. I love snow. I made a snowman, and we will finish it tomorrow. Let's start from the beginning. I was told there would be snow for the New Year's Day. There was no snow. I wanted snow! A few days later, snow came, and I was happy. There was snow when I woke up. It was all over our car. There was a very little. I went to the Paper Mill Park two times that day because there was snow. Yesterday, there was snow and snow and snow. There was so much snow. That we could play all day. I didn't want to stop playing in the snow ever. Then today, there was even more snow. There was snow all over the house and the car. You need to be careful before you go and play in the snow. If you do, If you do not wear warm clothes, you can get sick. Fifty people have died because of

the snow in the United States. This is because it was cold and the roads were slippery. Trees fall and hit homes and people. Be careful! The schools were closed, so I got to spend time with my sister, Vidheha. We had a snowball fight. We hit each other with snowballs. We were able to attack dad and mom with snowballs. Hajurmuwa did not come out, though, as she had a cold. I wish I could have played with her. I really want to play in the snow again tomorrow.

(Zoya studies at Spiny Babbler Evolution, Lalitpur.)



Monsoon Kandel, Grade 3, LRI

TRN PUZZLE NUMBER-407

All you have to do is to fill up in the seven boxes below with the numbers in such a way that the sum will be 581 whether you go diagonally, horizontally or vertically. The numbers should be 59 to 107 between. The number should not be used twice.

88	97	106	59	68	77	86
63	72	74	83	92	94	103
80	89	98	107	60	69	78

74	83	92	45	54	63	72
82	91	51	53	62	71	73
90	50	52	61	70	79	81
49	58	60	69	78	80	89
57	59	68	77	86	88	48
65	67	76	85	87	47	56
66	75	84	93	46	55	64

TRN PUZZLE SOLUTION-406

Prepared by: Bishwo Nath Kharel

CREATIVE CORNER



Roshina Khadka, Grade VI, Fubright School, Bhaktapur



Aagamam Parajuli, Grade II, New Star Pole School



Sailaja Dani, Grade III, Times International School



Archana Devi Shrestha
Damodar Lohani
Kumari Nirmala Giri

ALL CORRECT ANSWER

Mahendra Kumari Nath, Krishna Chandra Gautam, Sheela Shrestha, Rekha Rajopadhyaya, Khagendra Nath, Bal Krishna Shrestha, Surya Shakya, Mana Raja Rajopadhyaya, Sunil Sharma Bhattarai