

# i learn to trust

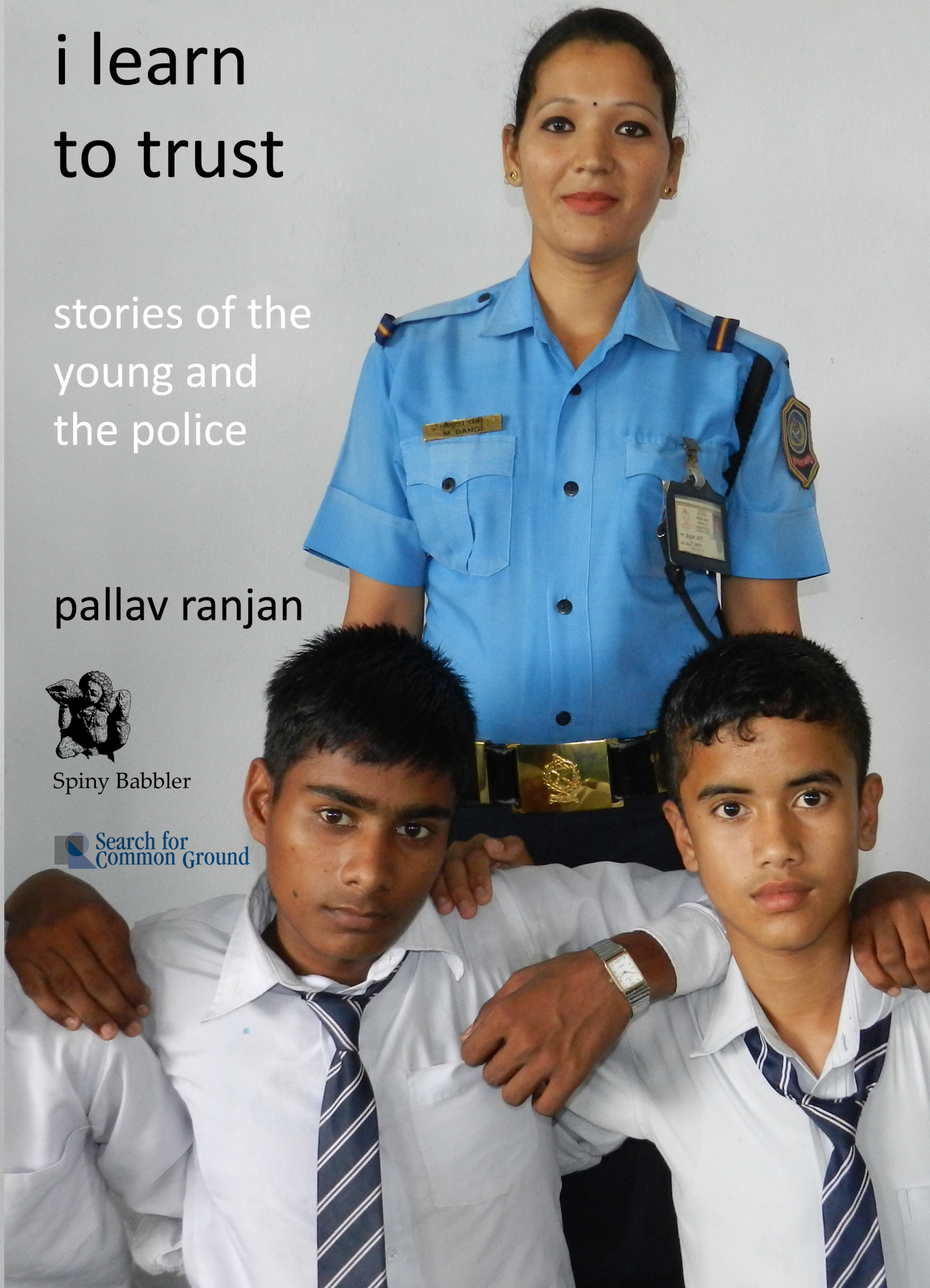
stories of the  
young and  
the police

pallav ranjan



Spiny Babbler

 Search for  
Common Ground





Some of the greatest English writers of the twentieth century have not been native speakers: Joseph Conrad, Rabindranath Tagore, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and Chinua Achebe. Perhaps someday Pallav Ranjan will take his place among those whose work so aptly mirrors the international status of English in our time.

- *David A. Fleming, Chancellor,  
St. Mary's University at San Antonio*

Pallav's detailed research and observation present genuine and actual situations through exceedingly skillful approaches and techniques. This is the specialty of Pallav's working style, this is an outstanding, magnificent invention.

- *Ishwar Ballav, critic*

A harsh and exciting journey... very moving, poignant and revealing... A magic carpet ride of emotion, of feeling, of honesty.

- *T.M. Collins, Chairperson,  
Queensland Poetry Association*

The specialty of this work is that it is as interesting as it is reliable. Its sequence of events, characterization, background, and impact are of unparalleled quality.

- *Basudev Tripathi, Nepalese language scholar*

A successful writer who finds balance and integrates the message effectively with the fine art that is writing not only communicates, but also preserves the dignity of the arts. A good example is successful poet, artist, translator and creative writer, established Pallav Ranjan's drama-creation.

- *Bairagi Kaila, scholar, folk traditions*

The world and our communities suffer conflict, antagonism, and lack of acceptance.

The writer shows skill in portraying a poignant story based on contemporary issues. The presentation of solutions rather than problems makes it important and relevant.

- *Mohan Koirala, poet*

Pallav Ranjan's retelling of these stories is in almost flawless English and is highly readable,... notable, and worthy of praise.

- *Michael James Hutt, Professor, University of London  
Chair, Center of South Asian Studies*



# *I learn to trust*

Stories of the young and the police  
by Pallav Ranjan



Spiny Babbler







To dearest Brownie  
whose love and trust for the young is without preconditions.





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## Foreword

ursts of color, noise, traffic, road animals, and sale. Fresh fish, weird vegetables, earthen pots, fragile toys, and a throng of people pushing and haggling, bicycles clanging, and motor-bikes honking-roaring in the dust. A two-year-old walks along the bazaar with her parents. She wants that which is most attractive, of course. Father walks on uncaring and dear mum tries to pull the child along. But no... the small one is adamant, she wants what she wants. "See the police there? I'll call him and he will take you away." The child eyes the yonder man suspiciously. Disbelieving, scowling, she howls for what she wants. He ambles forward. "See? He is coming this way." The child, urgently-suddenly silent, is led away fear filled.

Here comes the uniform!... Here comes fear!... Here comes the national bogeyman. An award winning man of duty, constable Dinesh Shah tells of his visits home on leave and how his infant daughter is physically frightened when his wife, washing clothes, uses his work colors to scare/tease her. In infancy this fear is placed and then reinforced as the person grows until it finds clear undeniable space in the citizen's psyche. And this fear has exacerbated over the past fifteen years as the nation adapted to a revolution and political conflict. Stories of atrocities by the state and those in uniform were turned to demon tales and used as propaganda to incite change and gather grassroots support. When actions were taken to assure safety and security, they especially targeted, traumatized, and alienated the young.

Now troublemakers throw rocks and protest. They may also possess and use guns and knives. Some crafted bombs using home appliances. Drugs are more common in use, violence may flare up instantly and reach uncontrollable levels engulfing streets, cities, and even the nation. These are the young. Police find duty in shearing the locks of young men who prefer long hair and snatching off streets those who like bejeweled ears. Kids may be taking intoxicants, or making love inappropriately. In this society, as in most others, youth make trouble, challenge the established, are up to mischief and are looked upon with suspicious half-eyes at best. Solutions are clearly needed so a nation can heal, come together, foster understanding, and learn to work together and find trust. It was a young Siddhartha Gautam who found a peace that lead to nirvana, reconciliation with that which he could not understand, and with his personal strife and findings, changed the world. Siddhartha found his way using hunger, suffering, meditation. Today's young may not be so patient.

So it is that Search for Common Ground sought to link the police and the young. Those vulnerable to the incitement of politicians and the entrapments of the criminal should find other ways of expressing energies. A few days of playing ball and going beyond hearsay got them to face the bogeymen (and women) and many succeeded in humanizing them. Over a six month period, 1200 young and a 100 or more police personnel came together and kicked the ball 10000 times! They stood-sat-looked at each other and talked countless hours asking questions that hurt and supplied answers that were not completely satisfactory all the time. Yet fear turned to gladness. Anxieties turned to confidences. Eyes that were downcast while passing the uniform on the street brightened up in smiles and greetings.

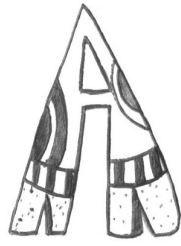
Pallav Ranjan

1 August 2013, Kathmandu

on the cover

# The Young are Sacrificed

Menuka Dangi, Constable



Asar 15 is a day of festival. Monsoon waters are falling, animals have plenty of grass to eat, bananas and other fruit are heavy on the trees, fields have been planted or are being planted, family and friends are together after days of labor and hard work, feasting. This day's feast is made up of yogurt, bananas, and *chiura* rice.

I am away from my family and my family is worried all the time. I come from Terathum. I am in the police. There is a war going on. I am assigned to the Ilam Bazaar police station. It is a time of fighting, attacks, ambush, killing, murder. It is a very dangerous time. Both the police and rebels lost people in the nearby Puwakhola confrontation recently.

On Asar 15 my duty is from noon to six. But my colleagues said we would get things done early and take time off in the afternoon. So I switched to the six am to noon duty session instead. We should celebrate the festival together. Ilam tea estates spread out beautifully, tea leaves are in bud, steep hills offer an amazing view. Clouds come into the bazaar when there is rain and on Asar 15, there is rain fall every year. Our plan is to get things done and go on a walk along the tea plantation and have a good early feast together.

The first thing to do is go on a patrol. Because we are at war, all of us go out armed. I carry a shotgun, my partner a .303 rifle. Seven of us get into a police van in a light mood. We will not let the festival day be spoiled.

A five minute drive gets us to the bazaar on top of a hill flank. This is the day of the weekly *haat* sales. On the floor of the *chowk* clearing people have spread their ware, mostly on plastic sheets. Vegetables of many shapes and colors and fruit of many types are laid out. This is a day when everyone comes to shop for the week and goods are cheaper and fresher. Since it is 8 am already, the place is not too crowded: people prefer to shop in the early morning when goods are very fresh or in the afternoon when vendors are worried that things will not sell or are preparing to go back home – some of them having to walk for hours carrying back their ware and so are willing to sell for less.

We spread out over the bazaar under the command of the assistant sub-inspector who is leading us. We go in twos as there always is the possibility of attack. We want to look things over and join each other at a tea house and have something eat. My partner and I are looking at the people and the wares when we see some very fresh and ripe bananas on sale. Of course, bananas will be necessary for our feast so my partner wants to see these and perhaps buy some. We go to the vendor. He choses a bunch. We see a child, maybe he



is 10, maybe 11, looking at us intently. He watches what we are doing, comes toward us, stares, moves around. He comes closer, first ten feet away, then five. I think he is a curious child.

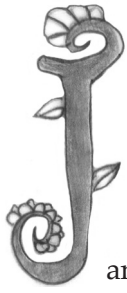
"What do you think?" my friend asks. And I say, they are good. It is at this moment that the child suddenly reaches forward and grabs my partner's rifle. The .303 slides off his shoulders so easily. Both of us are in shock, it takes less than a few seconds and we are not even completely conscious of what is happening. Is he playing? What is he doing? The child pulls the .303 rifle towards himself, cocks the weapon smoothly and before we can react, he has fired into my partner's chest once, and again. My partner falls. I am frozen. The shots are so loud and so close to me. I am staring and cannot react but the boy is already running with the gun in hand, past the sale, behind the buildings, towards the terraced fields and downhill, jumping from terrace to terrace.

My partner has fallen. I can only stare at him and in the back of my mind is the child running away. Time stands still for an eternity. Everything is silent. People vanish when they hear the shots. Perhaps they think this is a full-scale attack from the rebels' side. The rest of my team has taken cover. I and my friend are there seeming like forever. Staring. Silent.

When it is clear that there is no follow-up attack, people begin to gather. Another police van arrives within 10 to 15 minutes and my friend is carried to it and they take him to the hospital. I am in a dream. I do not know what is happening or what I can do. I get in the van that brought us to the bazaar. I learn that my friend has passed away two hours later at the hospital. The doctors could do nothing.

Thinking back, I feel very sad. I remember my friend clearly but not the attacker as such. I wonder why the young boy did not shoot me as well when he had the chance. He was but a child. He knew how to use a gun well and quickly. It took a lot of courage to do what he did and presence of mind to run away carrying the heavy gun with him. What made him do such a horrific thing? He should have been at school or surrounded by the love of his family. He must be 18 or 19 now. Maybe he too is dead. So many people died during the war. He should not have been entangled in this.

My brother, too, is his age. He has joined the police and is serving others. I think he is doing well. I am glad for him. And when I think of that young man, I think of my brother: he, too, could have chosen a different way of life.



## Our Side of It

Superintendents of Police

Share Their Thoughts

Janakpur is considered the center of the ancient Mithila empire. The Dhanusha area is rich in culture, art, and traditions that are the pride of a nation. History establishes the region as a hotbed of powerful interests and conflict that flares up through ethnic, political, and criminal activities. Superintendent of Police Basanta Kumar Pant is charged with assuring security in this volatile region. He says, "It is hard to make a success of police work without the involvement of the youth. Youth-police partnerships need to be appreciated and given importance."

In neighboring Birgunj, a border city between India and Nepal, Superintendent of Police Pitambar Adhikari shares a unique perspective on transit point problems and challenges. "The police department here has developed a strong youth focus over the years. They are what I would call change agents. They can be actors in the good and the bad and they have a great influence on others. Over a short time, we have involved sixty schools. Indoor classes and interactions, on-field observation of stations and posts, orientation on interrogation procedures, and visits to detention rooms have been a part of this involvement."

SP Pant considers, "Search for Common Ground's approach towards the youth and the police is in line with the work we are doing."

"The Hamro Team implemented program increased awareness on what we do and how we do it," SP Adhikari adds. "My officers have spent a lot of time within the program framework to support activities and understandings. The officers who have participated now have a deeper understanding of the fears and concerns of the young."

Looking at the limitations of the department and the needs of Janakpur, SP Pant comments. "We have long hours and sometimes our personnel are not as patient as they should be when they interact with the public. This involvement makes our personnel sensitive to the expectation of the people, especially the young."

SP Adhikari adds, "We find that young people have suffered from traditional police processes. A minority of young people are involved in drug addiction and trading, theft, disruptions within the community, violence and fighting, traffic violations, and small crimes. Just as wrong actions of individuals in the force should not reflect on the entire department, wrong actions of a minority should not be allowed to create biased opinion on an entire age group."

SP Pant believes an open border, poverty, illiteracy, and lack of awareness cause the youth to take wrong paths and SP Adhikari agrees. He says some problems are strategic, "Areas such as Birgunj and Bhairahawa may face less instances of substance abuse when compared to cities like Kathmandu and Dharan but these are transaction hubs. Drugs come across the border and are routed towards other cities in Nepal. Similarly, we may see very little prostitution here in Birgunj but again cross border human trafficking routes fall here."







“Three or four years ago crime rate was very high and things were difficult in Birgunj for the police. Now its better. Criminal racketeering, kidnapping, extortion, bombing, shooting, killing have decreased. Young people and their guardians have been easy targets. In one instance we were contacted by an embassy that had received fifty and more passports on which false visas had been stamped. We conducted an operation and found out that the false documentation was coming from one study abroad program broker. A teacher had been working with some university ‘representatives’ over email and phone. He had been asked to send young people’s passports by courier and fees through wire transfers. Not knowing what was going on, he had complied. Unfortunately, the racketeers were based in Nigeria and they sent back the passports with false visas stamped on them.

“We raided the place just before another five million rupees collected from young people could be sent to the international criminals. Some young people and their families had taken loans, some had sold property. It would have been a national tragedy. So many young people could not enter the desired country and attend university.

“I and my personnel received the opportunity to share such stories and more among young people. This is sure to have a knock-on effect and more youth and their families will understand that we are here to support them, their families and communities.”

Reiterating his commitments, SP Pant points out, “I have to say here that the situation in Janakpur city has been abnormal during the days this program held its activities. Though it has been difficult to coordinate and involve the number of police personnel needed to support program activities, we have participated to the best of our capacity.”

SP Adhikari points out the achievements, “There has been change. There is improved communication. Phone calls are made to me, confidence levels are increasing. One young man called me some time ago and said, ‘A policeman was very rude to me. There was no need for such an approach. Why did he treat me like this?’ He was very hurt. I took disciplinary action against the policeman involved. Though it may seem a small incident, even adults are afraid to speak to the police. Police have understood they are liable for what they say and how they say it. I must say their approach towards the public has changed. There used to be a lot of complaints on how they were treating the public. Now there are less complaints. Attitudes are different.”

SP Pant is determined. “School and college outreach has to be improved. We hope similar programs will be implemented in the future. We look forward to supporting activities that create a better understanding among the young and I hope activities are extended to remote areas.”

---

[Prekshya Ghimire: I live in Neta Marg, near the old water tank. I was three or four years old. I used to go next door to play with my friend. Mostly, we played indoors: kitchen, *chui dim* (catch-catch) and other childhood games. For some reason, we went outside the house that day. We were lost. I remember the fear. Not knowing where we were. The tears welling up inside. The longing for parents, family. Everything was strange and we walked and walked looking for our home, for something familiar to look upon and be glad. I wanted to see a policeman, a neighbor, anyone who could help. I cried and cried. So did my friend. A neighbor found us and recognized us and brought us home. I remember being so young and seeking help from an adult, looking for the police. ]







# We are a Team

Working with DISTRICT FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS



lobal football competitions such as the World Cup, European league matches, and national as well as local competitions have a strong following in Nepal, especially among the youth. Search for Common Ground's "Hamro Team," television series on social change was based on football. "Our team on the field," *Hamro Team Maidanma*, is the organization's ground level theme. Therefore it was natural for the organization to seek out and work with district football associations across the nation. FIFA, Asian Football Confederation, and All Nepal Football Association umbrellas cover these associations. They organize matches, youth championships, women's tournaments, and football clinics. Youth under their systems are playing for national teams and in the C, B, and A divisions.

President of Dhanusha Football Association, Tapesvhar Raut, was a football player. "We work for the development of football. However, we try to support positive change in the society when we can. This approach from Search for Common Ground to work with youth and their relationship with the police was a challenge and an opportunity."

Uddhav Aryal, General Secretary of Morang Football Association, thinks back. "I was convinced that this program would bring long term benefit. Collecting young people aged thirteen to sixteen together, getting them involved in positive thinking, having them interact with the police, reviewing their role and responsibility in the society, improving their unity, encouraging them to work as a team helps football and also guides the young."

Vice-president of the association in Dhanusha Sanjeet Singh comments, "Let's face it, the relationship between youth and the police in Janakpur is bad and we know improvement is necessary. This being our first experience working with an international development agency, we had doubts as to our capacity to implement structured efforts. This partnership helped us learn many things: how to follow guidelines, how to meet terms and conditions...."

"A three day orientation in Kathmandu and Search for Common Ground professionals' visits to Janakpur helped us prepare monthly program and financial reports. Our executive members would only meet when there were tournaments. We were not discussing things at the depth that this effort and our institutional development required. Over the months, we came in constant contact with ourselves. We are stronger as an organization."

"We visited many schools and developed relationships. I had never gone to police district and regional headquarters or the chief district officer's headquarters. Now everyone there seems to know me. Janakpur was undergoing a tense situation during the first seven days of our program: there was a *bandh* shut down of the city, there was some rioting and violence. Yet we received police support and were able to take our activities forward. During the second phase of the program there was another *bandh* as well as a visit from an Acting Inspector General of the Police. Even under such circumstances we received twelve police personnel, including policewomen, to support the program. Schools have also helped very much."





एमच्योर एथलेटिक्स संघ



मोरंग





“Young people learned about football, police interaction, understood legal processes and procedures, group organization, leadership, and they have gained exposure at many levels. When I meet them on the street they ask me when they can participate again. I feel that we have achieved our goal as negativity towards the police has decreased. They are greeting those in uniform and talking to them on the street where as in the past they would look away. Young people have asked some strong questions and have found that their concerns are shared. This means well for Janakpur. I feel that youth who have participated in this effort will make a contribution and help improve people-police partnership.”

Captain of the national team, Sagar Thapa is from the eastern region as are national players Robin Shrestha, Chetan Ghimmire, and Niranjan Khadka. National women’s football captain Jamuna Gurung is from Morang. Janakpur won best coach, best goalkeeper, and best forward in a recent youth championship. The eastern region can be proud of its achievements. “Football can help improve our communities as it encourages team work, coordination, and fair play. We encourage non-violence, discipline, and coordinated development,” says Bimal Rajbhandari, vice president of Morang Football Association.

Deepak Khati who has been involved with All Nepal Football Association well before district football associations were formed feels that development of women’s football has been very difficult in conservative areas such as Janakpur. “Girls did not know what a football boot is. Guardians understood and allowed daughters and sisters to put on t-shirts, shorts, boots and come out on to the field to play. Young women wanted to be involved. [A young Muslim girl fainted when her parents did not let her play and seeing her passion, her community also gave her permission to play.] I am so happy. In Dhanusha alone forty girls played. This has been a major achievement for the Terai. This has been a great victory in the gender battle.”

Uddhav Aryal comments, “Maiyu Rai from the teashop is such a great player but she has to work to study. Fingers are pointed at her when she plays football. I am saddened by the thought that she may not be able to concentrate on her abilities.”

Bimal Rajbhandari reported that 360 young people participated in the program in Morang alone and of these 120 took part in coach led football training. Boots, shirts, shorts were provided to all of them. “Getting kids this equipment is important. Many of them would have never been able to afford proper equipment without the program’s support. We can make a contribution to national football with this support, of that we are confident. If twelve players develop from this program, it would be wonderful.”

Tapeshvar Raut says young people’s relations, their conversations, their company has become stronger. “Schools were not able to provide this type of opportunity. Young people have understood that the police need our support, they are willing to listen to us, work with us, help us. We have also been able to open a door that can lead young people into a world of popular sport. I believe that this program has not only been good, it has been very good.”

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[Reena Kumari Shah: I had never played football before. When I told my parents I had played well, they were very surprised and enthusiastic. Perhaps they thought I did not have it in me. We played as a team and our team won. I want to play again. I teach my neighborhood kids how to play. I tell them how to avoid injuries and get them to do warm-up exercises. I share with them what my coach showed me.]







# 26 Years in Uniform

A conversation with inspector Tika Bahadur Thapa



I was twenty one when I joined the police force. By the time the rebellion in Nepal started, I had been promoted to a sub-inspector. I was assigned to Jhapa and was there during the elections as well. Working as an unbiased officer without political leanings, I found my work clear and uncomplicated though things were very dangerous for all of us. After three years in Jhapa, I was assigned to the Saptari zone headquarters which oversaw district level work.

I feel that the scenario has changed now and young people have more positive things to focus upon. I see many want a good education. Those who cannot get better jobs often go to work abroad. There are organizations working to build youth awareness, assure their protection and rehabilitation and provide them opportunities. When we come across young girls and women who have been entrapped by human traffickers, we have agencies to work with such as Maiti Nepal, ABC, and others. We intercepted a young woman with a child and saved her from traffickers. She was mentally unstable and with the help of social workers we looked for her husband and handed her over to the family. In case there are youth who have fallen into addiction, there are rehabilitation centers we can refer them to. There are different training, learning, growth opportunities now that were not there before.

Working in different places of Nepal, I found violence against women, theft, floods, landslides, firefighting related work requiring more of our time. We assure that documentation is a good part of our work. I am very familiar with the age group that Search for Common Ground has targeted. I have a seventeen year old son and a daughter who is fourteen. My son is studying science. He is a good kid: I would not say he is very clever. Neither does he go out a lot. He studies hard and got 77% in his School Leaving Certificate examinations [that is a very good grade and he must definitely be quite a smart young man]. He plays chess well.

My daughter is also serious. She loves dancing. Both of them are hardworking. As parents, I and my wife insist that they do well at school. If we assure that our children do not fall into bad company, they will be involved in work that is positive. Drinking, fighting, arguing in front of them sets a bad example. Work can be a problem also. When I come back home, they are asleep. When I awaken, they have gone to school or college. Parent led education is missing, I think, in the lives of those who work for the police and I feel that this situation should be improved. It is so hard to give time to our children that I feel guilty at times. But what can we do? Holidays and leaves are limited and looking after the home and family is something we do after retirement. I am sad that children of law enforcement personnel are getting the wrong message. They are doing wrong things and expecting their parent's position to see them through. When we brought some in, they said, "My parent is in the police. I am this person's son." It was sad. On the other hand, I am glad that my son and daughter know themselves.







In the towns I have worked I have found that young people [the boys] from the age of thirteen to seventeen are involved in fighting with each other, one on one, or in groups attacking individuals or other groups. For example when one young person was called a thief, he used a knife on his accuser. I took the injured young man to the hospital. He was fifteen. The doctor said he could not help as the wound was too deep. We did not know who or where his guardians were. I stayed up with him all night and took him to the BP Hospital the next day. As he had no money, I contributed the money required to give him proper medical treatment. I was up all night and it was only after I learned he was going to survive that I left. His guardian was found eventually.

When once I was on holiday at my village, two young boys bumped into each other. They were fifteen perhaps. One of them took out a knife and cut the other on the shoulder and ran away. I was in civil dress and this happened so fast that there was hardly any time for me to react. I was left to take care of the injured child.

These sort of incidents were common but they are decreasing now. In most instances we call schools, parents, and the young people together. We get them to talk and calm things down. We try to avoid filing cases because long drawn out police and court procedures can have a negative impact on a young person's future. Rape, murder, robbery are taken more seriously. Violence against women is often dealt out of court though such cases should not be handled like this.

Eve teasing, fights related to these, small arguments, and, as I said before, getting friends together and fighting in groups are more common among thirteen to seventeen year olds. These are usually not pre-meditated. Some cases are considered to protect the victims. Minors have to undergo a different process and repeat offenders are taken seriously.

Community policing, police-public interactions, hand-in-hand approaches, and school interactions need to be stepped up. Policing with a smile program is helping police and public relationships. Civil society organizations, international programs, and the police are working together. There have been real improvements in our relations with the people. As one incident can impact the whole organization, we have to be very careful how we behave in public. Some members of our force are not educated and there is only so much that a six month training can change. Those who interact with and support the young have to be careful and kind.

During conflict years a great distance developed between the youth and the police. Slowly things are getting better. There was a time when you would not come across young people at all! Joining the government security apparatus, siding with the rebels, or leaving the nation and going abroad were the only options open before them. They were taken away. They were harassed. That was the reality. On the positive side, young people are much more police friendly now. They are interacting with us and pass much more information to us.

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[Nikhil Sharma: I like football and I play in the midfield on the left wing. I want to do well in this sport so it was great training with professional coaches here. Though we lost our match, I feel I am doing better with the training that we received here. I feel that we can do much better as a team. I have to say I was impressed seeing the girls playing football. They played so well.]



दुमदास दराये  
श्री लक्ष्मी वसुदेव स्तुति  
संस्कृत ८





# a Silent Heart

Jyoti Karan Jha

My roots are in Janakpur and Jharkhand, vestiges of the ancient Mithila empire. We are close, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. We come together often and are there for each other. When I think of my family, my mind is mostly filled with joy and that one Holi festival day. I feel pain welling up inside me when I remember a day that began with so much excitement.

The neighborhood was a-roar. People were buzzing, dancing, laughing, making music, and throwing colors at each other. Yellow, red, green, blue, black dust in the air, on sparkling white cotton clothes, it was a dreamland of sorts. Some were drinking, some were taking intoxicants such as hemp, cannabis and marijuana. Sweets of many types and loaded drinks were on sale or on offer for free.

It was a festival as I always remembered it. Children, the young, the old, all were a part of the celebrations. Those that were alone were brought out of their homes to join in the festivities. Everything was progressing so well until the phone call. One of my brothers in Jharkhand went riding on a motorbike with a friend. They were out to clear their heads of noise, colors, and intoxicants, perhaps, and rode into an accident.

My brother died immediately afterwards. His friend ended up in a bad way in the hospital. No one knew how the incident took place. Joy was gone, everything was as if silent, unicolored. I was filled with a great sadness, father left for Jharkhand with hardly a proper goodbye.

At the hospital, my brother's friend had recovered enough to report that a police car hit them. Our family went to the station and the person in charge said that it was my brother's fault. Dissatisfied and angry, having learned from eye witnesses that the police car was travelling on the wrong side of the road, our family came back. The sense of injustice was deep and knowing what had really happened and how facts were being distorted made things worse.

Our family went back to the station again and this time a different officer was in charge. He was much more responsible. He asked for an investigation and as matters proceeded, the driver accepted that it was he who had made a mistake. We were so hurt that a person so young and so full of living had passed away but at least we reached the truth and found some comfort in knowing that our truth had found acceptance.

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[Pappu Shah: When in grade seven, I was driving a bike. I did not have a license at the time. I crashed against another bike and fell unconscious. When I came to, I was at the hospital and was being given medical treatment. The police had brought me there and had paid for the medication and care necessary out of their own pockets. When I gave the name and contact phone number of my guardians, they were called and they reimbursed the police. The owner of the other bike did not want to press charges so I was let off with a warning and an unpayable debt of kindness and generosity.]









# Peace for the Community

Ganga Raut

idari Gaun is a small village of mostly single storey white, blue, yellow houses. Some houses are cemented, some are made of spliced bamboo with hay or tile roofing. Most houses belong to Rauts, two houses to Das. I am a Christian with strong family ties. Grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, and their children live together, share the same stove, and we build our lives together.

Being near the Indian border makes things easier and cheaper but crime and danger are also a part of our lives. There is a fear of dacoits. We always heard of robberies in the villages next to ours. People we knew slightly had stories. Everyone seemed to have stories. The danger was for real and everyone was always alert because savings are hard to come by and much work is needed to build a future. We ourselves had never been robbed. We are not an overly affluent family so perhaps we did not feel in danger. Dacoits and being robbed was a tale for others.

I remember clearly: I was small then, it was the middle of the night. My uncle's son sleeps at the doorway so no one may enter that way. It seems the dacoits climbed onto the roof and came down into the courtyard quietly. By the time we were awake, they held my uncle's son by the arms and at knifepoint. They got us five brothers and our sister to open up our other house in the courtyard and locked us in. But not before a struggle. My aunt was quite brave, she thumped one on the head with firewood and was herself attacked. Blood poured from her head. There was no phone, no police station nearby. We were at the mercy of the dacoits.

Now it is different. We can expect help. For example, a person in my village was married young, at the age of thirteen, and then had a relationship with his sister-in-law. He married her too and both families were okay with this arrangement. A year later, one of his wives became pregnant. When he bought a *sari* for her, his other wife felt he had used her money. She started creating a scene. When things became intolerable, he beat her and himself fell in a faint. When he got up he was still angry, his pregnant wife was very angry. They were shouting screaming at each other and the whole village was upset. The night passed and in the morning there was another scene. No one could sort out the problem until the police were called. The boy ran away when he heard the police were arriving and they took the wives to the hospital. Everything was a mess. But after the police came, there was some peace and order.

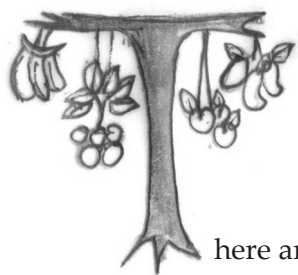
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[Sachin Basnet: I was going to meet my aunt at the hospital. Near the furniture store I saw a crowd of more than thirty people. Policemen were with a man who was trying to hide his face. I saw blue and black marks on his face and body (his shirt was tattered). People were yelling at him. He and two others were caught smashing the lock of a shop at midnight. A house across the street had also been robbed at gunpoint. Gold, money, and a laptop had been stolen. The police wanted him to show them where the gun and the stolen items were hidden. Plants had grown high and unwieldy nearby. The man pointed out a spot and a bundle containing the gun was found. The stolen goods were still missing. The police put the man in their van and they left. My aunt recovered two weeks later. And I remember the blue and black marks on the thief.]









# Helping Out

Reena Kumari Shah

here are ninety four houses in my village of Belauni. There are mud houses with bamboo walls and tiled roofs and Mithila art on the walls. There are cows, buffalos, oxen, ducks, parrots. It's a wonderful village. But even we have problems. There are three brothers in my village in the Ganapati Tol. They used to drink and fight and beat each other. One day the villagers called the police and they were taken to the station. They were told that their children would also learn such habits. Now they are much better.

Thieves came to my neighborhood in the middle of the night and stole everything: money, gold, silver. The neighbors and their family were beaten and when the police were informed they came immediately and caught the thieves. Five of them were in houses. There were of more of them nearby. A total of 700,000 worth of goods was recovered. For my people that is a lot of money. I like it very much that there is a police station near my village now. Nothing bad has happened, people are better.

My cousin brother is now a policeman. He is stationed in Malangwa and is 20 years old. He is married and has a son. His wife and son are in Janakpur. He enjoys his son's company very much. His son is one year old and is a beautiful child. When my brother comes home, he tells us that young people take drugs and drink. He tells us he has a responsible job and we too should be responsible. He brings me shoes, *gundpak* sweet, and cashew nuts. He visits home once every three months. My brother looks handsome and different when he is in uniform. I hope that all policemen and women are like him.

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[Sonali Jha: The roads are quiet. My mother, sister, three-year-old brother, and I are on a bus on the way to our home in Rajbiraj. A *bandh* shutdown has been called and the roads are blocked en route. Our bus stops and the conductor tells us to get off and walk. Home is an hour away by bus. My little sister is hungry, confused, and ready to cry. The long walk is impossible with my brother unable to walk very far. Drunkards are hanging around harassing women. We see a few policemen and mother asks for help. They tell us to come to their camp. My sister has started to cry. I feel lost. They take us with them and at the camp they give us food. When we feel better and safer, they stop motorbikes and ask them to give us a ride home.]

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[Manoj Bista: 7:30 pm. My sister, mother, uncle and I were on the roof. Lights were out. A man came riding on a bicycle shouting, using foul language. We thought he was drunk. We were glad to see him gone. But he returned our way again still shouting, using foul language. He hung around, went back and forth, and was a real nuisance. We went inside. Then I saw him peeking in one of our windows. I accosted him. He asked for water to drink. I gave him some. He left. He went to a house nearby and stole a shirt. He went to another house and was trying to pull a mobile phone towards him when people saw him from a roof and caught him. The man broke free and ran away. He had left his bicycle behind and came back ten minutes later and this time he was not allowed to escape. The police were called. His bicycle was left with us and his slippers and shirt that had come off in the melee. We slept nervously. The whole community was worried for many days.]







# What's Your Duty? Where's Your Duty?

Puja Thakur



sun filled day. Janakpur is hot today, birds are calling, and I sit under the cool shade of a tree. There are oxen and buffalos on the road, rickshaws are plying. Temples are quiet, the morning *puja* is over. At Shiva Chowk and Murali Chowk there are three-four, four-five policemen. They are talking to each other or standing around. Today a *bandh* shut down has been called by political parties in Janakpur. It has been a month that this has been going on. I don't feel good about all this. School is closed. I feel bored. I have friends and I receive education at school.

My thoughts wander. A month ago: I am going to Bisbiti Gaon where my *mausi* (mother's elder sister) lives. Young people are respected there and not looked or talked down to. I like it there. Most houses are nearby and people are close to each other. They help each other. My aunt makes great *buniya*, *jalebi* and I love these sweets. She also makes wonderfully tasty meat I hear, but I don't eat meat.

I am with my father on a motorbike, it is about nine in the morning. The road is neither crowded nor empty. Everything is as usual. There are people walking along, children and families also. There are balloons on sale. Shops are selling cosmetics, food and drinks, electronic items. There are tea shops and fruit sellers. A child suddenly steps on to the street, in front of a car. My heart is in my mouth, I see but I cannot react.

The car honks loudly and comes to a jolting halt. I don't think the driver has hit the child. I hear the child crying. His parents come running. A crowd gathers and they shout at the man in the car, "You should to be careful! Do you not know how to drive?" They scold the parents. "Why are you so careless?" "Why is the child on the street?"

I see that there is a policeman nearby. He does not come to the scene perhaps twenty thirty feet away from him. Thankfully, the car driver is a careful man and he had been driving slowly. The child is not hit. He is badly scared though. The policeman has seen the near accident. He is watching what is going on from where he is. Other people also see his inaction. They go to him and ask him why he is not helping.

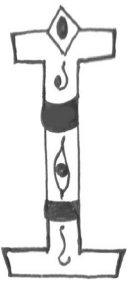
I hear him say, "My duty is here and not there. I cannot be everywhere." I and the people are outraged. We insist and then he gets himself to the scene. He scolds the driver. He then scolds the parents also. We have places to go, we leave. As the wind plays in my hair, I think of my *bhinaju*, my brother-in-law. He is in the police and is posted in Kathmandu. He told me to talk to the police if there is trouble. But in this case, the man did not care even when a near accident took place in front of him.

"Where is my duty?" He should ask himself. "What is my duty?" He should ask himself as should these politicians who call *bandhs* and waste my time and the time of thousands of other people. I shake myself of these thoughts and get up. It's time to go home and eat something.









# The Attack, Mom's Missing

Laxmi Shah

I was six years old. It was dusk. I heard sounds. "Firecrackers!" I first thought. Unlike the joy and fun such sounds filled me with during festival nights, these sounds were violent, they filled me with horror. One of my sisters started crying. Weeping, she went upstairs into our room. Outside, a column of smoke rose in the air.

My father was abroad, he had gone to Malaysia to earn money. My mother sold vegetables. We are five sisters, mother left for the shop at two-three in the afternoon and returned at eight or nine in the evening. She spread out a plastic sheet on a small patch of earth near the police station and sold *giraula* gourds, *sajiwani*, eggplants, cauliflower, tomatoes and more. I love *kobi*, I also like eggplant.

The day had been cool. I had gone to school and my sisters also. By the time the five of us came back, mother had already left. Sister cooked dinner and we were waiting for her come back. These loud sounds scared me and hurt my ears. I wanted to be with my mother. I wanted to go to Mujeliya where the shop was, where my mother was.

People began running. Everyone was running. The police station was under attack we learned. That is where my mother had her shop. My sister tried to run to her but she was held back by the neighbors. We could do nothing but scream and weep and wish that our mother was safe.

"At five they came in jeeps. There were twenty-five of them. Police were on duty at the station gate, they shot them down. I was at the petrol pump. I ran into my shed [which also serves as a tea house] and started shutting the wooden doors. The street emptied very fast. Laxmi's mother was at the tube-well, we called her inside and we hid her with us. Just across the street, less than fifty feet away, fighting went on for thirty minutes or so. Then the rebels held a procession, shouted slogans, and they went back. One of them was injured and he was carried away," says neighbor and eye witness who knows Laxmi and her family well.

Many policemen died. I used to know them. My mother came home after a couple of hours. I felt so glad. She looked so frightened. She told us what had happened in brief. My sister had cooked but none of us ate that night. We went to sleep at ten-eleven o'clock. All of us were scared.

A month or two later, my mother stopped selling vegetables because it was not worth it. We were losing money. Two or three months later, my father returned. It was a tense time in the family. Even though I was just six, I could feel that things were wrong, times were hard. Let there never be such fighting again. I do not know the new policemen by name but I know them by sight. I know that some of the men who died loved us. They would talk to me, they would buy our vegetables. They would smile and play with me, ask me about my studies, give me candy. As I grow older I find that the police have changed. I hear of them taking bribes from others. I see them harass girls, direct lewd comments at women. When we go for tuition classes, they make inappropriate comments. We have to avert our eyes. In the past they called us *didi*, *bahini*: sisters. Why do they do this *dai*? Why do they mistreat us?









# Child's Play

Pushpa Yadav with Meena Shah

he place can be called somewhat self-centered. No one pays attention to each other. Discrimination is rife. People think of themselves as big and important and others perhaps small and not so important. If there are problems, no one goes to help each other. But they are quick to call the police. I guess they want to be safe, not involved.

Yet it is a colorful place. Muslims, Chamars, and people of many other castes and types live here. A Biswakarma temple is the site of *melas* on festival days. During Diwali and Holi everyone comes out to play, sing, and dance even though they are shy and stand-offish. There is a deep pond next to the field. Several people have died there, drowned. Cows and buffalos have died in the pond as well. A large clearing next to it gives us a lot of space to play in.

Aryan, Chotu and their friends were playing cricket. They got into an argument. It started with Aryan hitting Chotu with the ball while bowling. Chotu was irritated and accused him of hitting him on purpose. Things calmed down and play started again. Accidentally Aryan hit Chotu again with the ball. And Chotu was incensed. Chotu told Aryan he could no longer play.

Aryan was from the same area while Chotu lived on another street. Aryan became angry with Chotu and went home. He complained to his father. Aryan's father came on his bike to the field. He grabbed the cricket bat from Chotu and shouted at him. "You come to my street to play and you bully my son. I know your parents, I will tell them!" He started hitting Chotu very hard with the wooden bat. Chotu had broken his arm and the doctor had only recently taken his arm out of the plaster.

He was swinging the bat with all his strength and hitting Chotu indiscriminately all over his body. His shouting could be heard far away. A crowd gathered. "Why are you hitting the small thin child?"

"Don't hit him on the chest and arms."

"He will be hurt."

"You cannot fight over child's play."

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[Pratik Chaurasia: It was a new academic year. I had been promoted to grade six and I needed new textbooks. A book stall had been placed at my school. I and my uncle bought the books I needed and came back home. My uncle felt the prices of the books were too high. And when we looked, we saw that a black marker pen had been used to cover the original prices on everything we had bought. As this was suspicious, we used a thinner and cleaned out the mark and we saw that the published price of the book we had bought for Rs. 375 was Rs. 200 only. My uncle was very upset and called a friend who worked for a newspaper for advice. They decided to call the police. When the police came, my uncle took them to the school and showed everyone concerned the books he had bought and how the prices had been marked over and extra money charged. A reporter took photographs and police talked to the stall keeper who promised to return the extra money he had taken from the school children. Though he returned the money and was not arrested, newspapers published what he had done. The following year there was no bookstall at the school, we went to stationary shops to get what we needed.]







The crowd intervened and held him back. He would stop and when he could, he would rush at Chotu and hit him again. Chotu, in the meanwhile, was standing still, taking the beating, we could see that he was very hurt. The whole thing was alarming.

After a while, Aryan's father got on his bike and went to Chotu's parents and said that he was bullying Aryan. Chotu began to cry and he went home weeping. His parents own a small food cart on wheels and were working. His mum went home to see her son. She saw him in bed crying. His recently healed arm was not moving and it was swollen. She and Chotu's elder brother heard the story. They were very angry. They called many people, from small children to very old people. A big crowd gathered, maybe eighty to hundred people. Most of them were carrying bamboo poles and sticks. The women and the elderly were also shouting and very angry.

They came to Aryan's home looking for his father. Thankfully, the door to Aryan's house was locked from the inside. They were shouting and swearing and said the clearing did not belong to anyone or their father. It was public and anyone could play there. Aryan's mother was shocked and called his father. She said that she and the family were being called vile names. I was afraid the crowd would smash the doors in. Aryan's father arrived and as he was getting off the bike, Chotu's brother caught him by the scruff of the neck and threw him into the deep pond where people and cattle drowned.

The crowd threatened to break his son's arm too. Every time he tried to crawl out of the pond, they would catch him and throw him back in again. Aryan's family and friends also arrived and they pulled him out. There was a big argument. Aryan's father acted innocent and said he had done nothing wrong. Chotu's brother was very upset. The neighbors brought out the bat that had been used. The crowd took hold of Aryan's father and using strap of the helmet, they almost strangled him.

The police arrived and asked the crowd to disperse. Aryan's family went inside their house. The police also went inside and while the crowd talked outside, they took Aryan's father out and prepared to take him to the station. Aryan's mother called the head policeman inside. I do not know what happened but Aryan's father was released from the station that night after dark.

While it was useful to have the police there as they helped establish peace, the punishment that Aryan's father received was not fit. Police took Chotu to the hospital and made sure he got medical care but it is not right that Aryan's father did not spend a single night at the police station. People think that money was exchanged to get him out but I am not sure about this. The police are needed to keep peace and stop things from getting out of hand. But in the process of making peace, they have to make sure what they are doing is just.

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[Anshu Kumar Ray: After sunset our next door neighbor was beginning religious rites. Priests had gathered, family and friends were there, a fire ritual was in progress. Our landlord was preparing fish for dinner. After gutting and cleaning the fish, he threw the waste over the wall as usual. By accident, the waste landed in the *puja* area. The neighbor was very angry. Soon they were screaming at each other. Police had to be called in and tried to calm things down. They explained that the incident was not intentional and would not happen again. But the neighbor said his *puja* had been desecrated and insisted that strong action be taken. They threatened the police and pushed them and threw police equipment away. The rest of the neighborhood had had enough. They intervened and stood in between. They gathered the equipment, apologized, and settled things down. After three hours or so, there was peace again. It is not only the duty of the police but also the community to help solve problems.]







# My Father the Policeman

Bijaya Mukhiya



My memories go back to when I was eight. My father was very hardworking. Sometimes he came back at ten in the evening and left at six in the morning. He would get called over the walkie talkie and he would leave immediately at any time in the night. Sometimes he would go to work in police uniform and sometimes in plain clothes. He had a team of four to five-members. I do not exactly know what they did.

There were a lot of problems at the time. A war was going on. Maoists were killing policemen. Their families were being targeted. My mother used to cry a lot. She was always asking my father to quit his job. But my father did not leave though my grandparents and mother were really frightened. His brother was also in the police and he quit due to family pressure.

I felt pride when I saw my father. When there are problems, the police are there to solve problems for the people. We as people have to be good and supportive so the police can do their work well. We have to believe in the police so security can be well maintained.

Once I was returning from my tuition classes. A wedding procession was going my way. It was evening, around 6:30. All of us were going towards Dr. Sinha's house, that is where the man was shot recently and he now has police protection. A band member providing music for the wedding said something inappropriate to a young girl in the wedding party.

She was hurt and angry and complained to her guardian. They talked to the band master and as they were asking him to take charge of his staff, the young man who had created the problem answered back and started arguing and said he had not said anything. A member of the family slapped him and a tussle resulted. The police came and took the band master, the young man, the girl, and the person who slapped him to the station.

I see the police patrol the streets. I see many people drinking alcohol, taking marijuana and hemp in and around the fish farming area of Kataiya Chauri. I also saw an eight year old hit by a motorbike. When the bike tried to run away, people shouted and the police heard and stopped him. They made him pay for the medication the child required to take care of this bloodied head and injured arm.

My father has retired now. He works as a guard for a bank. I talk to policemen and I feel comfortable in their presence. We talk about different things and I am glad that the war is over and things are safer for police families. My mother does not cry so much anymore.

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[Aakriti Lamsal: Three months ago, near Brahma Tol, Mr. Sahani, a neighbor, was on a bike with his daughter and nephew. A truck hit the bike and he died on the spot and the children were badly hurt. They were taken to the hospital by the community and neighbors raised money and helped take care of the children. The police helped out later and I appreciate how they protect us from strange and bad people and situations. On the whole, I believe human beings are here to help each other. Even if the police are not present, we have to make lives better for each other.]









# Do Things the Right Way

Aman Kumar Mandal

Fishes, lakes, and waters play a large part in my life and the life of my town. Janakpur is well known throughout the country for its many *sagars* and Ratna Sagar is a religious pond near Pidari Chowk where I live. A worship site during the annual Chath festival, the pond delivers many fine and healthy fishes to us every season. Nearby is one of the most popular fish markets of Janakpur. My father is a contractor who works with ponds, fishes, mango groves and he rents out stalls in the market. In order to get his work done, he has to move around a lot. That is why he needs a bike. For three years he went abroad to Dubai and worked there. When he came back, he set up this business and the business, I think, is good.

One day, after spending the day visiting people, he was at Bijay Meat House. He had parked his bike outside. He spent some time there, eating and talking to friends. When he came out, the bike was missing. He had forgotten to lock the handle and it had been stolen. He went to the police and they called the district headquarters and asked that two wheeled vehicles be checked. He then came back to the site of the incident. A small group gathered, people my father knew, and they discussed what could be done. Neighbors and others on the street were also listening. A stall keeper who sells omelet's nearby heard what had happened.

The day ended and everyone went back home. The stall keeper went back home and saw a bike. As he and his family did not have a lot of money, they could not afford one. Going inside, he asked his son whose bike it was. His son answered that he had seen two people with the bike and had stopped them. He found out that they were stealing the bike and brought it home.

The man was not happy with his son who had previous history of theft. He was suspicious and went to the police and reported that the bike was at his home. The police took the bike and his son to the station knowing that he was a repeat offender. He was used to stealing bicycles, motor bikes, and other things. I myself have seen him at the Ratna Sagar taking drugs using syringes. He was used to spending time in prison. He had been given a bike by his in-laws which he trashed. He beat his wife and was not good to his neighbors.

This time he was put in prison for six months. My father asked the police to let him go as he had been like this since he was young. The police said he had to be punished so that he would learn his lesson. If not he would continue behaving in this way and he would make trouble for others in the community. My father was persuaded to file a case against him by the police which I think was the correct way to handle the situation.

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Simran Baniya: It was winter. My neighbors had gone to dinner. Their son had come back after working abroad for many years. He brought money and many gifts with him. He had worked hard and the family had missed him. They now had savings and financial security. While they were at dinner two men broke in. They took whatever they could find, including money and gold. People who lived on rent in the house were disturbed and saw them. They called the police and my neighbors. The thieves were caught. Traveler's checks, money and gold were gone and could not be found. The police interrogated them. We also went to see them and pleaded with them. For two days they did not say anything. The police then slapped them about and at last they talked. I was at the station and heard where they had hidden the money and the gold. We went to search the fields and found the gold and money. All the worry of the past few days was gone.







# Stand Up and Take the Blame

Raman Baijnath



On a hot day, they are sitting in the shade. I hesitate. I feel that perhaps if I sit down with them, I will disturb them. I may not be welcome. Hesitating, I decide I will give it a try. One of them sees me and says, "Come sit with us, talk to us."

Many young people do not have motorbike licenses yet they drive. A fine of Rs. 1000 is to be enforced (reduced to Rs. 500 if they are carrying bluebooks). He asks which interaction group I am in. We are laughing soon, talking of our experiences. They tell me that they are from different police stations. It feels good to sit down and really talk with three policemen. For them to listen to what I have to say and to be treated as an adult is a wonderful feeling. We share fears, we share concerns, we hear points of view, our understandings becomes broader.

One event I shared took place about three months ago. Things are fresh in my mind. I had gone to Bara Bigha with eight friends to play. School was closed, a teacher had died. It was about 3:30. The field is very large and open to the public. We were playing and two brothers were learning how to ride a bike on the same field further away. The boys were not on the road. While teaching, the elder brother was called away by his friend. The younger brother was practicing alone when another bike came from the opposite side and crashed into him head on. The man fell, a sidelight was broken, not much damage was done.

The man who hit the younger brother had red eyes and he talked as if he were under the influence of alcohol. He got up and slapped the boy two times. He said he was in plain clothes and was a policeman from the Mujelia Police Station. More policemen arrived in a van when a crowd gathered. The man reported that the boy had been speeding and hit him. The elder brother came back and asked what had happened. The people who were eye witnesses, including myself, said that it wasn't his younger brother's fault. But the police took the two brothers to the district police station. My point is that even if you are in the police, the law should be fair and the same for everyone.

The policeman was not on duty. He did not accept his fault and blamed the young man. Police as well as politicians should pay the penalty if they make a mistake. I want the society to be fair and punish those who are really at fault.

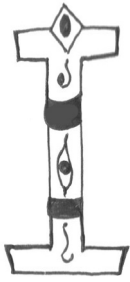
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[Siman Shrivastav: Sunday, after playing football, we were leaving when ten young men came and attacked one of my friends. We tried to separate them but we were stopped and told not to intervene. We ran to our sports teacher and they would not listen to him either. As there were many of them and they were big, he could not physically stop the assault. I ran to the stationary shop and asked the shopkeeper for his mobile phone and called 103 for the police. They came immediately. The young men tried to run away when they saw the police but after a chase, they were caught. My friend was scared but he was okay.]









# Ambushed

Constable Dinesh Shah

I joined Nepal Police at the age of twenty. I was looking for a better life and financial security. I lived in Manpur village in Sarlahi and I was married and had a daughter to look after. When I was assigned to Charikot, the rebellion had begun: bombs exploded, people, police were killed. We feared for our lives but we were also filled with courage. In Mujharia when policemen were killed I carried the bodies of my colleagues to the helicopter. I felt bad. When we took their remains home, I saw pain and sadness. Those of us who survived the attack talked among ourselves. We said we would make a stand.

Eight November 2007. It was the night before Laxmi Puja festival. It was past midnight, maybe 1 am. A phone call was made from Suryahi Village to the district headquarters. Dacoits were attacking. I and four other constables went there under the command of sub-inspector Ajaya Jha. As our post did not have a vehicle, we walked carrying torch lights. Past the rice fields several people were hiding in the fields and started shooting at us.

We were not prepared for an ambush. I tried to fire back, but my weapon misfired and would not work. One friend was shot in the stomach and died. A bullet hit me on the side of my head. Others too were not able to fight back in the dark as we could not see where the enemy was or how many of them were there. We had to turn back and run. I stumbled and fell and could not get up. I do not remember much after that. Three escaped the attack and called the district headquarters. A rescue team arrived and I was found by the light of my torch. I was taken to Dharan for treatment and from there to Kathmandu.

I learned that the villagers who had called us to the rescue accused us of being robbers. I feel very hurt. I cannot hear clearly in one ear and the vision in one eye is unstable. I was promoted but I am sad that the culprits were not prosecuted.

I have three girls and a boy. My youngest daughter is scared of my uniform. When I go home on holidays my wife washes my uniform and when the colors come close to her, she gets very scared. I hold her and say to her that she should not be scared of the police.

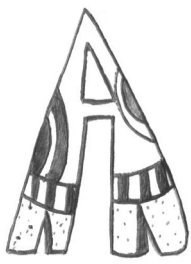
When kids do not eat, parents say they will call the police to scare them into eating. Even I was afraid of the police when I was young. Four five of us would go to the river, the Manpur Barrage, to swim and someone would yell, "The police are coming," and we would all run away. I now know it is important not to scare young people using the word police.

Look at the young people here. They are thirteen to sixteen years of age and no one talked to us when we first met. After a few days, they call me police uncle or elder brother, and talk to me. We listen to the news together. They interact with us in a meaningful way. They did not know which number to call in case of problems, what to communicate. Kids blamed us, they said we take bribes. We listened to them, they listened to us. These programs have to reach the villages, *dehats*. Young people's attitudes have changed completely. They used to accuse us, now they are our ambassadors.









# Young and Working

Jitendra Giri, Constable

A man I knew in Chandra Nighahpur was in the police. He dressed so well and looked so good, I wanted to be like him. I was nineteen and I went to the recruitment center. I saw the training and the testing and was so scared that I ran away. But I kept going back. I went back four times before I finally built up the courage and went right up to the gate and registered myself for the tests. They called in back fifteen days later. 125 people had applied and only five would get in. As soon as I got home I started running. I got fit and was able to run ten kilometers at a time.

When the test day arrived, it was hot. We were placed in groups and I did very well. I was selected for further training and sent to Naxal headquarters in Kathmandu. Two months were very hard work but I made it. I was soon wearing the uniform, hopefully looking as good as that man from Chandra Nighahpur. I was posted in Birgunj where the crime rate was 90% higher than the rest of the country. It was difficult to work. People shot each other, traffic was haphazard, kidnappings would take place, people openly flouted the law. It was like being in a movie, except that real people were losing lives and property and I was also in danger along with my friends and superiors.

I have so many stories of real happenings to share. At seven one evening I was in front of Gandak. A man was run over by a truck carrying sixty tons of cargo right in front of me. His head had come under a wheel and was gone. I was alone. I had to be careful. The body had to be removed. Brains and pieces of him had to be collected. I got plastic bags and collected most of him. Then I stopped a van and took his remains to the hospital. It was a very difficult experience for me. I am glad we have been able to improve the traffic situation in Birgunj now.

Being a border town, Birgunj is a place of business. People trade here, some in drugs. Some children sniff glue. An informant told us a man was bringing drugs from India in milk cans. We caught him with 2400 intravenous shots at Maisthan. The cost of the drug is about Rs. 50 across the border and I'm told it can be sold in Nepal for 1500 to 2000. When I fell into a river barrage, bamboo stilts went through my chest and hands. Similar drugs saved my life and it is sad that such useful chemicals are being misused. Children, the handicapped, the poor, the old, I have to be suspicious of everyone. I have seen many young people, migrant workers who have come to work here so they can feed their families back home, entrapped by criminals. They are asked to take

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Dipendra Budhathoki: Two weeks ago, 9 am. We had just had tea. I was putting on my school uniform when my neighborhood auntie started screaming. I did not understand what the screaming was about. I thought something terrible must have happened and I ran outside. "Thief! thief!" she was screaming. Someone had snatched her bag and had run off with it. Since the street is straight, the person who was running could be seen from afar. Several others had been alerted and they caught him. The people were very angry with him. The trend of snatching bags, necklaces, earrings and escaping on foot, on bicycle, or motorbikes has increased in Nepalese cities. They were yelling at him as well as hitting him. The women stopped the older men. I told the younger men to stop. A call was made to the police and they arrived in about six minutes. After they took him away, I returned home, arranged my uniform and books and went to school.







medicine across the border and some of these innocent people are arrested. I think as many as 10% of the cases we handle are like that. We inform our superiors as we do not have the authority to let them go.

Sometimes we are in the right place at the right time. One night after eight, at Murali Chowk, I was going past dark alleys. I heard a gunshot. One person was running towards me, away from the sound of the shot. I tripped him up with my stick and searched him. I only found two candies in his pockets. He had no weapons on him. About sixty people gathered and several said it was he who had fired the shot. He had shot at the rice seller and missed, they said. At the control center, he confessed that he had fired the shot and five other people were involved. They were from Inaruwa. He had thrown the gun into a dark alley as he ran. We went on a van and found the gun. They caught all five young men aged twenty to twenty five. I was awarded, five other policemen also received a token of Rs. 500 and an award for bravery that would be applicable for three generations.

Some months ago, two of us were on bicycle patrol and we had reached Krishna Chowk in Ranighat. We saw two young men, perhaps sixteen to twenty, on a motorbike and they did not have helmets on. The lights of the motorbike were also turned off. We knew something was wrong. I stopped them and asked where the driver's helmet and bike's bluebook were. The young men said they lived right here on the main road and would get it. They went inside a house. Thirty minutes passed and no one came out. I took the bike to a nearby police post and left it with the two policemen on duty.

When I came back somewhat frustrated and knocked on the door, a woman said that no one had entered the house at all. Neighbors and other passersby had seen them go in. I was angry, I asked her how she could lie like that. I took my torchlight and searched the house. There was no one inside, they had absconded. I took the bike to the district headquarters. It had been reported stolen at 7:30. I was questioned and I reported what had happened. The next morning the woman was brought to the station. Detailed interrogation took place. Her son and his friend had stolen the bike, she admitted, but they had run away. She had to be imprisoned for two days before they turned up and were arrested.

Young people can be careless. Some think bad ways are easy ways. I tell people: a laborer earns Rs. 500 in a day. There is no need to steal. After a while you will be caught and end up in prison. A laborer contributes sweat. His earning deserves respect. Crime does not bring respect.

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[Nikhil Raj: Bikas Sales is quite popular. The shop is small and family run. It has a lot of variety: drinks, rice, dal lentils, face wash, cosmetics... On Saturday I was sitting in the shade with my family. We heard very loud argument. We came out onto the road. Two customers were there and they were very angry. A mango drink they had bought had gone bad and also had larvae inside. They had asked that the drink be replaced but the fifteen year-old son who was attending the shop refused. He said he had no control over what they were supplied by the factories. A crowd gathered. Police inspected the goods in the shop. The goods were fine but damaged goods must to be replaced as it is the customers' right, they said. The boy's mother said she would have to pay out of her pocket and refused. A fine of Rs. 2000 was levied and the son was taken to the police station. His father came, found out what had happened, and went to the station. He said he would not let such an incident happen again. Though I am close to the family, I think the police were right as people could get really sick drinking such stuff.]





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# Twenty Years of My Life

Pushpa Kumari KC, sub-inspector



ripur Ward Police Post, Parsa. The young person studies in grade eight. His father drinks, beats his mother, troubles his children. The child comes to me, calls me auntie, he is scared to talk to me. "He drinks, he does not let me study, beats my mother blue and black." I said we could help. He is asked to come to the police post. He is asked to write a report. We go to his home. We take his father who runs his own business to the station. There we talk to him and ask him to sign a paper promising to behave well, be kind to his family. Now he is much better and the family is no longer suffering.

A narrow street. Girls go to school that way. There is a small bridge. Campus girls walk this way. Five to seven boys seventeen to eighteen years of age hang out there, school going type of kids. They use drugs. They make inappropriate remarks, harass the girls. One villager calls us and complains. He says "Our daughters are harassed, our young sons see this and maybe learn bad habits, start using drugs." We go in plainclothes. We catch two of them and the rest run away. We send them to the district headquarters. Now the area is safe.

My husband is also in the police. When I joined, I was unmarried. There were very few women in the force. It was difficult to work. Communities did not look upon women police positively. They did not know about women police in Parsa and crowds would gather to see me. They said, "*Mougi police aagelwa, mougi police aagelwa.*" Over twenty years, good facilities have been developed for female officers. A women's police cell has been established. There were no toilets, no changing rooms, no rooms for women in the barracks. Even if we were capable, we were treated like we were not.

Two months ago, we found a fourteen year old girl being abused. We arrested three women and they are in prison. The girl is in Maiti Nepal shelter home. Being a border town, we have to maintain high vigilance and have arrested many for selling or attempting to sell women.

In the past, rape, sexual abuse was in the background but things are more in the open now. Fathers-in-law and brothers-in-law would abuse women at home: many men go abroad to earn money leaving their families and wives at home. These cases were many but would not be reported. Dowry related abuse, the burning of brides and daughters-in-law and hangings are serious crimes yet culprits would go free. Women who are given inadequate food and clothes are coming out now, court cases are filed, counseling is provided, commitments are written in front of witnesses such as the police and lawyers and courts are referred. Property rights and divorce related advice is provided when requested. NGOs such as Mahila Sanjal provide support. I feel that the police-justice process is much stronger today.







# I Want My Brother

Parbati Shah



Mummy, Buwa, two brothers and I make up my family. My father works as a cook, he helps prepare wedding feasts. We live in Bishuwa in Birgunj. When I was ten, I came back from school and found my mother sitting at the door. She was worried. She said that the man who lived in our house on rent had taken my brother, aged four, on a walk and they were not back. We thought they had gone to the market and shopping may have delayed them. The man used to play with me and my brothers all the time, Sunny would be okay.

I did my homework, ate, and went to sleep. My father came late, at ten and woke me up. "Where is Sonu?" I did not know. The phone rang and it was the man who lived on rent with us. He said he had taken Sonu. He said he had put him on a bus with a woman who also lived with us on rent and had sent him to India. He was calling from the Nepal-India border, he said.

We were all shocked, crying, missing Sonu. My father called the police and went out. He did not come back that night. The kidnapper wanted four-five hundred thousand rupees. We did not have that kind of money. My father searched for Sonu with the police. The next day he came back, said nothing had been found. My mum said she wanted Sonu no matter what. We were heart broken.

Over the next couple of days my father sold all our agricultural land and collected money. The land went very cheap because we were in a hurry. The kidnappers called four-five days later. It was a relief to get their call. My father went to the location they specified immediately. He had informed the police and they were going to provide some support. The kidnappers called him to India but when he got there, they did not turn up. Sitaram, who lived on rent with us, had gone with my father.

These incidents happened again and again. It seems that Sitaram – who was with father all the time and had lived with us for five years – was informing the kidnappers about police involve-

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[Ayush Abi: It was Holi. People were dancing, singing, and colors were flying in the air. Earthen pots had been hung from ropes high up. Anyone who could reach the pots fifteen to eighteen feet above the ground would be rewarded. People made a circle holding each others' arms and others would stand on them. Then another set would climb on top of them and fall. It was all very comical to see. Some were wearing wigs. Some false mustaches. Some were in their underwear with their complete bodies painted. Many were drunk, some had taken hemp. All day people tried to get to the pot. It was only in the evening that one of my friends got the pot. He received more than 4000 rupees as prize money. Some young men were getting more and more drunk. Some were asleep on the streets. People were fighting. People were driving in threes and fours on bikes without helmets on. Some of them were completely drunk. In festive spirit, the police let things be unless things went out of hand. They would put trouble makers in a van and take them away. Those who made sense would be allowed to go home after a few hours, the rest would be kept overnight at the station. It was a fine balance between fun and danger, not spoiling one of the greatest festivals of the year and keeping order.]







ment. My father began to suspect he was involved as every time they went together, he would go halfway, make an excuse, and disappear. Sitaram began to empty his rooms. He was sending his material to his father-in-law's place. He moved half his stuff and for some reason ran away. Twenty long days had passed by the time this happened.

Each day that passed was very sad and difficult. We did not feel like cooking or eating. Neighbors would come. One evening, while we were eating, my father started to cry. I had never seen tears in his eyes. A month passed, yet we did not know what was happening. We knew Sonu was in India. Every five to ten days the kidnapper would call and my father would ask to hear Sonu's voice and for a few days our minds would be at peace. The kidnappers called my father to India again. Father went there with the police. Indian police were also helping us. They saw two men on a bike but they ran away.

The kidnappers did not call for some time. When they did, they threatened to kill Sonu. My father told them he would not tell the police anymore. "Tell me where I should come without the police," he asked. After being told a location, he met with the police and told them what was happening. A plan was made. Nepalese and Indian police would help. He would go alone but they would form a net.

That day father went to Modihari with six hundred thousand rupees in cash. The kidnappers came on a bike. He went to them and gave them the money. He had been given a whistle. When he blew on it all the police came, Indian as well as Nepali. There were many of them. One of the men escaped while the other was caught. He was interrogated and told the police where Sonu was. Sonu was with the woman who lived on rent with us in a house nearby, he said. The man who ran away was also apprehended.

My father, his friend, and two policemen went to the house. They took my brother from the woman, then the police arrested her. She was taken to prison. My brother came home. We were so happy! A huge crowd came to see him. The whole house was full. At dinner my brother, who would not pick up his own plate (he was so loved and spoiled at home), not only picked up his plate but washed it too. Mum started to cry when she saw him do this.

Police of two nations came together and worked together for a long time to save Sonu. I would like to say thank you to them.

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[Deepak Kumar Yadav: A neighbor was having important visitors over. A traditional arranged wedding was being planned and the girl's family was coming over. We had known him for a long time and he needed help so he called me. He gave me and my friend money and his bike to go shopping. We had gone past Mahendranagar Chowk when a car hit us. My friend hurt his knees and I injured my shoulders and leg. We were not able to get up and were in a lot of pain. People came and looked at us and left us there. No one helped. A police van arrived and asked the crowd to leave. "What is this?" they said. "Two kids are lying there in pain and you are doing nothing. What will happen if you are involved in a similar accident or your kids? No one will help you either." The policemen took us to the hospital. We did not have enough money so they added 1500 rupees from their own pockets and made sure we got all the attention that we needed. They took us back to the station and gave us tea to drink and food to eat. Then they brought us home. One policeman scolded my parents and said we are too young and careless to be riding bikes on the streets. My parents were thankful and said that they had made a mistake. They reimbursed the money used to take care of us.]









# Electricity Thieves

Manu Chaudhary

adhemani Tol has shops, old houses, and a masjid also. Our community is friendly, I have a lot of friends. In this wonderful community, we also have people who can be very silly. For example, my neighbor. He is very expense conscious. He tries to save money whenever he can. In order to reduce his electricity bills, he took to stealing electricity. Bare municipality electricity lines go through most neighborhoods across Nepal, what he did was make metal hooks and mount them on thin poles. He connected electrical wires to these and whenever he used the water pump he would reach out with this contraption and steal electricity.

He had no hesitation, shame, or guilt. All of us could see what he was doing in broad daylight. It was a display of his cleverness. Slowly he got lazier and he would ask his wife and his eight year old son to make the connection. This made several people in the neighborhood worry. They would tell him that this was dangerous and could have severe or even fatal consequences but he would not listen. Some other people felt like taking electricity for free. There did not seem to be any consequences and anyone who wanted could just reach out and take the power that they needed from the bare lines. Another neighbor copied what he did.

No one acted like this was theft. They would take what they wanted and when they wanted during the day or at night. They made no pretense of hiding what they were doing. This went on for several months. Neighborhood aunties would tell the eight-year old son that he should not to listen to his father, he might get electrocuted! I do not think he understood or he felt afraid of his father and obeyed instructions. The women would get quite upset.

Then one day, suddenly, the police came on a van. When they saw the police, the man and his wife ran away from the house. Their son was sleeping and did not know what was up. Those who lived in the house on rent and the child were taken to the station. The man and his wife had no option but to go there and set them free. They came back quite sad from the chief district officer's working quarters. Their electricity connection had been cut. I heard they had to pay Rs. 36,000 in fines. That put a stop to electricity theft in our neighborhood. Our other silly neighbors who were also stealing electricity first ran away and when they came back they stopped stealing electricity.

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[Prashant Shah: I am passionate about bikes and cars. I know how to ride a bike. My uncles and my seventeen year-old brother Rohit have taught me well. I have driven on the village road at speeds of fifty to sixty kilometers per hour. I don't get on the highway because my guardians are scared that I will get into an accident. "First get your school leaving certificate and then you can go," they say. I and Prabhat were on a bike. We had come out of the school hostel and were out for a ride, going towards Adarsha Nagar. A policeman stopped us and asked for my friend's license paper. My friend did not have it with him. "Remember me *dai* [brother]? I gave you 200 rupees so I could take the test?" he said. We were at the crossings where there are a lot of people. The policeman said, "*Bhai*, don't say things like that here, go go." And we left. My friend had bribed the policeman in order to take the test. We went to the clock tower and came back. I will be taking the license trials after my examinations are over but I am not going to bribe anyone. What is the point in bribing people after paying for the classes, interaction sessions, and preparing for so long.









# Life on the Line

Priya Shah

ani ghat is an old settlement. Houses are packed together. There are many old houses, streets are narrow. Most people are involved in trading and some own factories. I suppose because of this we were targets. It was a time of rebellion. It was a time of fear.

I was playing inside my home with my brother Pritam. He was six. I was eight. We heard loud voices and looked outside the window. People had gathered and we heard some of them saying, "There's a bomb. That's a bomb." We watched what was happening from the window. My parents also came to watch what was happening from the window with us.

Right across our house was a small round package. It looked brown from where I was watching. One of my neighbors is an assistant sub-inspector and he had also come. More and more people gathered, twenty-twenty five of the neighbors. It was about eight in the morning and everyone went to him for suggestions. He said that everyone should stay away from the device. Everyone moved about twenty feet away and stood there talking and staring. No one told us to go away from the window but everyone was telling each other not to go near the device.

The sub-inspector called other policemen and four of them arrived. No one knew what to do. I do not think any of the policemen were trained in how to deal with the situation. Everyone was scared that houses would fall down if the device exploded and people would die. Nepal is not used to seeing bombs in the neighborhood.

Someone had to take action and one of the policemen was very brave. He went carefully to the device, slowly he picked it up, and very carefully took it away to the Sirisiua River nearby. As we were small, we were not allowed to go with the crowd that followed him to the river. We went to school thinking of the action we were missing.

We were told that the policeman threw the bomb towards the center of the river and it exploded as it came in contact with the water. No one was hurt. Everyone was relieved. I still remember the policeman and how brave he was. I can still almost see the bomb in front of our house. And when I hear bad things about the police and how they take bribes, I think of how he saved my neighborhood.

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[Sachin Basnet: When thieves were stealing in the night, the whole village was worried and insecure and could not sleep properly. A neighbor was robbed and their computer and bicycle stolen from two floors up. The family was locked inside. So when a thief was apprehended by the villagers one night, all the anger came out and he was beaten. The police came to get him, but villagers from the next village also came and would not hand him over. He was beaten badly by them after the police left. I do not know what happened to him as they took him away.]





श्री गणेशाय नमः



श्री गणेशाय नमः





# Safe Shopper

Aayush Jaiswal

darsh Nagar is a good community. We are next to the trading town of Raxual, India, and we get better prices for the things we need if we go across the border. Goods are newer, fresher, and qualitatively better in some cases. Our family goes to shop there three or four times in a year. There are many advantages being next to the border and there is also much that is not good.

There are many shops in my neighborhood, they sell all types of items. A few of them purchase items that have expired cheaply in India and sell it in Nepal at regular price as many people are uneducated or unaware and do not look at each item's expiry date. My story is about a shop three minutes away from home. It is a small shop. We used to buy things from there. I have memories of the shop since I was five years old. I would buy biscuits, candies, and noodles there. Our parents would buy oil and soap and everything that we did not have.

Seven years went by. I became twelve years old. On television and at school we were receiving information about how we should check the expiry date on the items we buy. I went to buy processed cheese from this shop and I thought I might as well check the dates.

I had to open the tin can as the expiry date was on the inside. I saw the product had expired one and a half years ago! The cheese was yellow, not white as it should be. I tasted a little bit, it tasted bad. I showed the can and the cheese to my parents. My father said that he would go to the shop as this was probably a mistake. We did not think the shopkeeper had purposefully bought expired items to sell for a higher profit.

At the shop my father saw that the fruit juice on sale had also expired. Other items were also older than they should be. He tried to talk to the shopkeeper regarding the food and other items he was selling to the community. Bad food can make people very sick, he said. When my father asked the shopkeeper not to sell such items, the owner and his son who ran the shop told him not to buy from them if he did not want to.

My father came back feeling very hurt. We talked in the family and all of us felt hurt by their behavior and how they were treating us. We had known them for so long. I said maybe we should call the police like it was suggested to us by the media and the school. My father owns a photocopy shop, one of his friends has a restaurant-eatery and the other owns a clothes shop. My father did not want to do this. He decided instead to talk to neighbors and friends.

Since this was having an impact on the health and safety of the whole community, they went together to talk to the father and son. This time too they would not listen to our point of view. Even when they were told that people would be sick they would not talk to us decently.

Not having much choice my father and his friends went to the police camp and told them what was happening. The police came to the shop. We do not know what happened, I think he agreed not to sell outdated items. But it was too little too late. Being a small place, the word had spread. We had stopped buying from him as had other neighbors. After a couple of months they moved shop. I do not know where they went. But I remember them rather sadly. Things did not have to end that way.







# Tears and Silence

Name Withheld



he is a quiet girl, well behaved, kind and soft hearted. She speaks to me in a small voice. "Grandfather, Buwa, Mummy, two sisters and an elder brother make up our family. We live together in Murali Chowk. I have two uncles, they lived in our other house across the street. My father trades in jewelry boxes. My uncles work as a plumber and a painter. We were frequent visitors to each others' houses. I met both uncles regularly and played with them. I would watch TV with them and play with my aunties and their children.

[Her memories hurt her, she begins to sniffle.] Aunties used to make noodles for me. The youngest would make *sel roti*, carry me on her lap. She loved me. Dasain, Tihar festivals would come around and we were all together. We would all wear new clothes, do *puja* worship, feast on meats and sweets, decorate our homes, light firecrackers, oil lamps. It used to be fun. I wish our family was like that again.

"Both aunties were very good to me, especially the young one, she was so affectionate, kind. My uncles however could be different. They would be fine and fun and then over small things they would become very angry. They would shout at each other and sometimes even scuffle physically with each other. I felt so bad to see them like this, I used to cry. Altogether, there were nine of us children. The eldest was eighteen and the youngest was three. We would all cry when we knew they were fighting. My father travels a lot, his work takes him across Nepal and also to India. If he was present, he would try and separate my uncles and even then they would not listen to him and would shout at him. Aunties would try and separate them too. They would attempt to drag them away from each other. But my uncles would instead push them and sometimes they would fall. Small things would make them angry, immaterial things, I felt. Neighbors would incite them, some form of cruel entertainment I suppose seeing them fighting each other in public, creating a scene.

Every year they would brawl two or three times. I felt so frightened all these years. The women in the family were very close and they were there for each other. I had become twelve years old. It was a holiday and I was home. It was about nine in the morning. We were eating. Grandfather was out. Again there was the sound of argument. [She begins crying and is unable to communicate. Further information is provided by her teacher.]

Again there was the sound of argument. These days the arguments were worse as property was being divided among the brothers and they could not agree what each was entitled to. Their property was valuable. They had excellent farming land. They owned land in three places in central areas of Birgunj City.

The sounds were very loud, the family left their food to run next door and stop the *tamasha*. Before they got there, there was silence. It seems the uncle had hit his brother's wife, the youngest aunt, on the head with fuel wood and she had died. He had then run away. After a while, police were called. The uncle had been faster, he had already called his wife on the phone and she had left the house with his children. They had probably entered India by the time the police arrived. She feels bad and is still very scared. Her uncle has not been arrested. Despite owning so much in Nepal he and his family cannot enjoy what is their right. It is sad for the whole family.







# I Remember

Sakshi Bajracharya



I live in Murali Chowk. Our family owns two houses next to each other. Grandma, mum, father, brother, I and my sisters, and an uncle live in the three storey house while the other is rented out. One of my sisters is studying Ayurvedic medicine. The other is an accountant.

Our tenants are very nice to me. I help when I can: going shopping for them if they are ill and they too help when we have need. I visit them on weekends and holidays and play with their children and watch TV with them.

Five years ago, a lady came to live on rent with her baby daughter and a full time maid. I was ten. I have some clear memories while some of my memories are so hazy. The daughter was very pretty, she was trying to walk. This story is about the maid.

She was perhaps twelve years old, getting on to thirteen. I would see her washing dishes, playing and taking care of the child. I would go to school, she would stay at home to do house work. She was tallish, she dressed well, and smiled easily. I remember a hot day. I had gone to their room. Auntie was out and she was there with the baby. We talked.

She told me that she had to work very very hard and that one days she was sure to die. The conversation was disturbing but I tried to take it as a joke. I was sure she was kidding. The next day I went to school, there was homework and friends and laughter, I forgot what she had said. Then again holidays came around and I was home again. I would see her, we would smile and talk, there was nothing to remind me of what she had said.

Another holiday. Mum was home, she is a housewife. Father had gone to the sub-metropolitan city office where he works. We were watching TV. After the program ended, I was bored and went to meet her. The girl and I were about the same age and I liked being with her. We talked and she said she had a cough and that she would take some medicine. She drank a capful of medicine and started retching. She rushed to the drains and vomited. I felt scared seeing her so sick. I went back to my room. The bottle she drank medicine from was somewhat strange.

After sitting for a while, I felt anxious. I went back to her. I do not remember how much time had passed. When I tried to open the door to her room, it was locked from the inside. The auntie and the baby were out. I knocked and got no response. I called her name several times. She would not open the door. For some reason, I felt frantic. I was thinking something must be really wrong. I tried to comfort myself thinking that she may be fast asleep after having worked hard.

The old conversation came back to me, the time that she said that she would die. I went to mum. I told her that the girl was not opening the door and took her there. She too knocked on the door and got no response. She also felt fear and a sense of things not being right. She called my uncle who was upstairs watching TV. He came down and broke open the door. I was there when the door crashed open. We all saw her. We were shocked. She was hanging from the fan. She had used a shawl to hang herself. Something deep inside me said that she was already dead. Mum told me I should not be there and sent me away. I went upstairs, leaving my mum and uncle. The police came. We were all very afraid. Thankfully, the police were kind to us. After some time the lady and her baby daughter left our house and moved elsewhere.







# Two Daughters

Aakriti Lamsal



any trees, long stretches of fields, and five or six houses make up my neighborhood. Rice, wheat, corn, and mustard play in the wind, depending on the season. There is a pond where fishes are farmed. I was nine years old and a girl next door and I were particularly close. We were like sisters. We played badminton, watched TV and she would not leave when her mum called her home. We studied together and did no-work together: escaping from what we had to do was great.

Cars could not come to our homes. Things that could have been easier with a road near us weren't. So my friend's family decided to sell their house and moved 10 minutes away where there was a direct road connection. Someone else moved into their home: a lady from Hetauda. She had left her husband and had two daughters. They were ten and twelve years old.

The woman would not speak well with the neighbors and she was quite rude at times. She was not accepted by our usually friendly and welcoming community. She had no income source. She was not a good person, it was whispered. The girls became friends to me, but my mum said I should not talk to them.

Men started visiting her. Different men would come to the house and the room that she had rented. They came daily, two or three of them. The neighborhood was worried. Something was wrong with these visitors and whatever was going on should not be happening everyone said. These men would make noise, drink, and the women in the community did not like it at all. I was young and did not understand, but I remember being disturbed in the afternoons and at night.

Everything was tense and no one in the community was happy. This went on for a year. The neighbors told her that young children were in the neighborhood and such activities were not desired. She said she would change but she did not. My neighbor auntie had enough. She went to the police. They asked her to file an application.

The police visited the woman. My mum would not tell me what was happening, but we heard whispers about the goings on. The daughters had become my friends. There were seven of us kids and we would all play together. There were so many things for us to do. We loved to be in the fields and around the trees. We would go to see people harvesting fish using nets at the pond. We would laugh and stand in the wind.

The woman did not listen to the police and men continued to come to the neighborhood. Then the police came again and told her to move out. She left with the girls. She was not very good to them: she would yell at them and hit them. They studied at a government school and I hope they are still going there. I hope she gives them the education that they will need to build a better life and I hope that she treats them well.







# A Gift to Love

Anisha Saraf



It was the day of Chath, perhaps the most important holiday of the Terai. The family has to be together on occasions like this. When my uncle said he had to go to work, we all were disappointed. He has a jewelry shop in Kalaiya, twenty minutes away on the bike, and he had to go there as a lady wanted her *mangal sutra*: she was going to her parents' home.

I heard my uncle say that it was Chath and everything was closed and he had to be with us but she insisted and being a nice man, he could not say no. He rode to Kalaiya on his bike and finished and delivered her *mangal sutra*. About 3:30 he headed back home on his bike. He is a gentle person and drives in the same manner: carefully and unhurried. When he reached the Pathlaiya crossing and was turning towards Birgunj, another bike came from the other way and crashed into him.

We were at the lakeside *ghats* and at about 3:50 my father's mobile phone rang. It was the police. I was there when he learned that my uncle had met with an accident. I felt very bad. The rest of the family were not within earshot. My father told me not to tell my mother and aunt. He was worried and did not want others to panic.

I was quiet as my father made an excuse and left on his bike, he was going to the hospital. We continued with the celebrations until five and came home from the *ghats* after sunset. My father had been called to the Narayani Hospital. When he got there, he found my uncle unconscious. The doctors advised him that this case could not be handled in Birgunj and said that he should be taken to Kathmandu. An operation had to take place that night.

It was then that my father called my mother. I was with my mother when father called. I saw the shock and horror on my mother's face when she heard the news. She started crying and told auntie what had happened. They were both scared and crying. Father had told them to pack up so he could leave for Kathmandu as soon as possible with my uncle.

Father went to the police station from the hospital. He learned that my uncle had been hit by two young men who were sixteen and seventeen. They were under the influence of alcohol. They also had marijuana in their possession. The police had them in custody.

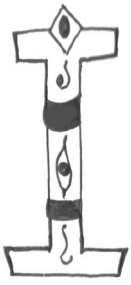
The next day, my uncle regained consciousness and could talk a bit. Auntie had stayed all night at the hospital with him. She had calmed down a bit. The leg operation had taken place. Father and uncle left for Kathmandu the next day and he received good treatment and came back well many weeks later. He is back to normal now, though he still has implants to remove.

My father thanked the police a lot. The young men were taken to court. They were sentenced to prison for possession of drugs as well as endangerment of life. They were fined two to three lakh rupees and some of this money was used for my uncle's treatment. Without police presence, time would have been lost. My uncle could have lost too much blood and he may not be here with us today. The police were there on time and brought him to the hospital. For me they are heroes as they have given another life to my uncle, and for us, the gift of a wonderful person for our family to cherish.









# Dadaji

Puja Chaurasia

I loved my grandfather very much. He was honest, great and kind. He brought to me dresses, sweets, bags – everything I wanted in life. He was a conservative man and wore *dhoti* and *kurta*. When my parents were not with me, he was there for me. When mother scolded me, when she made me cry or hurt me, I would go to him. He was a friend to me.

Dadaji told me to be a good person. He never believed in anything bad about me. He always gave me courage. My father was in Kathmandu with my brother. Mother was in the village and my sister at a hostel. I was with Dadaji. That day he told me that he had some land related work. He used to buy and sell land and help others who wanted to do so. He had to attend a party. He said he would come back as soon as possible and that I should not be afraid. I felt afraid and lonely when he left. I wanted to be with him. Time passed and he who always came on time did not come back. I called his mobile phone number so many times but the phone was not picked up. I called my father at nine. He was worried. It was unnatural for my grandfather to stay away so long, especially when he was taking care of me. Father would take a night bus and reach me by the morning.

Grandfather did not come back all night. I was twelve years old and had never been alone in my life. Father arrived at three in the morning. My sister and brother also came. We called his number again and again. At six a phone call came on my father's mobile phone. He was told that grandfather was in Advanced Hospital. The caller said he had been at the party with my grandfather but left no other information. With heavy hearts we saw father go to the hospital and waited to receive good news from him. My father came back even more sad and said Dadaji was not at the hospital. My brother, twenty one, and sister, nineteen, went to search for him. My sister found Dadaji at Narayani Hospital. The doctor there would not let her see him.

We went there and tried again and again to see him. When the doctor would not listen, we asked for help from the police. The police told the doctor that we were his family and that we should be allowed to see him. I was very glad that the police at the hospital recognized and appreciated our rights as a family to be with him. We were told we could see him from afar but that we should not touch him. His body was swollen. My sister started fighting with the doctor. She said they had not let her meet him. I knew how Dadaji breathed: he used to take really deep breaths. Now his chest was not moving at all. I reached out and touched him. I then called a lady doctor. She examined him and said that he had already passed away. I had had a small operation on my cheek so I was told I should not be in the room.

I felt so hurt leaving him, I started to cry. The doctor who would not let us see him was taken by the police and put in prison for three months. We took my grandfather to the village and cremated his remains. A police case was started and we found out that the people who had invited him to the party had poisoned him. They owed him eight lakh rupees and that was the reason for taking his life. Five people were involved and they were in prison for a year. I felt very bad because if it were up to me, I would have taken their lives just as they had taken my Dadaji's life. Where is the justice in letting them go free in one year?

My Dadaji is dead but he still comes to me in spirit. I see him in the night. He tells me, "You stay well, I will come to meet you again."







# People Against People

Rajan Yadav



Our community has a majority of Yadav and Kurmi people. For generations both have prioritized learning and there are many doctors, engineers, and well educated people in the community. Yet for many years, there has been ethnic violence in my village. Kurmis attacked Yadavs and Yadavs attacked Kurmis. There were also shootings. Since Yadavs and Kurmis live amongst each other, it was very difficult and dangerous for all of us when ethnic violence flared up.

My village is in Rautahat. When there was such fighting, the police came but by the time they arrived, physical damage was already done. Things got so bad that the chief of police at Gaur himself came to my village. After the police chief came, things became better.

The elders called a meeting and asked for further help from him and requested that a police station be established in the village. The people would contribute to make this happen, they said. Engineers of the village designed a police station and they would also work as laborers carrying sand, bricks, and cement. Villagers donated land and further labor. A building with a kitchen, rooms, and toilets was made and the police came to stay in it and provided safety and security.

Now such fighting does not take place. Whenever the threat of ethnic violence appears, the police get to the site immediately and the situation is calmed down. I do not think we Yadavs and Kurmis have come any closer. Arguments still take place but physical violence has stopped. Shootings do not take place.

Now that we have safety and security, real development is taking place. We have shops, tailors, electricians in the village. There is plenty of agricultural land and rice and wheat are grown there. The Bam Nahar flows nearby, we have several ponds where we farm fish. Brick kilns and other businesses are thriving.

A black topped road is coming to the village. Our people have given land and some have lost their homes to the road. But everyone is happy despite this. I have hope that maybe in a few years Yadavs and Kurmis will become friends, but for now we do not have to walk in fear.

My hope is that our people are not so involved in politics. Right now young people fourteen years onwards are passionate about politics. Nothing good comes of incitement and violence, whether politics is the reason or any other. No matter which party, people will eventually learn to vote for those who make a real contribution. Parties must concentrate on doing good work, bringing suffering to the people is not acceptable.

With the police station is here, I think our community has changed for the better. Police have played an important role in my community. They have changed things.









# The False Guru

Priyanka Gupta

ano Nautan, Bara. A small village of fifty to sixty houses. Most people are farmers or they work as laborers and technicians in Birgunj. There is a river nearby, many young people swim there. Women wash and bathe there. The beaches are also cremation grounds where people from several villages burn their dead.

I was in seventh grade at the time. One morning a holy man, a *baba* came to our village. Many villagers went to meet him for they are simple and faith filled. They were overjoyed to see him and touched his feet and asked for blessings. Village elders and the educated also showed him great respect. The *baba* said he had come from India and that he was a Brahman. He said he left all that he owned and he had been rich and married. He had given up everything to bring goodness to the people.

He said, "I will stay here at the cremation grounds. I have studied with the saints, I will a build a temple here. I will take care of those who are suffering." My villagers came together: some gave free labor, some bought kitchen utensils for him, some beddings, some had bricks delivered. They built a hut for him and roofed it with hay. Some planted flowers around the hut and everyone was pleased to contribute. Every day donations of rice, vegetables, *dal*, money, and clothes were made. Time passed and things went well. He wore saffron clothes and smoked marijuana as is the wont of ascetics and the culture of the Terai plains and the healers of the Himalaya.

When young men of Birgunj City found out that he had marijuana and hemp they also came to smoke with him. Before we knew, they were using intravenous drugs. A couple of our young men learned these bad habits from him. When girls went to bathe and wash, men and boys from outside the village would say very bad things to them. We were too afraid and shamefilled to go and complain at home and repeat the things that were said.

One day a child playing near the *baba's* hut found used syringes and collected them. We have a pharmaceutical shop in the village and its owner saw village children play with these syringes. He asked a boy where he got them. He was about to do something about all this but work called him away from the village.

Soon after the men who had come to the *baba* caught a girl who had gone to wash clothes and raped her. We learned that the *baba* saw this and did not say anything. The girl was taken to the hospital. The villagers said this would bring shame to the village. The pharmaceutical shop owner went to the hospital. The girl was crying and she had been told not to inform the police. He talked to the girl and had her inform the police in detail about what had happened. The police went to the hut and arrested the *baba*. They found drugs. Four of the six young men who had raped her were arrested (two had absconded). They were imprisoned and so was the *baba*.

When the girl was brought back home, people in the village gave her no support. They said such bad things about her and hurt her so much that within a couple weeks, she hung herself [Priyanka is no longer able to hold back her tears]. This is the sad story of my village. If not the villagers, the police could have done more. I know they did as well as they could but they could have done more to comfort the child and make the villagers understand.









# My Father, the “Doctor”

Rahul Thakur

come from Darwa where agricultural flat lands stretch from horizon to horizon. The Shankar Bhagwan Mandir attracts worship and *mela*. People live in Mithila art decorated houses made of rice husk, mud, cow dung, bamboo splits. Under roofs of hay or *khapada* clay tiles, people, cows, sheep, goats, buffalos take respite from the hot sun. Taller than men, traditional rice storage bins rise like dome sculptures in front of houses. Many shrines, worship sites protect us. The river water is as clean as can be. We swim in it and call it Jamni. People have died there though, so you have to be careful. There are many good things in the village as well as some bad things.

Small *bhattis* selling alcohol are in operation. Those who are uneducated are told to work for wine or do things in lieu of payment: what they are asked to do is not good. My twenty-five-year-old cousin also drinks. When he is in the city he does not get drunk but back in the village he takes up bad ways. There are so many young people like him.

My father used to drink. The whole family would suffer when he came home drunk. My mother put a stop to it. One Holi festival my father went to meet friends in Malahi and was passing through a village when someone called him a thief and all the local people got together and beat him. After beating him, they locked him up. In great fear and worry I and my family heard this and ran there. When we reached him, I saw the police had arrived and they believed what the local people were saying. I saw people in the crowd with whom we had long standing feuds and they had threatened to punish him. They had been seeking revenge for some time.

My father said very firmly that he had not been drinking and he did not steal anything but no one listened to him. My brother, mother, and I were all crying. My family has always been cooperative and good and contributed to the community. My father studied medicine and though he did not finish his studies, he opened a pharmaceutical shop and treated people who were ill. They call him the “doctor” in the village.

I did not like the way the police sided with the others and would not listen to him. The village Mukhiya and Pancha had him released saying that mistakes happen during Holi. We brought him home and then had to take him to the hospital as he was in a lot of pain. He had to be hospitalized for two weeks. Even today – three years have gone by – his body still hurts no matter what medication he takes.

These types of events have happened to a lot of people in the village. Several people have been hit by bikes while walking. When I see the *bhattis* ruining young and old people, I feel bad. Men end up fighting and beating their wives and children. They use foul language.

A day before I came to school in Birgunj, I sat with villagers and we called the police. We went to the *bhatti* and told them to stop selling alcohol. They replied quite boldly, “You can call who you want, if the police come, we will give them Rs. 200 and some free alcohol and they will go away.”

I hear that the police did come the day after I left. They talked to the villagers who had complained and they talked to the *bhatti* owners. The *bhattis* have not been closed down yet and things remain pretty much the same. I hope the police work harder for my people. Problems are in villages as well as larger cities, they must not forget that. Police have to give more attention to the *dehats*.

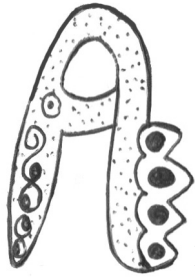






# Within the Smoke

Barsha Ban



Madhesi community. An old community with many memories. A community that remembers things that their great grandparents, grandparents did. Perhaps if everyone chose to remember the good as well as the bad we would not have so much conflict but most of the memories are about real and perceived wrongs and problems that were caused. Angers of the past are collected and resentments kept close to heart. This leads to fights over the irrelevant, things that are really small.

I, mummy, and my sister had gone with neighbors to the temple. It was winter and people had gathered around a fire. They were burning wheat husk. Evening *bhajan kirtan* prayers had begun: *madal*, cymbals, the songs, and the chanting of the priests sweetened the evening air and made it wonderful.

Even as we were enjoying the peace and the music, we saw a great column of smoke rise. Our first thought was that a house was on fire. We were worried and ran to see what we could do to help. We reached the courtyard. Smoke filled and dark, it was hard to see what was going on. There seemed to be many people moving around. I saw shadows of five-ten people. There was anger in the air, mixed with the acrid smoke that made breathing difficult.

It was not a fire, that was obvious. I saw silhouettes of people raising their arms, they had *bhata* sticks and poles. I heard screaming. There was someone on the floor. I recognized the old man on the floor, near him were his sons. They were being beaten by the people who had the bamboo poles. I knew them all. The old man and his family had made a fire and were sitting around it when they were attacked. Fire and husk had been scattered and smoke was billowing.

It was horrible. There were seven year-olds with bamboo sticks beating the old man and his two sons. Tears were rolling down my face. This was our village, our community, and these were our people hurting each other. It was too dangerous for us to go near the swinging poles. We were cowering on the sides not knowing how to stop this outrage. We screamed and shouted but no one would listen. The old man was no longer moving.

One of our neighbors, Mr. Manoj Yadav reached us. I pleaded that he help. He immediately placed a call to the police. In no time, a van arrived carrying six to seven policemen. By the time they arrived, the crowd attacking and protecting the family had reached thirty perhaps. All had poles and were striking each other. It took the police five to ten minutes to control the situation. They carried shields and used them to clear the way.

Once peace was achieved they called an ambulance. The police then poured water on the husk and the air settled. The father and sons were taken to the hospital, the instigators, three brothers, were taken to the police station.

I felt bad. I saw blood, I saw a fallen man being beaten even when he was down. Like the smell of smoke on clothes, the pictures never leave my mind. I remember the hope that I felt when the police came. I remember believing there would be justice.

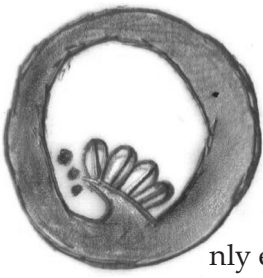






# Victimized

Salma Rai



nly eight, I was in Dhankuta for the holidays. My mother was alive. Her home in the high hills is very different from the Biratnagar plains where I live. The air is cool, the water is sweet, there are many places to visit: Bhidetar, Basantapur, Terathum... I especially like Hille.

My grandfather is a farmer who tries new things, he has a nursery and plants *amlisho*, cardamom, *rudrakshya*, coffee, *raktachandan*. He was inspecting the faces of the *rudraksa* when two men came. They called him outside. It was 7:30 in the evening, we were about to eat. I was washing my hands. He talked to the two men for half an hour. When he came back, he was nervous and visibly shaken. He did not want to eat.

My mum asked him what the matter was. He said nothing and told her to eat. Afterwards, he said that the men were asking for money. My uncle was in Kathmandu and needed money. Grandfather had sold *amlisho* and cardamom that day. These men came regularly to the village and seized money and goods. They beat villagers, killed people and ran away to India. Everyone was afraid of them. My mother asked him to talk to my father who is a policeman. But people had complained in the past and the police had come. As houses are spread sparsely on Himalayan hills, many hours on foot is required to reach them. Police posts and stations are far away and it is hard to catch criminals in difficult terrain. These men would disappear when they saw the police. Anyone new approaching can be seen from far away. When the police left, they would return only to beat those who had complained and extort more money from them.

After much thought, grandfather did talk to my father. He was asked to come in the night to town and file his complaint so no one could report that he had been seen at the police station. A trap was laid. But the men managed to run away. They were sure to come later to threaten my grandparents.

All the villagers were fed up and very angry with what was going on. They gathered together and when the men came to threaten my grandfather, they caught them and beat them. After that they handed them over to the police. There are no criminals like that in Dhankuta anymore. With a larger police presence in the station and greater awareness and confidence among villagers, those who do bad things have been scared off.

As a child, when I saw other children play with their fathers, I yearned to be with my father. Because he was in the police, things were very dangerous for the family. The Maoist rebels would come and threaten us. He was shot in the arm in one of the battles. We had to leave the village and come and settle in Biratnagar City. My mum left him for a few months saying that she would not come home until he quit his job. Still he persisted and did what he thought was right and she went back to him.

Mother passed away eight years ago, she fell from a cliff-side getting water. He could only come home a day after her death. He has cared for us well. He tells us not to cry. He does not get angry when we fight but gets angry when I or my sister cry. I am very proud of my father. I love him so much.









# Our Football Field

Yogesh Jasraj and Samyog Dahal

Yogesh remembers heading in the goal that won his team the game over the weekend. The love of football: Yogesh likes Manchester United and Sir Alex Ferguson is his hero. Samyog likes Ronaldo and Real Madrid. Yogesh is a striker, Samyog plays in the midfield. They train under coach Kumar. "He is our *guru*. Sahid Maidan and Mahindra Morang are our favorite away grounds and Madhumara is our home ground."

"While playing Pokhariya, I was keeping a high line. A ball from Chai, our goalkeeper, bounced and I chipped it right over the goalkeeper's head. What a wonderful ball that was from Chai! We like to play as well as watch football. One afternoon, *madhesi* teams were playing on our home ground, sixteen-eighteen year olds from the community. A *pahade* (mountain) boy was in defense. He kicked the opposition striker. A scuffle ensued and he left the field. When the match came to an end he came back with a helmet in hand and other young men behind him. He challenged the striker and said he was a member of a gang. They started punching, hitting each other. Other *madhesi* boys grabbed the helmet from his hand and a fight started. Thirty young people were involved in the punch up.

An older man in the audience called the police. For twenty to thirty minutes, the fighting continued. We were hiding in corners in case we too were attacked. The police did not come. Why were they so late? I would like to ask. The *madhesi* community – men, women, and elders – came to stop the fighting. During the lull, the *pahade* boy and his friends were calling each others' friends on the phone and asking them to come to the stadium and join the fight. People from the community said that football had caused the problem and would no longer be allowed on the grounds. The goal posts were cast down. The boys were still arguing. The mother of the *madhesi* striker arrived and said that it would be the fault of the *pahade* boy and his friends if anything happened to her son now or in the future. They went away threatening to come back. The police finally arrived. They asked the elders what had happened. We too were chased away by the local people. "What are you watching?" they said. "This is not a spectacle." We left four people bleeding.

If the police had arrived on time, the fighting would not have gone on for so long. We lost faith in the country's security apparatus that day. We were also sad the goal posts had been destroyed and we could not play football. Four of us went to the field six days later. Things had simmered down enough. We talked to the elders and young men in the *madhesi* community. We knew many liked football. They talked among themselves and convinced each other that it was not the sport that had caused the trouble.

It was ok to play on the grounds again but we had to be careful and make sure such incidents did not take place. We needed money in order to set up the football posts. We tried to collect money but being young, no one would help us. The *madhesi* brothers helped and they raised 15 to twenty rupees from people, shops, and institutions in the community: the very community that had cast the posts down. They gave us the money they had collected.

We bought bamboo and material needed to set up the posts. We borrowed tools from a friend's family, dug holes, made sure the poles were firm, and set up a perimeter. We then found we had money left over! With that money we bought a football.







# The Tree Lovers

Ranjit Yadav



Labtoli is a secluded village. Our only connection to the outside world is a mud track. A local bus plies our way a couple of times a day, we walk or use cycles and motorbikes to get to the outside world. The pride of the village is our forest. A committee manages the forest. We tell the committee if we need wood or if we have a marriage, *bartabandh*, sickness and financial need. We are allowed to cut dry branches for the home and can make money by selling them.

If we cut one tree, we plant two and take care of them. We do not take goats and buffaloes into the forest where they may eat and destroy growing saplings. We have caretakers and we water the saplings in the morning and in the evening.

The Kamala River near the village never dries up. We swim there. Pigeons, crows, monkeys, snakes, tortoises, and crocodiles come to the forest. We jog there in the mornings. When it is very hot and houses are stifling, we rest in its cool shade. In the evenings we go into the forest for walks.

One evening electricity time out left the village in the dark and there was nothing to do. Beyond the forest is our farmland where we plant potatoes, squash, spinach, depending on the season. We wanted to see if the harvest had been stolen. Sometimes people steal what is ripe.

I and some friends walked through tall shadows, dark places, and pleasant clearings. Then we saw light far away and were surprised. We heard the sound of an engine, a tractor. We thought the tractor was stuck in the mud and wanted to help. Then we heard a new sound. We recognized the sound immediately: the sound of axe against wood.

We approached carefully, making sure we would not be seen. We saw from between the foliage that one tree was down already and others were being cut. Thieves had come to steal our trees. They had driven over our fields and destroyed our crops.

We ran back to the village as fast as we could and I called my father. I told him that people were stealing our trees and that they had driven a tractor over our fields ruining our crops. We rushed over to the village elder, our Pradhan, and reported what we had seen. There are four motorbikes in the village. Getting on them, eight people, including me, went to the location. There were five thieves altogether and they tried to run away. But we were around them.

We told them loudly that they should come quietly with us. Even if they ran away, we would be able to go to their homes. Also a tractor is too expensive to leave behind. We got them to put the wood and the trees they had cut on the tractor. The Pradhan called the police and they said that they would come in the morning as things were under control.

The keys to the tractor were handed over to the Pradhan and wood unloaded in front of his house. The police came in the morning and the men were taken to the station. They were from a nearby village.

A Panchayat was held and the village elders held counsel. The men were fined and warned not to do such things again. The Pradhan praised me and my friends. He helped us get compensation for the damage caused to our fields. I felt good that I and my friends were able to save our trees.







# We Will Not Take Drugs

Shiva Basnet and Sujit Rijal



Sujit explains, "We are uncle and nephew by relation even though we are both 16. During the last Holi festival we tried hemp. Nothing happened so maybe we will not try it again. We will tell you real stories about drugs. What we have seen first hand."

Shiva begins, "There's a mango grove on the way back home. It is somewhat dark, offers wonderful shade and, is very quiet. We rest there but we don't hang around as such. Sometimes we see eighteen to twenty year olds sitting smoking marijuana there. That day, we had a football match that we won 2-0. I was feeling great. It was dark already, maybe seven in the evening. Under the mango grove were seven young men smoking and a police patrol was going towards them. Bushes blocked the young men's line of vision and they did not see the police until it was too late. I could hear the swish of sticks swinging in the air and the twaps as they landed. A couple of them ran, four of them were caught and received a beating. They were not taken to the station, but given severe warnings. They no longer sit under the grove."

Sujit tells another tale, "I was in grade eight and my landlord's son was very nice to me. He was eighteen and used to talk kindly to me. Then he made a girlfriend who a little plump, pretty, and would come to get him on a scooter. They would go out together quite often. Things started changing. He came home late. He stopped talking to me.

"One day, I was coming back after playing football and as I came in, I saw him leave. He was crying. I went inside and asked my mother what had happened. He had been smoking marijuana in his room and his family – father, mother, elder brother, and sister – beat him. I felt bad for a long time. I felt bad that he was crying. I felt bad that he had been beaten. Mostly, I felt bad that he was making life worse for himself.

"A month later I learned that he had started taking intravenous drugs. He brought friends home. They stayed overnight whether they were male or female, something that is not done in our conservative community. His brother found him in the toilet injecting himself one day. He called the police and at nine, the police dragged him down the stairs and took him to a rehabilitation center.

"He improved for a while but got back to his usual ways. His family as well as tenants knew that this had to be stopped. One day the police came and took the boys and girls who were in his room to the station and I have not seen him much after that. He left his girlfriend and became better I heard. Drugs cause real harm. They hurt your family. I saw his mother cry so many times."

Shiva also saw similar sadness, "A twenty one year old from an affluent family was into intravenous drugs. He lived near the Biratnagar Gate. His family went to visit Kathmandu while he was out with his friends. When he came back, he found the house locked. Perhaps his family did not want him in the house and did this on purpose. He broke in through a window. Five days later, his parents came back. They found the house stinking and his dead body. He used too much of whatever drug he was taking and died from an overdose."

"Of course we will not try drugs. We don't even smoke and we have no reason to start. Well, festival hemp and some wine at a party is a part of our culture and that is all we have tried!"





WELCOME METROPOLITAN CITY

BIRATNAGAR SUB-METROPOLITAN CITY



# Two Cups of Tea

Siman Shrivastav



My father was born in Chakraghatti Village where my grandmother, aunts, sister, and brothers live. My father moved to Biratnagar City with me and my mother as he works there. During the summer and on other holidays I go to the village, especially for the celebration of the Chath festival. We have cows and calves, farmland, and many trees. I like it there, especially during the litchi, mango, and jackfruit seasons. The huge Koshi river flows nearby. Since it is a big river we do not swim there. But we do get to eat the fresh catch that fishermen bring.

I and my father were going to Chakraghatti. The plan was for me to stay at the village for a week or so. We left home after lunch, at about ten. On the way, the road was open. The Dharan Road is nicely blacktopped and it feels great to ride on it. We left city limits, houses thinned out and the fields spread out. On the way, my father, I call him *baba*, said we should eat something so we stopped in Duhubi for snacks.

I noticed a small boy, he was eight years old or so, working at the eatery. We asked for two cups of tea. The shopkeeper made the tea and the boy brought two cups to us. Then the man told him to wash the dishes. I do not know what he did wrong, maybe he did not listen to instructions. The man hit him on the head and then slapped him on the face.

I felt as if I had been slapped myself. I felt very angry. Children are our nation's future we are told at school. They should not be used as workers as far as possible. Even in case the situation cannot be avoided due to extreme poverty, they should not be mistreated. I was studying child rights in my social science classes.

My *baba* had not seen or noticed the child but I had. The man went inside and I talked to my father. I pointed out the child. After listening to me, my father said we could meet his friend in Duhubi. He lived a few houses away and was an influential man. We got on the bike and went to talk to him. He knew the police and said that the child would no longer be abused.

Though I would have liked to meet the police myself, I was satisfied that he would take some action on behalf of the child. We went on our way to the village. I hope the police were contacted and the child well taken care of. I think the hotel keeper should be punished. The media have an important role to play in these sorts of cases as they can spread information and those who have child laborers should be made aware of child rights.

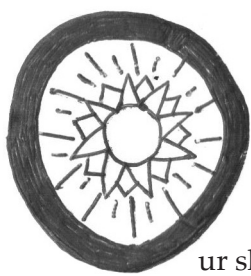
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[Akash Mandal: When I go on walks early in the morning, I see big tractors carrying logs. The police stop them, sometimes behind the petrol pump, sometimes beyond the trees. I see the police then ask for money and the drivers handing over cash. Sometimes the tractors do not stop and the police shout at them and then I see a person come on a motorbike to talk to them. He seems to be the owner of the tractors. He also gives the police money but it is usually less than what the drivers give.]









# Rescuing My Sister

Krishna Kumar Rajbanshi

Our shop in Katahari Kadamtoli sells odds and ends, noodles, candy, tea, meat for drinks, and home brewed as well as factory made alcohol. Kids buy candy, biscuits; women buy soap, salt; men drink and enjoy meat; older people come for tea and conversation.

It was Saraswati Puja day, the day we celebrate the goddess of learning and education. A dance program was organized in Adarsha Nagar. Megha and Samita, my two sisters had participated and were coming back at seven pm. They were nine and ten years old. A person invited them to get on his bicycle and said that he would give them a lift home. "I will also buy you candy," he said.

The girls had been taught to be wary of strangers. They refused and the man caught them and covered them in shawls and scared them into sitting on the front and back of his bicycle. Megha jumped from the back of the bicycle and fell on the road. She ran away as fast as she could. We saw her running towards the shop. She had run and run in tears. She could hardly speak. I and about eight-nine guys my age or older were at the shop.

As soon as she could, Megha began screaming. We did not understand what the matter was at first. She said that Samita had been kidnapped. She described the bicycle and the man. A short while ago we had noticed the man go by us and thought he was going somewhere with his daughter. We had heard her crying but we thought it was something simple and suspected nothing. We were shocked that we had taken the scene so simply and easily.

There was a bike with us and four of us got on it and gave chase while the rest ran as fast as their legs would carry towards the direction the man had gone with Samita. We soon saw him in the distance and shouted. He looked back and speeded up but he was no match for a motorbike.

Going past a bamboo grove he tried to escape. Knowing that he could no longer do this with Samita, he pushed her off the bicycle and took to the fields where the motorbike could not follow. We stopped and made sure Samita was fine. She was very scared but she was fine. Those who were running on foot got near us. The man was still in sight and the cycle was hindering him. Many of us began to run across the fields after him. A few of us stayed with Samita.

The man abandoned the cycle and began running on foot. He reached a small settlement and a newly made house. Probably because he was exhausted, he went in and locked himself in the house. There were about thirty five of us giving chase now, the whole village had poured out. We broke open the door and got hold of him.

He was punched, kicked, and punished for an hour and a half. The elders told us to stop beating him. They said he could die. He would pass out and people would pour water on him and rouse him and beat him unconscious again. The elders decided enough was enough and called the police. Fifteen minutes passed. I called the police again and said they had to come soon. I stopped the boys from hitting him. I told them that if he died, we would be the ones who would be caught and sent to prison.

I called the police again and told them to come urgently. They came in a van and told everyone that if anything happened to the man each of us involved would be held accountable. We explained what had happened and handed him over. They took him away and he was imprisoned.







# Wind in My Eyes

Hari Prasad Koirala



Those were hot sweltering days. It was hot under roofs and hot under trees. Sweat would pour even when we were in the shade. It was the month of May, the month of extreme heat, high winds, and storms.

I was home and after a stifling hot afternoon, I went to play football as the air started to move and the sun began to go down. I had a great time with a dozen friends. As we finished, we noticed the breeze had become a lot stronger and the day was darkening. Fast moving black clouds were covering the sky. We knew that a huge storm was brewing so we decided to go home.

I was near home when things became bad in earnest. I was walking along a footpath, it was open except for a few trees. There were some logs, wheat had already been harvested, sugarcane isn't grown in our area, the fields were wide and open. Gusts of strong wind carried dust into my eyes.

It was hard to walk and when I tried running home, it was hard to run, I felt like I would be lifted away. I was so glad to reach home. Outside the wind got worse and worse. Trees were swinging. Father, mother, sister, and I were worried that our house would be swept away by the wind. Our goats were tied in the shed and we watched with real worry in case the lightly built shed was blown away. It was really scary. This went on for about fifteen minutes. Then it started raining. There was a lot of rain. Some of it came into our home. Maybe it was forty five minutes later that everything calmed down.

The storm was over and we were left unharmed. Perhaps other people were not as lucky. We saw fifteen-twenty people heading towards the west, I also went to see if anyone was hurt in the surrounding areas. It was darkish now.

I saw that tin used to roof houses had been blown on the road. Trees had fallen. It was our neighbor's roof that had been blown away. Their bed was broken, bricks had fallen from the walls. Wooden banisters had fallen on the auntie who owned the house and she was hurt. Their cow had been scared by the storm and had broken free and run away as the shed fell. The family had run to the neighbors and taken shelter. I helped remove the wood and bricks and collect clothes in the roofless house. Five of us were working when the police from the local village station arrived.

There were also five of them. They joined us. They picked things up, helped find the cow. The man of the house was not there, only the auntie and her five-year-old son. He came after dark. It was seven, so arrangements were made for them to sleep and eat at the neighbor's. Everyone came together. The next day we went back to help and collected the tin of the roof that had flown to different places. It was a month before the house could be fixed. The police gave us real help and we worked together hand in hand.









# Running in the Dark

Sangita Dhamala

pm. We were asleep. All of a sudden, there was shouting from my uncle's house next door, "Fire! Fire!"

We all got up confused, scared, and rushed down. We saw that the fire was not inside the house but the main electrical lines. The high powered municipality wires were on fire and the fire had traveled towards the meter box inside the house. Since it was a cemented house, the walls did not catch fire. My mother, father, brother, aunts, uncles, grandparents, neighbors, about thirty of us watched in fear. There was no question of pouring water over the electricity lines. Since we do not have fire extinguishers in our neighborhood we could not do anything. All the houses on the street are connected and the whole neighborhood could burn down.

My father and uncle called the firefighters. The department of electricity was also informed. I and my 16-year-old brother were told to go to the police station, it is about five minutes away. We ran as fast as we could. When we reached the station, we were breathless and the building was dark. The police station is a one storey building that is not yet complete. The main gate was closed and chained up. We yelled and shook the gates. One light came on and one policeman in uniform came out. He asked us what had happened and we told him our house was on fire and since we did not know what to do, could he come with his friends and help. He called other policemen. We were glad that there was urgency in his voice and actions.

There were only three policemen as others had gone for the nightly patrol. He asked us where we lived and we all ran back as fast as we could. By the time we got home, a huge crowd had gathered. There was no space to get in. The fire engine was already there and its lights were blinking. The street was in darkness, electricity department had cut the lines. The fire was already out. Everyone was either shouting or whispering.

The policemen and the firefighters looked things over and said that there had been a short circuit. There was a discussion. Slowly the crowd left. The police helped clean things, including material that had caught fire. Curtains, table, and some clothes had burned. The house was filled with a nasty smell of smoke. My uncle and his family could not sleep there that night. After helping, I went to sleep. It had been a scary night. I dreamt uneasily, perhaps I would be woken up again by the shouting of "Fire!"

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[Dinesh Kumar Patel: A friend said that I "had to" attend this program. I felt nervous when I saw so many policemen and women near me and met the Superintendent of Police. He gave us his mobile phone number and that I liked very much. One of the games we played was "the river." We learned how to save people and what to take with us when there is flooding. My village also suffers from floods. My house has been flooded five times. Water washes away bamboo huts in the neighborhood. It takes away goats and cows and animals. Many farmers lose their harvests. Fortunately no one has been killed. When there is a flood we do not ask for help from the outside, such as that of the police. The villagers come together and help each other. I hear that stores, boats, help, safety for animals, clean drinking water, food are needed when there is a flood. I think I will call the police next time as they can help in many ways. I can call the superintendent himself.]







# Behind the Scenes

Search for Common Ground at work, group discussion



Being able to trust is of paramount importance in peace building and conflict transformation. Security built on mistrust is always fragile. After a decade long armed conflict – 1996 to 2006 – Search for Common Ground identified and responded to the need to build, maintain, and repair the mistrust of the people, in particular the youth, towards the police: they share a sour relationship governed by mistrust and prejudice,” comments Rajendra Mulmi, country director of Search for Common Ground at a group discussion.

“Schools, football associations, and police institutions worked together to achieve this joint effort. Getting everyone together, getting them comfortable and feeling safe, placing a forum, a platform, where they could talk and share their concerns would go a long way in building trust, we believed,” reinforces Yubakar Raj Rajkarnikar, senior program manager, who was intricately involved in the implementation of this effort.

Working hands on and observing the changes on the ground, project coordinator Alok Thakur was particularly impressed. “When we see the police, questions come to the mind and to be honest, many of them are negative. But conversations, games, sharing sessions, made everyone feel good. Young people, coordinating bodies, and the police had never been involved in these types of activities. Hard questions were asked and answered seriously and thoughtfully and, later, goodbyes were said with smiling faces. It was amazing and it was important that everyone felt that they were constructive. The inspector given the responsibility of coordinating the police did not want to come because he felt apprehensive: what will I be asked, what kind of accusations will come my way was his concern. But by the end of it all, superintendents, officers, foot soldiers from many different police institutions participated and, I think, they felt glad.”

Work was focused in three volatile districts – Dhanusha, Morang, and Parsa. A list of 900 young people aged thirteen to sixteen led to the selection of 360 from about twelve schools in each district. School associations made recommendations and private and public schools sent male and female participants and appropriately represented minorities.

“It was a good geographical spread with schools from different clusters drawing varied ethnic groups and pulling in young people from outlying villages,” expanded Rajendra Adhikari, field coordinator, while supporting the process of finding young people with first hand stories to share. “We divided the 360 young people into groups and of these 120 played football.” The young were integrated, inter-school relationships improved, young people and police personnel who hesitated to ask questions or asked non-relevant questions improved questioning skills and increased confidence.”

“Fears placed during childhood. Limited positive interventions during the war period and the harassment of youth had left a big divide between young people and the police. The police themselves realized that much needs to be done. They felt that they had perceived young people as a problem. Young people were of the impression that the police are there to harass citizens. There was a need to deconstruct established perceptions. A





Activity images





safe space had to be created,” comments Rajendra Mulmi. “In this safe zone, in this new found comfort, interaction started. Soon everyone was involved in conversation, questioning, playing.”

The very next day, policemen at the Birgunj clock tower started smiling at young people and the young people were saying hi and waving back. Deputy inspector general of the police Bimala Thapa wants women of the Madhesi community to apply for police jobs. Senior superintendent of police Rajav Subba said Search for Common Ground was doing crucial work that the department itself should be doing.

Niresh Chapagain says that there is a communication gap. “Police do good work that young people do not know about and the potential of youth to be dynamic and supportive had been thought of but the thought had been marginalized by the police system.”

A two way conversation between Alok and Niresh reveals how those who led the program were surprised by what developed. “Ownership of the effort by the stakeholders was a major concern. Girls’ parents in some of the most conservative communities of Nepal had concerns about their daughters participating in physical activities. In Janakpur, parents were worried how they could marry their daughters off if they came back home with a broken leg and one girl did indeed fracture her leg. We were surprised to see her and her mother participate in a follow-up football match. There were risks and challenges. Teachers, parents, schools appreciated the unique opportunity provided by the program, we were stunned: schools moved exams so their students could take part. Sometimes it is hard to bring together twenty participants for a training. We were so happy that everyone wanted more! Young people, schools, footballers, teachers, police, everyone was asking each other on the streets when they could participate again.”

Perceptions of the police, even amongst planning and coordinating partners changed. Bad experiences of the past were replaced by goodwill. “Perhaps because the police were trained to facilitate, they had the skill sets to hold neutral programs and this effort had particular success,” feels Yubakar Raj Rajkarnikar. “Scenario changes for the youth and the police, bringing them out of their usual lifestyle, giving them events that they will never forget were necessary.”

On the street, shopkeepers, rickshaw wallahs, parents, and young people had more positives rather than negatives to share regarding the Hamro Team Maidanma involvement. Development efforts are often ignored and vilified as ineffective and foreign. The perception this time was focused on opportunities: learning, continuing, and expanding participation. This was probably due to the seriousness with which the partners, police, schools, and the young took their involvement.

Yuwakar laughs. “In order to meet the expectations of the people, I would think a separate body needs to be formed and the process institutionalized. We are bound by the limitation of resources but our efforts continue. We are already involving young people seventeen to twenty-three years old through a separate program. We are pleased that the police are reaching out on their own now and football associations also want to stay involved. There has been a change in priorities, identification of need, a sense of ownership. This is how it should be.”

Rajendra Mulmi wraps up, “I would say this is a well accomplished project. It is relevant, it will contribute to consolidating peace in the lives of Nepalese citizens. We were not very ambitious, but we were effective.”







## CRITICS COMMENT

### Novels

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...makes a new contribution to the field of Nepalese literature. The writer successfully presents stories of ordinary characters in a very simple and touching manner.

– Govinda Bahadur Malla “Gothale,” writer

I call this a fundamental step towards the promotion of constructive social expression and development. The language, style, and structure of the story uphold the vision that this effort aspires to accomplish.

– Krishna Chandra Singh Pradhan, critic

A creation like “Goreto Nisafko” is exceedingly important considering Nepal’s current state of affairs. I thank Mr. Pallav Ranjan for fulfilling this need.

– Diamond Shumshere Rana, novelist

Recognized as a poet and translator in Nepalese society, Mr. Pallav Ranjan’s writing stands out as unique in the field of Nepali literature.

– Dr. Chudamani Bandhu, critic

Simplicity, ease of understanding, and an emotive approach to writing are strengths of this presentation. In essence, the language style is attractive. Because the story has meaning, the likelihood is that the audience will be able to accept it easily and effortlessly.

– Ashesh Malla, dramatist

### Poetry

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Pallav Ranjan’s compositions have, as is the nature of poetry at its best, the power to grip us, move us, carry us along, and finally stop us with the temporal punctuation of music.

– Liza Wolsky, Pantheon Books

I am convinced that he will become a master of the finest expression over time.

– Greta Rana, Chair, PEN International Women Writers’ Committee

Ranjan is skilled in the techniques of great poetry as was Devkota himself... His real poetic ability is never in doubt.

– Cap Miller S.J., Dean,  
Jesuit Training Center

...not merely exquisitely crafted poetry. This is almost a hymn of deep affection and beauty... It should not only be prized by lovers of poetry but, one would like to believe, help place Nepal on the modern English literature map.

– The People’s Review

Pallav Ranjan is the honest poet.

– Madhav Kumar Nepal, Leader of Opposition,  
later Prime Minister of Nepal

Though Ranjan modestly says Devkota’s writings are “as difficult to capture as the fog’s moisture or the light of a million fireflies” he has done a splendid job of doing just that. That is due not only to Ranjan’s command over the English language but also because he is himself a poet of no mean promise...

– M.R. Josse, analyst

“Pallav Ranjan Ko Goreto” incorporates stories, poems, and music. There is very little songwriting of this style in Nepal. Because the songs are different from that are commonly heard, proper absorption and commitment is required to delight in them.

– Kali Prasad Rijal, songwriter

[Pallav Ranjan] has the master weaver’s touch, the weaver of dreams and ideas. The words used are rich with the scent of spring and rain-fall on earth; moody with tears and heavy emotion; and euphoric with the sounds of a whole universe of sensations.

– The Wanderer

Spiny Babbler is among those attempts that I appreciate the most. The youth involved in this effort will be rewarded.

– G.P. Koirala, Prime Minister of Nepal

### Films

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Until new dimensions are added, the national film industry cannot move forward or continue its positive direction. The need of the present-day global market is also that of creations that contribute new dimensions to movie-making. I am fully confident that the entry of a gifted and explorative person like Pallav will strengthen



the Nepalese film industry, add to its wealth, and brighten its future. – *Neer Shah, film maker*

I congratulate Pallav Ranjan and the entire Spiny Babbler unit for this very different film craftsmanship and unique approach to cinema. Your creativity and experimental efforts are appreciated... this can be the alternative film and add a new movement and form a new chapter in Nepalese film making.

– *Tulsi Ghimmire, director*

A well-made docudrama based on ground reality. Its story, characters, sets, issues, and solutions are very realistic. It can make a difference to people in villages, in their day-to-day lives.

– *Yadav Kharel, film maker*

This docudrama, through a strong storyline and background work, captures the fundamental realism of Nepalese village life. This film must be shown to villagers in all remote parts of this country. This is a universal story, it depicts the life and pain of Nepalese villagers.

– *Chetan Karki, film maker*

The uniqueness of Nepal has been well represented by this film. The location, the story, and the characters have been selected well and as per the demands of the presentation. Direction and technical aspects are also good.

– *Basundhara Bhusal, actress*

## Art

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The artistic expression of Pallav Ranjan will provoke any spectator. His color treatment, heavy demarcation of lines, vehement composition, bold images and forms leave a deep impression in the mind. Also, his efforts to develop art consciousness and artistic expression among grassroots people across the nation is really appreciable. – *Manoj Babu Mishra, artist*

I stand before a painting, or shall I say, the painting stands before me. Besides me is artist Pallav Ranjan giving meaning to his creation. The grandeur of his work, its composition, subject matter, color coordination, and style are remarkable. Doubtless, I am mesmerized.

– *Bijaya Thapa, president,  
Nepal Association of Fine Artists*

Pallav Ranjan uses simple and natural colors with the minimum of shapes to express himself succulently and with child-like liveliness. Using a minimalistic style that is selfless, bright, he creates purposeful shapes that connect directly as he opens his mind and heart freely, without hesitation.

– *Kala Premi Shrestha, artist*

Because of the need for art to adapt its different forms, shapes, colors and surroundings to grasp situations and reach out, today's modern art – while expressing shapes, colors, and identifying needs – creates settings and situations within which it can give birth to circumstances that influence structured environments and tell its variety of tales.

– *Uttam Nepali, writer and artist*

## Music

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Beautiful recitation and rendering of poetic expressions. Musical interpretation and translation of non-conventionally woven words meaningfully expressive of feelings of gravity of Pallav Ranjan is not easily done.

– *Yogesh Vaidya, singer and composer*

I loved the very first song that I heard. The music and the voice flow together well and I believe that the singer truly felt the words he was singing.

– *Prem Dhoj Pradhan, singer and musician*

It is beautiful writing that makes a song beautiful. I find the composition of words extremely attractive. These words, combined with music and voice, have made the songs fulfilling and pleasurable.

– *Koeli Devi, singer*

Music is beautifully composed – it captures the forceful emotion and technique of the written words. When listening to the songs and the music, I felt that I was alone and that beautiful water falls were around me.

– *Madhav Prasad Ghimmire, poet laureate*



30+ schools and many partner organizations worked together to make this effort possible, special thanks are due the following.

Adarsha Higher Secondary School  
Asian Model Public School  
Children's Paradise Secondary School  
Dhanusha District Football Association  
Don Bosco School (Nilgiri)  
Everest English Boarding School  
Gargi Memorial English Boarding School  
Gautam Secondary School  
Grace Higher Secondary School  
Happyland Secondary English Boarding School  
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Jeevan Jyoti Secondary School  
Kadambari Academy  
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Mascot Academy  
Modern Era Higher Secondary English School  
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Mother Teresa Memorial Secondary English Boarding School  
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Narsingh Secondary Higher School  
New English Higher Secondary School  
New Vision Secondary School  
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Pole-star National Secondary English Boarding School  
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Tej Punj Shishu Secondary School  
Vidhya Sadan Secondary School  
Police Institutions of Dhanusha, Morang, and Parsa

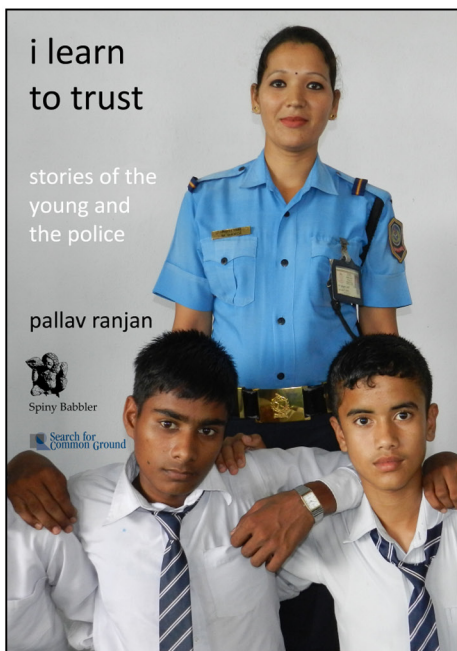
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Among other books by Spiny Babbler are:  
*Anthology of Australian Stories*, Brian Dibble  
*Modern poets of Europe*, Patricia Oxley  
*Nothing Personal*, Greta Rana  
*Selected Poems of the United Kingdom*, Patricia Oxley  
*Young Minds of Twenty Nations*, Para Limbu



Pallav Ranjan was born on 14 December 1971 in Kathmandu and educated at the Jesuit schools of St. Xavier's Godavari and Jawalakhel. After completing grade 10, he was a volunteer at a library for three years. At the age of 19, he joined a travel trade publication house in editorial capacity and also founded Spiny Babbler. The organization works with the arts, education, and communications. It publishes in the print, web, and video media; prepares outreach products and programs for development organizations; and implements human justice efforts with global organizations working in Nepal. His life opportunities program for young people runs a pre-school, school, and a club. Pallav's work has been profiled by the national media and praised by social workers, politicians, writers, artists, film-makers, and international scholars. According to Satis Shroff of Universitätsklinikum Akademie für Medizinische Berufe, "Nepal is conspicuous with contributions by the anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista, the climber Tenzing Norgay, the Kathmandu-based journalists Kanak Dixit and Deepak Thapa, the tourist-guide Shanker Lamichhane, the poet Pallav Ranjan and the development-specialist Harka Gurung."





*I learn to trust*  
by Pallav Ranjan

Spiny Babbler

Search for  
Common Ground

ISBN: 9789937269605



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The author was a part of a Search for Common Ground process that brought 1200 young people (aged thirteen to sixteen) in direct contact with more than one hundred police decision-makers, officers, and foot soldiers over several months.

Listening, searching, and sharing resulted in fifty seven stories. Not every story has a moral, not every tale serves a purpose. Memories clear-misty, pain-anger-relief, dreams and shadows were collected and given space in this book. Places, people, actions, opinions come from remembrance of the past, present, or the future and may not be accurate: how can a fourteen year old perfectly tell of villainy that smothered her heart when she was but four?

This collection tells of ways the police and the young interacted with each other, situations that alienated them or brought them together. Half the mind asked that the craft of writing be prioritized but the stories were told simply, leaving them truer to original conversations: the living itself was so powerful stylization was deemed unnecessary.

Impressions and fragments, sparkles and shine ons, sounds and silences are in this book, each precious, each special.