

Landslide

BY UDAI THULUNG

There was another landslide in the hills this year. From the beginning of Asar, the rainy season fills the hearts of the people of the hills with the terror of natural devastation.

This landslide happened in a remote place. There was chaos all around. The newspapers found a good source of news: nineteen people had died. This was a new way of people dying. People had become sick and tired of watching and hearing about people dying of terrorism, so this was a nice change. Politicians, ministers, relief workers, the Red Cross, the Army, volunteers from relief camps all started flooding in.

Chandraprakash read detailed reports of the destruction caused by the landslide in the local newspapers. Reading about the devastation caused by the landslide made him shudder at the thought of the decimating power of nature. Dark thoughts of life and death raged about like a storm in Chandraprakash's mind just as the rain poured incessantly from the sky.

Khit-khit-khit. His wife? He looked in her direction, shocked.

"What are you up to?" her question was directed at him, and her glance directed at the bag.

"It'll make it easier to escape," he replied, embarrassed.

"And you would slip away on your own?"

"I shall take you folks with me as well. Don't sleep; how can you sleep!"

"*Dhyatt*, just go to sleep...you are..." she pulled herself away from his grasp.

How could he sleep; he only lay down quietly. "Shut your ears..." his wife said.

"You sleep." He stopped short of saying that he would be on duty. He lay down, looking at the ceiling, faintly visible in the light of the lamp, and he did not know when he slipped off into sleep.

In the morning, when his wife pulled at his quilt and called, "*Aouu*, won't you get up?" he woke up with a start. His eyes and ears searched in all four directions. His terrible fears of the previous night had not come true. Even the rain outside had stopped. He found his house and his family just the way they were the last night.

Looking at his wife, he chuckled, and turning around on the bed, he said, "We are still around, eh?"

His wife was now bringing out from the bag all the things he had put into it last night, and was putting them back into the cupboard. Δ

~ Translated from Nepali by Shradhanjali Tamang and Sayantan Dasgupta.

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