

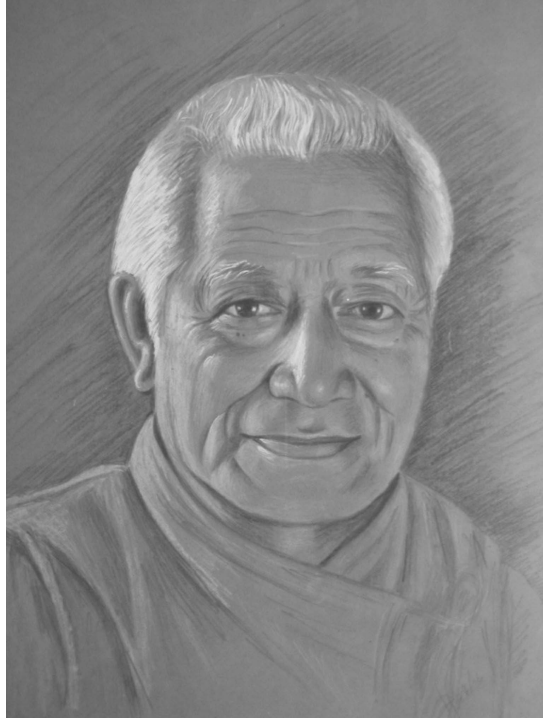
Kesar Lall :
A Homage on the occasion of
his Buraa Janko

भाजु केसर लालज्यू यात वय्कःया ज्याः
जंकोया लसताय् हना सफू
ने०सं० ११२४ सिल्लाख्व एकादशी सोमवाः

Monday, February 2, 2004

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The Legend Of The Lake

By Asoke Paul

WITH the stars appearing above our heads we left the pleasant house-boat, in which we had been cruising across the placid blue bosom of the Wular from early morning, and hurried to our host's cottage nearby.

Our host Sherif Shah was a kind old man and he was the best host, we believe, to be found under the sun. He treated us not only as his own children but also entertained us with such delightful stories that we shall never forget him and his stories. He has a very good, gruff voice for a story-teller and one might easily mistake him for a figure of the story itself speaking.

"After you have eaten," Sherif Shah told the juniors, "I shall tell you a wonderful story—the more wonderful because it is a true one." Then turning to me he said, "You may write it down, Asoke, if you like it."

So, after a sumptuous supper, we dragged the good old man, who looked so much like Father Xmas in his home-spun woolen suit, from the table, and reminded him of his promise.

* * *

Outside, the stars twinkled in a cloudless sky and reflected in the broad expanse of the blue Lake below. The little house-boats

floating on its surface, were also lit so that an imaginary person might easily mistake this nocturnal scene for a Dewali or Christmas being celebrated jointly on Earth and in Heavens.

"A very long time back," the old man began his story, "there was no lake here. In its place there was a spacious valley where flourished a big town with many beautiful satellite villages around it. In one of these villages there lived a potter.

"One night this potter saw a dream in which a big Naga (serpent) appeared before him and advised him to take his bag and baggage and make the best of his way out of the valley as soon as possible, 'for,' he said, 'the valley is going to become a lake, in which, our race will find no living space.'

"Meanwhile he was also asked to make known to all the people of the neighbourhood as well.

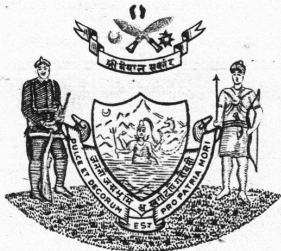
"Frightened out of his life and sweating heavily, the potter woke up. But he could not keep quiet, so he ransacked his hut for his few belongings; and soon he was seen marching out with a heavy sack on his back.

"Wherever he went he called loudly upon the people to follow him and told them that they were served with a 'Quit the Valley' notice by the Seisha Naga (the King of the Serpents); and so they must quit it.

"The people took him for a madcap ruffian and did not listen to him.

"But the frightened potter went on and on for many miles wearily; and once, when he glanced back from over his shoulders, he saw that the whole town had been submerged under water. This sight made him quicken his steps, and he never looked back again until he was well out of the valley.

"Thus," concluded Sherif Shah, "the Wular Lake came into existence."



KATHMANDU,
NEPAL

February 28, 1955

I have the pleasure to write a few words of recommendation for Mr. Kesar Lall Shrestha whom I have known for a long time. He is a self-made young man, sincere and hard-working. He knows his duty and can be absolutely relied on.

He has also worked as Assistant Private Secretary for me.

I wish him all success in his future career.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'M.P. Koirala', is written over a horizontal line.

(M.P. Koirala)
Prime Minister &
Minister for Finance, Nepal.

Contents

Tej Ratna Kansakar	11
Siddhi B. Amatya	18
Nhuchhe Bahadur Bajracharya	20
Kumar Bahadur Bhatta	27
Christoph Cüppers	30
Jim Fisher	34
David Gellner	35
Bhasudev P. Gorkhaly	36
Corneille Jest	38
Madhav Lal Karmacharya	45
Ruth Obee	48
Mac Odell	49
Toshiko Omura	53
Lotsawa Punya Prasad Parajuli	54
Laxman Rajbanshi	57
Lora and Ralph Redford	59
Bal Gopal Shrestha	60
Mukunda Shrestha	79
Ramesh P. Shrestha	80
Purna Kaji Tamrakar	81
Mark Turin	85
Janak Lall Vaidya	93
Luzal Vaidya	98
Betty Woodsend	100

Kesar Lall : Folklorist, Writer and Friend

I would first like to express my heartfelt congratulations to my old friend Kesar Lall Shrestha on the occasion of his *Budhaa-Jankva*, the old-age Buddhist ritual to mark his birthday held on the auspicious day of 77 years, 7 months and 7 days. This day is of special significance to a person of his stature who has taken a life-long interest in the promotion and recognition of Nepal's indigenous ethnic traditions and cultural expressions. His research on Nepalese folklore in general, and Newar folk culture in particular, has established his reputation as an eminent folklorist not only in Nepal but also in many foreign countries such as India, Sri Lanka, the USA, France, Germany and Japan. The popular appeal of his work to foreign readers is due in large part to his local and international publications which are almost entirely written in English. The fact that his books are read by young and old, tourists and academics, linguists and literary scholars indicates his genius as a master storyteller.

As a folklorist, Kesar Lall has been a highly active researcher travelling the length and breadth of Nepal, making contact with people in remote areas and living with them to understand their socio-cultural practices and belief systems. In this way, he has collected a wealth of materials and presented them to readers in a style that is simple and also captivating. He is in many ways the master of the narrative genre, and the stories that he retells are believable because they are based on the authentic folklore traditions of diverse communities that still survive in many parts of the country. As a writer, he has thus been able to capture the hearts and minds of his readers, both native and foreign, with his innumerable collections of folk tales, aspects of folk culture and realistic travel stories. These publications established his reputation as a folklorist and writer of distinction as early as the 1960's. Some of his publications that have gained widespread popularity include: *Lore and Legend of Nepal* (1961, 1991), *The Seven Sisters and Other Nepalese Tales* (1967), *Nepalese Fairy Tales* (1978), *This*

Beautiful Nepal (with Dorothy Mierow, 1981), *Tales of the Yeti* (1988), *Folk Tales from the Kingdom of Nepal* (1991), *Gods and Mountains: The Folk Culture of a Himalayan Country, Nepal* (1991), *Nepal: Off the Beaten Path* (1992) and many other fascinating stories on related themes.

The appeal that Kesar Lall has as a writer extends to both serious scholars such as anthropologists and sociologists and to general readers. In his own words, as Kesar Lall writes in his Preface to the Fourth Edition of *Lore and Legend of Nepal* (1977):

“Since the first publication of this book in 1961, there has been some appreciation of Nepalese folk tales both abroad and within the country. Some of the stories in this book have been translated into Japanese and Hebrew. Some of them have been included in a collection of tales from many lands. One story inspired a television film in French. The book is also being translated into German. Within Nepal there is now a greater awareness of the need to record the folk tales, which naturally is a matter of gratification to those who care about them.”

The encouragement that Kesar Lall has received from readers, academic circles and the media has stimulated and motivated him to carry out extensive and intensive field work on Nepalese folk cultures with the aim of documenting them before they are lost. He is well aware of the fact that many minority languages, ethnic cultures and socio-religious structures in Nepal are rapidly declining in the face of globalization and modernization. His contributions as a writer thus essentially lie in his constant effort to capture our belief systems and ways of life for posterity, and to present them to the outside world. The books and papers that he has produced thus far are both readable and informative, interesting as well as entertaining. Among his various publications, I would single out *Gods and Mountains* (1991) as one of his most significant books which incorporates all these qualities with remarkable clarity, and covers a wide range of materials beginning with the legend of the origin of the Kathmandu Valley in a simple, direct style:

“In the beginning there was a lake. No mortal eyes ever saw a body of water of such great beauty. We can now only imagine what a pretty sight it must have been, surrounded as it was by mountains covered with forests and the Himalayas lying not far away towards the north. We can also imagine how large it was, for the mountains are still there; only the water is gone, drained out of the lake by the legendary Manjusri, one of the greatest Buddhist divinities. He was a Bodhisattva, meaning the ‘Essence of Enlightenment’. He came, it is said, from Mahachin or Great China in fulfillment of a prophesy made by the Buddhas long ago.”

The author then surveys the myths, legends, hymns and folk songs that constitute a part of Nepal’s prehistory. This is followed by interesting accounts of the Nepalese character as expressed in beliefs and practices such as festivals, holidays, pastimes, gambling, witchcraft, proverbs, nursery rhymes and riddles. He also records old songs related to the landscape, the seasonal rains, the simple joys and hardships of the farming community, and a bonus collection of eight engrossing folk tales. The book is thus an impressive account of the cultural composition of Nepal and in particular the Kathmandu Valley which is renowned the world over for its gods and mountains. In his review of the book, Richard Critchfield referred to Kesar Lall as ‘the most celebrated folklorist of Nepal’ and to this book on the folk culture of the country as ‘a marvelous amalgam of a life time’s findings, preserving the oral traditions of a once-remote land and its people that might have been lost. One comes away from Kesar Lall’s fine tales and carefully researched essays with a sense of knowing Nepal much better’.

Apart from his contributions as a folklorist, Kesar Lall has also taken a leading role in selecting and translating locally printed folk literature and modern stories from both Newar and Nepali into English for the benefit of foreign readers. Some of the most prominent publications in this series include *Nepalese Book of Proverbs* (1985, 1991), *An Anthology of Short Stories from Nepal* (Translated from the Newar language, with Tej Ratna

Kansakar, 1992), *The Story of Prince Siddhartha* (1993), *The Story of Bungadeo: Rato Machhendranath* (1993), *Forbidden Fruit and Other Short Stories* (translated from the Newar language, with Tej Ratna Kansakar, 1994) and recently a translation of the full length novel *Letter From a Lhasa Merchant to His Wife* (2002) by the most prominent Newar poet and writer Chittadhar 'Hridaya'. He has also translated into English B.P. Koirala's famous collection of short stories *Faulty Glasses and Other Stories* (translated from Nepali, 1997), and the two collections of short stories *Women and Other Stories* (1998) and *Shattered Dream and Other Stories* (1999) both by Laxman Rajbanshi, translated from the Newar language. In addition, Kesar Lall has produced original biographies and memoirs of distinguished Buddhist monks like Venerable Bhikkhus Amritananda Mahasthavir (1986) and Dhamalok Mahasthavir (1999).

Kesar Lall's *Travel Series* is another important genre of his writings that has won widespread acclaim as a first hand description of various peoples and places in Nepal. Richard Critchfield, commenting on the richness of this travel series, writes:

“Kesar Lall takes us into a Himalayan world of sun-drenched ridges over misty terraced valleys, of lowland thatched brick villages to drafty Sherpa and Tibetan stone chalets, from the steamy jungles of the Terai to the icy ramparts of the highest peaks. It is a world peopled with Tamangs and Gurungs, trident-carrying *sadhus* on their way to distant shrines, Tibetans moving in mule caravans, Sherpas spinning *yeti* tales around a campfire. Or Pan-like cowherds piping flutes, barelegged porters with muscles like ropes, old women bent under bundles of grass, laughing children, herds of goats.”

Among his Travel Series, *This Beautiful Nepal* (1981), *Nepal: Off the Beaten Path* (1992), and *A Nepalese Miscellany* (1993) are collections of essays on his travel experiences, and the recent book which he edited entitled *The Newar Merchants in Lhasa* (2001), is a collection of published and unpublished materials written by merchants, pilgrims and business associates

about their experiences in Tibet. This latter book records the close relations between Nepal and Tibet 'on either side of the Himalayas which have been bound together for centuries by their legends, religion, culture and commerce'. Professor Corneille Jest's comments on the book serve to highlight the importance of this historic relationship:

“The merchants of Nepal have surmounted great geographical barriers and endured climatic rigours for centuries in the past to play an important role in trans-Himalayan trade and cultural and religious exchanges. In effect, they have contributed much to enrich the life of the peoples in this part of Asia. In this book Kesar Lall has brought together for the first time the most interesting travel accounts and experiences of some of these enterprising men, about whom so little is known until now.”

Kesar Lall has established his wide reputation as a versatile writer who continues to produce books, articles and pamphlets on religion and cross-cultural studies in newspapers and journals published in Nepal, the SAARC countries of South Asia, Myanmar, Japan, as well as in some European countries. Apart from his on-going publications in Newar, Nepali and English, he has also found the time to write scripts for television, video and radio programs related to his fields of interest. The complete range of his publications in itself provides a rich source of information, and a bibliography of all his works has been included in this book. One little known fact about Kesar Lall is that over the years he has also revealed himself to be a budding poet, having published a collection of his original essays and poems entitled *The Girl with a Meaningless Name* (2000), and the first ever volume of 50 of his short poems published under the title *A Tree to Cherish* (2000). He prefaces this collection with a theme poem by Alfred Joyce Kilmer (1816-1918) as follows:

*I think that I shall never see
A poem as lovely as a tree...
Poems are made by fools like me
But only God can make a tree.*

Kesar Lall's own contribution to this theme is the stark realism depicted in his composition entitled "Two Trees":

*There stand in my backyard
A pear tree with limbs round and smooth
And a walnut with a texture thick and rough
Close together.
Difficult, when both are in leaf,
To distinguish one from the other,
Their branches interlocked in embrace
As a couple in love.*

*The walnut has taken long to fruit
But the pear, as if to compensate
And to cover up the other's shame
Bears a superabundance of sweet, brown fruit
For myriad mynahs and crows to feast
Until winter is back and the branches are bare.*

As a friend and co-author, Kesar Lall has enriched my life in many ways. While working on joint projects, we used to hold long discussions on the declining cultural practices of Nepal's ethnic minorities, the problems of cultural transfer in the translation of local literature to English, and above all, to share his profound insight in the Buddhist philosophy of humility, tolerance and peaceful co-existence with man and nature. He has, in other words, provided me with a world view that is remarkably different from the one I am used to with my background of Western education. I also respect his dedication to the tasks at hand, his meticulous eye for detail and nuance, and his compromising attitude to ideas and opinions of others. I have thus admired not only his scholarship but also his ability to inspire and motivate others. The one sustaining aspect of his personality is his optimistic attitude which enables him to set definite targets that are realistic and achievable within a given time-frame. He has always given me the impression of being a very patient person, clear-headed and well organised in his methods of work. When talking to him, he frequently

makes notes of the things he wants to remember, the source materials he has to consult or verify, and the tasks he needs to complete on a priority basis. This assortment of records about 'things to do today' seem to give him a formidable memory which my habitual absent-mindedness cannot hope to match. In his essay entitled *A Friend's Portrait*, he referred to the well-known Newar scholar Satya Mohan Joshi as a *kalyan mitra*, a true friend and a man of peace and compassion. I feel this to be an accurate description of Kesar Lall himself, a good and reliable friend who believes in the Buddhist virtues of modesty and kindness to all living beings. His own poem on *Compassion* truly expresses his faith in life and human dignity:

*The greatest of all virtues
A human being is endowed with
And the essence of all the wisdom
Gathered all these centuries
Is compassion.
Measured by his compassion towards
All living beings
Give the true measure of a human being.*

Tej Ratna Kansakar
Nepal

Kesar Lall as I know him

The first time I met Kesar Lall was in September, 1960, when I went to the US Embassy in Kathmandu for a job interview.

Mr Douglas Foreman, First Secretary of the Embassy, conducted the interview and introduced me to Kesar Lall. Kesar Lall took my typing test and wished me good luck in getting the job. Kesar Lall was working in the Political and Economic Section, while I got a job in the Administrative Section.

After two years, I was transferred to the Political and Economic Section, to work under Kesar Lall. From 1962 until his retirement, I was therefore associated with Kesar Lall for almost three decades. I enjoyed every moment of working with him. He was my senior, guide, confidant and above all a true friend.

Kesar Lall is always ready to help anybody who seeks his help. He does not know how to say 'no'. He has a very kind heart. I have also found him to be very innocent on occasion. Once, in the early sixties, Kesar Lall and I went to Shivapuri hill to spend a night at the top. It was on the last day of the Nepalese year when many people go to Bagdhawar, the source of Bagmati river situated near the top of Shivapuri, to take a holy bath at midnight, i.e. at the beginning of the new Nepali year. We reached Bagdhawar at around 8 p.m. and stayed there until midnight to celebrate the occasion, and then we went to the top to spend the rest of the night. It was about 1:30 a.m. when we finally reached the top and both of us were tired and thirsty. I had carried with me a can of beer and a can of ginger ale. Before retiring I offered the can of ginger ale to Kesar Lall as I knew that he never drank alcohol, while I drank the can of beer. After drinking, we both felt sleepy. Kesar Lall then told me that he felt drunk and dizzy as a result of drinking ginger ale. I told him that ginger ale is a soft drink and contains no alcohol, but he was not ready to believe that. This made me laugh at his innocence.

Kesar Lall is also a trekker and a hiker. Because of him, I also became interested in trekking and hiking. We made a number of trips together and also in the company of other friends. Of these travels, our treks to Muktinath, Dolakha Bhimsenthana, Helambu and Gosainkund lake and hikes to Kakani, Nagarkot and Dapcha (Namo Buddha) were the most memorable.

As a writer and translator, Kesar Lall has earned a remarkable reputation for himself both within his native Nepal and also in the wider world. He has written more than two dozen books in English, most of which are collections of short stories and folktales. Kesar Lall always used to go looking for old folks to speak to whenever we stopped for a rest or for a night during our treks. He always carried with him a note-book and a pen, and whenever he got an opportunity, he would sit down with a resourceful local person and note down folk-tales and short stories from the locality. He was also always in search of new materials for his books.

Kesar Lall is for me an ideal human being. On the occasion of his Bura Jankhu I salute him with honour and respect, and wish him a very healthy life for the years to come.

Siddhi B. Amatya
Nepal

Bura / Buri Janko : Old Age Ceremony

I have known Kesar Lall Shrestha for more than half a century, since the establishment of Ananda Kuti Vidhyapeeth in 1952. His father, Mr. Jagat Lall Shrestha, popularly known as Jagat Lall Master Saheb, who lived in *Maasan Galli*, a lane between Seto Machindra Nath temple and Mahabouddha near Bir hospital in Kathmandu, taught boys and girls as a private tutor in his own home. In those days, there were no public schools except the Durbar school, and consequently Mr. Jagat Lall Master Saheb was a very popular teacher. I myself was his pupil at the time in January 1952 when Ananda Kuti Vidhyapeeth was founded by Bhikkhu Amritananda at Ananda Kuti Vihar at Swoyambu, Kathmandu, of which I was a co-founder. Together with his son Kesar Lall, Mr. Jagat Lall used to come to visit both Bhikkhu Amritananda and myself in order to see the school at Ananda Kuti Vihar. He was interested in Theravada Buddhism and also in the first Buddhist boarding school which was run as a *gurukul* school with the boys sitting under the trees and with me as a *guru*. News of our Buddhist boarding school in Nepal started to spread far and wide, even to other Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka, China, Japan and Burma. The first foreign donation of some stationery from Japan was received in 1953 for distribution to the students, for which we held a public meeting, most probably the first one of its kind in the Kathmandu Valley. The great Maha Pandit Rahula Sankrityayan was the chief guest. The meeting was conducted under the chairmanship of the then Education Minister Hon. Tripubara, and I clearly remember that Kesar Lall was the announcer at the meeting. From that time onwards, I developed a friendship with Kesar Lall, and his visits to Rev. Amritananda and me became increasingly frequent. I came to know that he wrote English very well and that he had published a number of English language books such as *Folk Tales of Nepal* and others. It was on account of his excellent English that the Rev. Amritananda took him to Japan in 1953 as an interpreter, when the Venerable Bhikkhu went to Japan to attend a conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists.

Kesar Lall, as I understand it, is now approaching the stage in his life when the first ceremony of 'old age' or *Bura Janko* is observed. This is a traditional ceremony, also known in Sanskrit as *Bhimratharohan*, and pertains to a person who is 77 years, 7 months, 7 days and 7 hours old. The performance of the rites and rituals known as *Pancha Rakkhya Manda* is believed to help the five elements of fire, water, air, earth and space (*Pancha Tatwo*) remain in their pure forms, both ecologically and physically. It is believed that the concerned individual cannot enjoy the benefits of sound health, happiness and a long life if the nine planets (*Nava Graha*), which play a important role in the matter, are not in a favourable disposition and alignment.

There are three *Bura Janko* (old age ceremonies) in the life of a Newar man or woman, and they are as follows:

1. *Bhimaratharohan* or *Bura Janko* - 77 years, 7 months, 7 days and 7 hours or after 950 full moons have been seen.
2. *Deva* or *Chandra Ratha* (in Sanskrit) or *Nikagu Bura Janko* (in the Newar language) - 84 years, 4 months and 4 days, or after 1,000 full moons have been seen. Nowadays, however, this second ceremony is often performed at 82 years.
3. *Maharatha* (in Sanskrit) or *Jyatha Janko* (in the Newar language) - 99 years, 9 months and 9 days or after 1,200 full moons. This age limit has now been cut back to 92 years to allow more old people to qualify.

There are thus three *Bura Jankos* which follow one another with an interval of a few years. The description given here concerns the first one that Kesar Lall will be observing. The first *Bura Janko* is performed on an auspicious day determined by an astrologer after the individual concerned has seen 950 full moons in his life time. The old man, as well as his sons, daughters, grand sons, grand daughters, nephews and nieces are usually all eager to perform the ceremony as a mark of respect and adulation.

The old man should feel both happy and proud to qualify for this important ceremony at which all his offspring pull him around while he sits on an elaborately decorated chariot. While his wife may be too young for the Janko, she is also considered to have reached her husband's age.

Seven is a highly auspicious number as it is a sign in one's life that one has attained *mangala* which is believed to be a very good omen. In this function, the *Mula Guru Purohit* (Chief Vajracarya priest) will perform *Homakaran* and *kalasa puja*. An Upadhyaya priest will also perform a puja to the mandala of *Astamatrika* and *Navagraha*, while five assistant guru purohiths read the holy book of *Pancaraksa*. They construct the mandala of *Pratisara* or *Pancaraksa* surrounded by *Navagraha* (the nine planets). If they use an image of Pratisara then it is placed on top of the mandala, which is drawn with white powder. The mandala is the house of Pratisara and has four doors in the four cardinal directions, each with its *paala* or guardian. Pratisara is a Devi and she has female guardians. The circle that surrounds the house is called a *Padmabali* (surrounded by lotus flowers). The further circle around that is called *Vajrabali*, followed by *Jwalabali* (fire flames), and on the outside are placed the *Navagrahas*. Pratisara is always present — a goddess of protection against all kinds of evils and dangers, and the one who also gives the blessing of long life. The *Pancharakkhya* also consists of five ferocious and protecting Devis known by the common name of *Tara* but whose real Tantric names are *Pratisari*, *Saharapramardini*, *Mahamayuri*, *Sitabati* and *Mantranusarini*. It is also customary that the *ih*i initiation for girls is performed along with *Bura Janko*. In the first *Bura Janko*, *homa* or *yajna* is performed for peace and tranquility. A puja to *Navagraha* mandala is performed to drive away evils, and a Kalasa Puja is also performed to invoke the blessing of Svayambhu Pancha Buddha for the long life of the old man.

The five assistant purohiths read the holy book of *Pancharakkhya*. They must read the five chapters, which deal simultaneously yet separately with the five Devis. In actual fact, it is usual to have only two or three assistant Vajracaryas for this reading since they simply divide the book into equal portions, whatever their number.

The first chapter deals with *Pratisara Devi*, white in colour and also known as *Vairocana Tara* who is the Sakti of the *Vairocana Buddha*. The second chapter deals with *Mamaki Tara* - blue - the Sakti of *Aksobhya Buddha*. The third chapter deals with *Pandala Tara* - yellow - Sakti of *Ratnasambhava Buddha*. The fourth chapter deals with *Arya Tara* - red - Sakti of *Avitabha Buddha*. The fifth chapter deals with *Amala Tara* - green - Sakti of *Amoghasiddhi Buddha*. Their sons are *Visvapani*, *Vajrapani*, *Ratnapani*, *Khadgapani* and *Padmapani*.

Each Navagraha is represented separately in the mandala. The sun is represented by a special kind of paddy that grows with stinging hairs and is important in a puja (*swaana*), and which is also used in Ayurvedic medicine. A red cloth is placed over this flower. The moon is represented by polished rice grains called *aakhya* on top of which is placed a piece of white cloth. *Mangal graha* is represented by mustard seed in a pot on top of which is placed a loaf of molasses (*chaku*). Then *Buda Graha* wheat (or barley) seed called *tacchho* is placed on top with a yellow cloth. Next, the *Brihaspatiika* is placed in a pot with an orange cloth while the *Sukra Graha* is represented by peas in a pot with a green cloth. The *Sanischar Graha* is represented by black lentils in a pot with a blue cloth, the *Rahu graha* by black soyabean (*hakumusya*) in a pot with a black cloth, and *Ketu Graha* by *kola* grain seeds in a pot with multi-coloured cloth. One teacher of all the grahas (*upa-graha*) is also represented by black soyabean (*haku mushya*) in a pot with a blue cloth onto which is placed a small piece of gold.

First of all, a puja is performed to *Pratisara* by reciting the sutras and using flowers, rice, tika and other things, and this is followed by the worship of the *Navagraha*. During the puja the old man undergoing the *Janko* is not recognized as the *jajman* (head of family), since the *jajman* on this occasion is the old man's eldest son who is the chief participant in the worship, even though the old man will from time to time throw rice offerings to the relevant Devis.

At the end of the puja, the family members will pour water from four pots over the old man. Dressed in neat and clean clothes, he will then perform

a puja to *Guru Mandala*. He will then be dressed in the uniform of an *aaju* (one of the ten senior most members of a *baha* or monastery with a turban on his head and large round golden earrings) and he will then be taken round the city to visit temples on the way. He will either be carried in a palanquin (Patan custom) or pulled in a chariot (Kathmandu custom) by his sons, daughters, grand daughters, grand sons, nephews and nieces. Before being taken on this procession, he is blessed with a mixture of *abhir* (red powder), *taae* (puffed fried rice), fruits and some pastries. The procession is led by a band playing national and cultural music. If his wife is alive, she will also participate in the ceremony since for the purpose of this ceremony, the wife's age matches exactly that of her husband.

When the *Navagraha* puja is completed, the mandalas representing the grahas are given to the purohit except for the Pratisara mandala which is left until the next day. Very often such a mandala is created the day before the main function, for it involves much detailed work. One Vajracharya priest performs a small puja (*sobha puja*) with all those who will participate the next day. They also burn the *Mahadwip*, also called *Dusala Kriha*, on the evening before the *Janko*. From then on, the old man has to fast. He burns *Mahadwip* with a five-ply wick dipped in oil which is of the same height as the man himself. He may eat meat only when the puja is completed.

He will be welcomed back by his family members after the chariot procession with a ceremony at the entrance of the house. In the welcoming ceremony inside the house, he will be blessed with *sagan* by his relatives, which consists of eggs, alcohol and a presentation of gifts of various articles. He will then eat the *bhubhajan* (eating from a special brass plate). In this function, the *Kumari* (the living goddess) is also invited and worshipped. If the *Kumari* is not available, a *Kumari puja* is performed in the family prayer room called the *aagan*. They consume eggs and alcohol only after returning from the *kumari puja*. The Pratisara mandala is left inside the *aagan*. When all the *aagan puja* is completed, the remains are put in a *kalasa* and thrown in a holy river. The old man's sons and grand sons wash downstream in the river, that is, in the *kalasa* water, which is considered to

be holy. One of the sons or grand sons then brings some of that water to the old man.

The sons and grand sons then perform the *araga* puja for the old man and worship him by washing his feet with the *kalasa* water, milk, roasted rice and coins. At this time the old man will also be offered *thaebwa*, a large silver plate with 84 different varieties of food placed on it, each representing a deity. The old man places his right foot on another plate onto which his wife also places her left foot. Then all the nephews and nieces also perform the *araga* puja. At the right moment he will have to change his clothes, wear a white turban and put on special gold earrings given to him by his family. The bottom part of his special dress, a kind of white skirt, is called a *jaamaa*. The top blouse is called *kwanch*, like Chinese *kwechin* with big floppy sleeves, and also a waistcoat with long sleeves. Over these he wears a long coloured silk coat, a skull cap called *thyaso tapuli* and gold earrings called *chacha*. This part of the ritual is similar to a child's four-day old rite. Then a container known as *pathi* containing fruit, *yomari* (sweet bread, shaped like pagoda, with sweets inside) and coins are thrice poured over his head. This ritual called *sipha luyegu* is conducted by the *jajman's* wife or by the old man's daughter-in-law. After this *araga* puja, the *ratha saalegu* (drawing the chariot) takes place. The *sipha* puja to the gods and goddesses is conducted to wish for good health and longevity. The coins are given to the purohit, and the fruit and *yomari* are distributed as *prasad* to the children and grand children. If the *ihi* ritual (the marriage of girls to the god Narayan) is included in the ceremony, then all the girls and their families must also be fed. The old man is then regarded as an *aju* (a venerable elder) and whenever he attends a feast he is given the position of a head person and others must bow down to him.

After the procession and welcome ceremony (*lasa kusa*), a *sagan* is offered by all the relatives and friends. Before the old man eats the *sagan* items, he offers small pieces of the food to the gods (*dyah chhayegu*), one to *Adho Bhagawan bhutas, preta* (evil spirits) and one to *sattwa* (living beings). The left-overs are left at a *chwaasa* (cross-roads where the demons reside). This is called *kalah waayegu*, an offering to ensure that the old man does not

suffer from indigestion. In the evening, all his relatives and friends are invited to a feast, and at night there will be a final puja to *sukunda* (oil lamp with representation of Ganesh) while the family members offer gifts. When this is completed, the purohit performs a *mata* (lamp) puja to *sukundaa*, *chaita bali* (food in a small pot) and a *dhau pati* (yogurt) puja. The final *khen sagan* is offered to the old man, the purohit, Guruju and the *jajaman*. A special thanks-giving *sutra* (prayer) is recited, followed by giving of *daksinaa* (offering of food and money to the priest). Then the lamp that stands on the *bali* (heap of rice grains) is placed at the entrance to the door (*pikhaa lakhu*) as an offering to the god who resides there.

This is the end of the first old age ceremony. This is followed by a second one known as *Devaratha* or *Nikagu Bura Jya Janko* a few years later at the age of 82 or 84.

For now, my hearty congratulation to my friend Kesar Lall on his first old age ceremony (*Bura Janko*). I wish him longevity and good health.

Nhuchhe Bahadur Bajracharya
Nepal

Kesar Lall Shrestha: An Enlightened but Unsung Hero of Nepal

It is the case everywhere that due to some unseen powers and pressures, many undeserving people are overly awarded and their contributions unwisely recognized. It is also true that many deserving people go unrecognized and remain unsung, even though they have done a great deal for the nation. In Nepal, Kesar Lall Shrestha definitely falls under the second category.

I am given to understand that the great ritual ceremony and traditional practice among the highly cultured Newars, known as *Janku* is soon to be celebrated by Kesar Lall. *Janku* is the most important event in the life of a person, when he reaches 77 years, 7 months and 7 hours after his birth.

I had the opportunity to spend about eighteen years with Kesar Lall in the same room in the US Embassy in Kathmandu, during which time we shared common problems and discussed our woes with one another. During this period, he never gave me a single moment to complain or argue with him. Once he told me that Khuswant Singh, the well-known editor of the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, wrote in his obituary of Zulfikar Bhutto of Pakistan that he never found a more honest human being.

I now feel the urge to say that I have no friendship better than the one which I have with Kesar Lall Shrestha. It is unbelievable that a short man, not highly educated, and without an important position in the national government and not undergoing any kind of training or courses in any subject, could possess so vast a knowledge and write about his experiences for the benefit of others. Kesar Lall has some qualities which are simply inborn and god-given. He is always inquisitive and meets with knowledgeable people to gather the necessary information, history or stories about the subject he is going to describe in his writing. He has the habit of collecting useful information from countless books, magazines, newspapers, from the television, the radio and from meeting various authorities,

including mostly the people of the hills, the old, local inhabitants and pundits.

He writes his accounts on rough paper, typing and editing them and then finally sending them for publication. As the task of publishing is neither easy nor financially affordable for a simple man like Kesar Lall, some publishers, knowing the value of the subject, have been publishing his books. To be honest, I have not read all the books authored by Kesar Lall, but I know that he has made Nepal and Nepalis very rich by writing about a dozen books on various subjects including culture, history, folklore, superstition and blind belief, old time accounts, travel and tourism, and even Nepali jokes. I have also come across some foreigners who were highly impressed by the materials written by Kesar Lall. Swiss television is reported to have shown a children's programme based on a story written by Kesar Lall and even sent him a modest remuneration for his tale.

I feel proud that my other two colleagues, Mahesh Chandra Regmi (who recently passed away) and Bharat Dutt Koirala, have been awarded the biggest and most famous Asian award - the Magasaysay Awards in the fields of Journalism and Communication Radio respectively. I will not be surprised if one day Kesar Lall Shrestha receives a similar award from such an establishment or institution. It is not that these people are undeserving of their awards, but Kesar Lall is in no case inferior to them. It is simply that the contributions of Kesar Lall have been allowed to go unrecognised and thus make him an unsung hero. The award-giving authorities may miss the most talented and brilliant Kesar Lall if his contributions remain inadequately recognized. During my 18-year close association with him, between 1959 and 1977, I was lucky enough to follow, learn and practise things according to Kesar Lall's character. He taught me the meaning of trekking through which I was able to see the beauty of many hilly places. When I suffered stomach trouble, it was he who advised me to drink only boiled and purified water. I had also never seen my name as a writer in a newspaper, but I derived inspiration from him and once wrote 'A Letter to the Editor'. I have now been able to publish about a hundred articles on various subjects in the leading newspapers of Nepal.

When Kesar Lall had some personal problems relating to the division of property among his brothers and half-brothers, he taught me about, and warned me of, unnecessary court cases and other troubles and difficulties, and urged me to settle affairs in good time. I followed his lead and am now free of such problems. I should mention his manner of dealing with others: he is always kind, helpful, co-operative and generous to anybody who comes to him seeking his guidance or help. He is, quite simply, my *guru* in many subjects, and thanks in part to him I feel fully satisfied with what I am today. Kesar Lall is a highly knowledgeable person and has done a lot for the country and I feel like an intellectual dwarf when I am around him. Another of his notable qualities is that he does not mind if others do not appreciate his work. He follows the wise saying of Ravindra Nath Tagore - *Ekala Chalun - Ekala Chalun* (move alone, alone and move alone). Be it his official boss, seniors or supervisors, friends or relatives and well-wishers, all find him to be a noble and simple gentleman and have unfailingly appreciated his work. We wish him a long life and great prosperity. May the Almighty give him more strength and light for the benefit of all Mankind!

Kumar Bahadur Bhatta
Nepal

Newar Craftsmen Employed by the Early dGa'-Idan pho-brang Rulers

This short contribution is in homage to Kesar Lall Shrestha, whose scientific interest and work covers, among many other subjects, the cultural history of Tibet-Nepal relations. It is always a pleasure to discuss related topics with him and I am very grateful to him for sharing his deep knowledge so freely with friends and colleagues.

It is a well-known fact that Newar craftsmen, because of their high skills in art and crafts, worked in Tibet to help construct and decorate the monasteries and palaces of rulers and other dignitaries. From the earliest times of the Tibetan kings down to the last great period of traditional Tibetan rule, which was initiated by the dGe-lugs-pa school in the 17th century, we come across Tibetan literary sources about Newar craftsmen working in Tibet.¹

The written sources for the period under consideration are the writings of the 5th Dalai Lama,² Ngag-dbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho (1617-1682), who, as the spiritual and political head of the state, engaged the succeeding regents in the construction and repair work of many religious shrines. In his three-volume-set of *tham-phud*, the collections of dedicational verses and prayers written on the back of *thang-kas* or in connection with the erection of statues and shrines, we find many short references to Newar craftsmen working in Lhasa or elsewhere in Tibet. The names and other details obtained are briefly discussed with the hope of further stimulating research on this topic.

¹ The tradition continues to the present day, as can be learned from an article written by the expert on the subject, Erberto Lo Bue, in 'Newar Sculptors and Tibetan Patrons in the 20th Century', *Tibet Journal*, XXVII, No. 3 & 4, Dharamsala 2002.

² Ngag-dbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho: sKu gsung thugs rten gсар bzhengs rin po che'i mchod rdzas khang bzang gi dkar chag dang tham phud deb khrims yig 'go rgyangs sde bzhi'i sgo 'phar phye ba'i skal bzang gi glegs bam gnyis pa, *Collected Works of the 5th Dalai Lama*, vol. Tsa, 307 fols.

In the year 1670 (?) the regent (*phyag-mdzod*) Blo-bzang mthu-stobs (1669-1675)³ undertook some seasonable (*dus-babs*) repair work to the famous Ramoche shrine. Among the coppersmiths were two Newars, Amara SiM and Dhanashree. These two craftsmen are also mentioned among the workers at another construction site initiated by the regent (*sa-skyong*) Blo-bzang mthu-stobs. The text mentions a Newar fore-man named Siddhi, then A-ma-ra-siM, one bKra-shis-mgon-po, followed by Dha-na-shree. This list is quite extensive as gives the names of other Newar craftsmen, presumably carpenters. Here we find Dha-na-mu-ni, Dha-na, Sut-sa, Dha-rma-de-ba, La-Na-tsandra, Da-na-mu-ni, Daa-ki-ta, Dza-shree-deba, Su-tra-ka-la, Chu(?) -na-de-ba, Dha-na-shree, Da-na-mu-ni, La-Na-de-ba, Dha-na-de-ba, Padma-nentra, Shaakya-mu-ni, La-Na-de-ba, Mahaa-mu-ni, Indra(?) -shree, Dzes-candra, La-Na-candra, Shaakya-mu-ni, Dzes-candra, Dha-laM, Glang-bu-de-ba, Dzes-dha-na, Sarba-kraM, bKra-shis-nor-bu, Dha-na-pa-ni, Ma-Ni-la, Dha-na-shree, Ga-na-pa-ti, Nor-bu-tshe-ring, Dha-rma-de-ba, Gu-Na-candra, Mu-ni, La-na-mu-ni, La-kraM, Shaakya-mu-ni, De-ba-dza-ti, Candra-la, Tshe-ring, Sa-ma-tra-ba-Da(?),⁴ mGon-po-dha-na, Mu-ni, Dzes-de-va and La-Na.⁵ What becomes obvious from this list is that many of these workers must have been Buddhists as their names would indicate. A few workers bear Tibetan names, but they are always listed in the group of Newar workers. They could have been offspring of a Tibetan-Newar intermarriage (*khacaraa*), but this is pure supposition.

The three Newar foremen (*dbu-mdzad*) A-ma-ra-siM, bKra-shis-mgon-po and Dha-na-shree are distinguished from the common workers when listed. We find these three again at a construction site in the year 1674 together with a group of Newar craftsmen, many of whom have been mentioned above, but there are also some new names.

³ On the dates of the different regents see Luciano Petech, 'The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study', *T'oung Pao*, XLVII, 1959, pp. 358-94.

⁴ Compare the name in the following list.

⁵ The block print I have at my disposal is not very clear. Some names are still questionable. They are given here according to their forms as shown in the Tibetan texts with their spellings in Tibetan which can in most cases be easily transformed to their normal spelling in Newari *lipi* or in Devanagari.

Among the common craftsmen we learn of Dha-na-shree, Dha-rma-de-ba, Dha-na-mu-ni, Dha-na, Dznyaa-na-mu-ni, Ta-ki-ta, La-na-de-ba, Su-ta-ka-ra, Dze-siM-de-ba, Ma-haa-mu-ni, Su-tsa-shree, De-ba-candra, Edu-shree, Dze-candra, Shaakya-mu-ni, Pra-ma-nanda(?), Shaakya-mu-ni, Dznyaa-na-mu-ni, Dha-na-de-ba, La-na-de-ba, La-na-candra, Dha-laM, Lo-bu-dha-la, Dze-dha-na, Kyi-na-de-ba, Sarba-dharma, bKra-shis-nor-bu, Dha-na-pa-Ni, Ma-Ni-la, Dha-na-shree, Da-na-pa-ti, Nor-bu-tshe-ring, Dharma-de-ba, Gu-na-tsandra, Mu-ni, La-na-mu-ni, De-ba-la-traM, Shaakya-mu-ni, De-ba-dza-ti, Tsandra-la, Tshe-ring, Sang-gha-bha-dra, Mu-ni, Mgon-po-dha-na, Dze-de-ba and La-na-tsandra. This list is completed with names of Tibetan coppersmiths and carpenters.

Some construction sites were established for several years. From the year 1670 until 1675, different groups worked in succession on a particular construction site, starting with stone cutters and carpenters who totalled more than one hundred craftsmen and who worked for about three months. The next group plastered the walls and worked nearly eleven months. Sixteen relief carvers followed and worked for two and a half months on site. The next group consisted of ten painters who worked for a period of about seven months. The next mention is of ten Newars who worked for ten months on the site, but their work remains unspecified. Seven silver and coppersmiths followed and worked for seven months. Two horse dealers (*lo-ro-ba*)⁶ were employed for seventeen months.

Given that the road from the Nepal Valley to Lhasa and other regions of Tibet could take several weeks, we may presume that many Newar craftsmen stayed in Tibet for a period of some years rather than travelling every season between Nepal and Tibet. Especially for the construction of the prestigious Potala Palace, and in particular the tomb of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Newar craftsmen must have spent years in Tibet to help complete the work. The regent Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho left an exhaustive list of the workers involved in his report of this magnificent construction.

⁶ This is the meaning of *lo-ro-ba* according to the rGyun mkho'i tshig mdzod, Szichuan 1980, but as the context of other occurrences of this word shows, its meaning is most probably that of a craft connected with metal work.

When the 5th regent (*sde-srid*) Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho constructed the tomb of the 5th Dalai Lama Nag-dbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho at the Potala Palace in Lhasa, he employed a large group of Newar craftsmen.⁷ The long lists of Newar names transmitted by the regents make for interesting reading, since they provide us with information on Newar name-giving in the 17th century. In addition to the names, the regent Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho also provided information on the salaries paid to Newar craftsmen. The payments were not only in gold and silver coins, but also in kind, which included tea of different qualities, cloths and other items. The craftsmen were classified in ranks from rank one (*ang-dang*) to rank three (*ang-gsum*). They were employed as stone sculptors, silver and coppersmiths, metal workers, jewellers, tailors and as *gzi-rgyag-mi* (persons engaged in polishing metal works).

Naturally, this subject needs a more detailed study than has been given here. Although it seems doubtful that we will learn more than the names and crafts of these Newar craftsmen of the late 17th century, particularly the foremen, we may hope that the picture will become less sketchy as our search is extended to the writings of other Tibetan dignitaries of the period.

Christoph Cüppers
Nepal

⁷ See Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho, mChod sdong 'dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag, Bod ljong mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, Lhasa 1990, pp. 269-270 et passim.

Two Things About Kesar Lall

I remember two things about Kesar Lall when he arrived at George Washington University in the summer of 1962 to teach Nepali to members of the first Peace Corps group to Nepal.

The first was his irrepressible chuckle and the twinkle in his eye, no matter how ponderous a turn the subject of conversation might take. As children of the Kennedy era setting out to save the world, we sometimes took an overly self-righteous view of our role in history. Kesar Lall could be counted on to gently steer us to a more modest view of our own self-importance.

The second thing I remember was his book, *Lore and Legend of Nepal*, which had come out a few months earlier. Since I was assiduously collecting every publication I could find on Nepal (easier to do then when there were not as many of them as there are now), I was thrilled to see his book, and even more thrilled to be on a first-name basis with its author. I didn't realize then that Kesar Lall would be the phenomenally productive scholar that he has proved to be. The range of his interests has been extraordinary. Westerners who want to know more about Nepal, and the Nepalese for that matter, are very much in his debt.

Nowadays, whenever I see him he always has another publication (or, more likely, several) in hand. I have told him that he writes books faster than I can read them.

Jim Fisher
USA

A Few Words on Kesar Lall

I have known Kesar Lall's name for many years but it was only in 2003 that I was finally able to meet him. I already knew that we shared an interest in the recent history of the Newars and in translating and making available a rich cultural heritage that is, unavoidably, changing out of all recognition. Due to his long personal association with Bhikshu Amritananda, he has an in-depth knowledge of the great monk's career, and I wanted to learn from him. What I did not know was that he also possesses a stack of documents relevant to it, which he generously offered to let me see and copy, if necessary.

To an extent that may be paralleled elsewhere in Asia but is hard for Westerners to grasp, the knowledge and understandings of the older generation of Kathmandu-dwellers today are wholly foreign to their own grandchildren and perhaps need to re-presented to them in English for them to make sense and be acceptable. The task of doing that, and also of making that culture known to the wider world, is one to which Kesar Lall has devoted himself. His collection of translated extracts from Nepal Bhasha accounts of travels to Lhasa is one that should whet the appetite of many young Newars, and may even send them back to the originals. Far from slowing down as he has got older, his rate of production and the breadth of his interests have increased and become wider, an example to us all. I salute Kesar Lall: cultural expert, translator and historian.

David Gellner
United Kingdom

Respectable Kesar Sai and Bhabiju

I am filled with joy at your auspicious attainment of 77 years, 7 months and 7 days. This is good evidence of your being successful in acquiring maturity and is an enviable achievement. Although it is enviable, let me not envy you, because I have no desire to be an envious person nor have I been so in the past.

I do not want to pass up this golden opportunity of honouring your maturity which you have achieved through your mode of life and good conduct. I bow down before you to receive your kind blessing and wise guidance on this happy occasion, and ask you to continue to guide me in the future along my life's path by sharing your valuable experience with me.

I have been fortunate enough to have been your friend for the last five decades, and I sincerely hope that you will continue to favour me with the same manner of pleasant intimacy in the future. Since you are more mature than I am, I would like to write a few lines on what I have learned from your wisdom. Kindly excuse my immodesty in writing this down.

It is said by those of culture and experience that no society can grow if its members do not honour maturity. The respect for maturity generates discipline in people, and only those who have discipline can establish a society in an orderly manner. Order alone, and not lawlessness, violence, invasion or expansionism, leads to true prosperity. Prosperity acquired thus helps to create morality and righteousness in a society, and leads us all, without exception, to genuine happiness and eternal peace.

Please trust that I am hereby being neither instructive nor informative. If my few lines of musings are of interest to you, then my purpose has been served. At this time I would like to express my complete

confidence that your past life of dignity and good manners will make you happy and balanced in the future. Finally, I would ask you to accept my very best wishes for your maturity and wisdom and to give me that chance to serve you in the future.

Bhasudev P. Gorkhaly
Nepal

The 'local bus' left Kathmandu in the early morning, circumambulated

A walk along the trail to Lhasa ... with Kesar Lall

“...Over the years writing became my avocation, writing about memorable events, about people I admired most and places I liked...”

- Kesar Lall

Over the last few years, Kesar Lall and I have collected information on the Nepal-Tibet trade and the testimonies of Lhasa *sabus*, the Newar merchants, culminating in the translation by Kesar Lall of Chittadhar Hridaya's novel *Mi Manahpau* published under the title “Letter from a Lhasa merchant to his wife” (New Delhi, Robin Books, 2002). This is how I discovered that Kesar Lall had a special liking for Sankhu, the small Newar town located in one of the remoter part of the valley of Kathmandu.

Sankhu was the first overnight stop on the journey which took the Newar merchants to Lhasa eighty years ago, an arduous journey that took more than one and a half months to complete. While Kesar Lall was translating *Mi Manahpau*, we decided to explore the trail to Lhasa and our first visit took us as far as Chabahi. Chabahi was in years past a small village at the outskirts of Kathmandu with an important Baha. Located nearby was a monumental stupa noteworthy for its elegant shape, ornate with very old carvings around the plinth and with one of the oldest standing Buddha statues in the valley in the courtyard (now gone!).

It is in this *baha* that the Newar merchants spent their last night before going east and entering the unknown territory, leaving their caste, family and friends behind. On their return, they had to undergo the rituals of purification to recover their caste and status in the same *baha*.

We later went as far as Sankhu in the north-east of the valley, with a plan to visit the sites where Newar and Tibetan traders and pilgrims stopped in the sacred shrines along the trade route between Nepal and Tibet.

The 'local bus' left Kathmandu in the early morning, circumambulated the shrine of Badrakali, than headed due east. We passed the stupa of Chabahi on our left, the stupa of Bodnath, crossed the sacred river Manahara. The road climbed terraces crowned by bamboo groves with a few settlements on both sides of the road, their architecture giving an indication of the owners: Newars, Chetris and Tamangs, most of them new settlers there.

Then we crossed a bridge over the Manamati, a stream coming down from the crest line of the Manicur Dhara, marking the boundary of Sankhu territory. Kesar Lall recalls a story concerning this spot, haunted by a sorceress (*The Ghost of Sankhu*, in 'Folk tales from the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal', Kathmandu, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2000):

“Once upon a time a rich farmer and trader of Sankhu arranged a marriage for his daughter with a young man of Kathmandu. To the girl's misfortune, the husband turned out to be a drunkard and a gambler. So one day she stole out of the house and escaped in the darkness, deciding to go back to her parents in Sankhu... Arriving at the river Manamati, she was startled to see that the water was not moving! There is a belief that at midnight the waters of the rivers in the valley stopped for sometime. Finally she could cross and saw a fire on the road side and a lonely woman sitting there preparing a plate of husk and grits of rice cooked in blood! The old woman insisted that she ate some rice, and forced the girl to take some of it. It must be a ghost she said to her self...She was scared but could not run away. As she pretended to relieve herself the ghost insisted that she did it near the fire, the girl pleaded suggesting that the ghost could tie one end of her girdle to a branch of a pipal tree; while the girl unrolled herself and slowly made her way out of the circle of light cast by the fire. As soon as she was in the dark she untied the girdle from her body and fled home. The ghost called 'have you finished?', 'I am coming back' said the girl.. after some time the ghost called 'rice, rice where are you now?' and the rice answered 'I am here!', from the girl's bowels!

The ghost then knew that the young woman had left for good and came in pursuit with haste... When she was about to be captured, the young woman took a copper coin and touched her forehead with a prayer to goddess Vajrayogini and thus was saved. In the early morning a farmer found her, and she was taken home where she told about her misfortune...”

Leaving the bus, we entered the city of Sankhu from the south, noticing that the city gate had been renovated, the conservation of several shrines undertaken and the drainage system repaired.

With a smile, Kesar Lall mentioned the proverb:

*Sakvami dhab bhvasi
Khvapaye bhvasi jhoh jhoh kasi
Yelaya bhvasi taca pyasi
Yemi bhvasi sijalaye lumsi*

*The people of Sankhu are proud of their water canals (that flow
along all the houses of the city),
The vain inhabitants of Bhaktapur have terraces in a row
The vain inhabitants of Patan love their keys
The vain inhabitants of Kathmandu cover copper with paint of
gold!*

A long and steep flagstone stairway, on the pine-forested slope of the Manicur Dhara, took us to the Vajrayogini temple. On the left of the trail, we were able to locate a big stone slab with a steep gradient, known as the *Lhasa Paka* ‘The Rock of Lhasa’. One has to rush to the top without falling back and over, and if one succeeds, it is a sign that the journey to Lhasa will proceed without difficulty! Unfortunately, the stone is now half buried in rubble after the trail was enlarged and only old folk remember its symbolic value.

The temple of Vajrayogini is an object of strong devotion for Hindus and

Buddhists alike. A group of Tibetan pilgrims was visiting the shrine, since it is one of the important sites to be worshiped by Buddhists when visiting the valley, and were offering incense and flowers to Vajrayogini, whom they call Tara in Tibetan, the Goddess of Wisdom, and who is known to give powerful blessings.

Since we were discussing the trail to Lhasa, a custodian showed us a series of carvings opposite the Vajrayogini temple on the pillars and brackets of the *pati* which represent different episodes in the life and history of the Newar merchant Sinhasarthabahu who went to Tibet with five hundred traders from Kathmandu. They settled in Lhasa and took Tibetan wives, who were in fact witches. They were saved by Avalokitesvara who, incarnated as a horse, carried them back safely to Nepal.

Many wonderful sites are located nearby including the 'Nine Caves'. The most important one, called *Pap dower*, is a chamber cut into a huge granite rock. Its name derives from the narrow opening of the chamber through which the devotees may try to squeeze themselves and so prove their virtue if successful. This cave was the residence of many Tibetan yogins in years past.

'This is the place where Padmasambhava came on a pilgrimage and meditated. In the caves he concealed many treasure texts, for the benefit of the believers...', comments a passing pilgrim.

Down from the shrine, on the right side of the long flight of steps, is a nunnery built in 1996 by a Tibetan Lama with the support of generous donors from Taiwan. The prayer hall is ornate with statues of the Buddhas of the Three Times and Padmasambhava/Guru Rinpoche. We were surprised to see one of the walls covered with printed application forms, each one combining a photograph of a Chinese student with a request to the Buddha for success in forthcoming school examinations, and each mentioning a donation to the monastery.

Further west along the contour line lies an ancient terraced field, now a

pasture, which is considered to be a sacred space on account of a small cave where the Saint Milarepa is said to have spent three years in meditation.

Turning east, after commenting on the landscape of forest and terraced fields, Kesar Lall mentioned that his father had planned to develop a tea plantation around 1945. Inspired by a visit to Darjeeling, he was interested to experiment with the production of tea in this area since a wild species (*Camelia kissi*) grew on the slopes of the upper part of the Sankhu valley. He purchased some land and a Lhasa sahu, Moti Kansakar Sahu, became interested, but the project did not last long.

We reached Lapchi Phedi, at the bottom of the ridge, with a row of houses facing each other on both sides of the trail, built on a high plinth with steps giving access to a platform. There was enough space for a table, chairs and a fireplace where a kettle was kept warm for preparing tea. We questioned an old shopkeeper concerning the trail to Tibet. He recalled caravans of porters resting before the climb.

After a steep climb through the forest of Narayan Ban, we reached the crest line at Jarshing Banjyang, a large pasture and horticultural farm. Close by a stupa built in dressed sandstone dominates a unique view over the Himalayan range and to the south-west lay the valley of Kathmandu.

It is near this stupa that travelling merchants and porters had a meal, and Kesar Lall recalled how Chittadhar describes the moment when, on this very spot, those who were leaving for Lhasa caught a glimpse of the homeland for the last time :

“...They received curd for sagam, standing up, not seated as usual. The head porter saved the leftovers of the lunch taken there, for the next day. From then on, there would be no caste discrimination among the Newars...”

Down again to Lapchi Phedi and along the small river which is now called Sali Nadi, the main source for irrigating the valley.

Just outside the North Gate of the city stands the temple of Bhimsen. The merchants who came back from Tibet would make their major offerings to the patron of their trade here.

We moved to the East Gate and walked along a dirt road that winds between terraces towards the Sali Nadi. The river bank is a major site for Hindu worship and pilgrimage, in particular during *Sostani* in the month of *Magh* (around January). The sacred spot along the Sali Nadi is located below a small gorge, partly hidden by tall trees, where *ghats* have been built.

On the terrace overlooking the site, in the courtyard of the *dharmasala*, one should worship a statue of the deity Bhimsen/Bhindeo, who is directly linked with Tibet.

Kesar Lall recalled a story told by an old merchant:

“A long time ago, a merchant sent some loads of wool from Tibet. After a while a porter noticed that his load was becoming heavier and heavier, and checking the load he found in it a stone which he promptly threw away. The same thing happened to another porter and so on. Finally they thought that the stones must be a deity and after due worship to Bhimsen, the caravan continued and safely reached Sankhu.”

Is this statue the very stone which was found in the load carried down from far-away Tibet? So says tradition.

We went further down the right bank of the Sali Nadi, to the confluence with the Budu Kosi, where in a bamboo grove one reaches the shrine of the deity Vajravarahi represented by a simple stone. We were told that this small place was haunted by *bokshi* (witches):

“Some time before the harvest in the rice fields, pigs which have been reared by the butchers destroy the crops and poison the earth with their droppings. To protect the crops one has to offer rice and sesame to goddess Varahi.”

Late in the afternoon, when we had completed our circumambulation, many questions remained unanswered. I was wondering how, through going to Sankhu, one could imagine the ways of life of those who walked along the same trail with their fears, hopes, joys and sorrows so many centuries ago.

In Kathmandu we parted ways, eager to continue the walk to Lhasa, and to listen to some tales from the past and lessons for the future.

Corneille Jest
France

My Neighbour and Friend Kesar Lal Shrestha

Kesar Lal is one of the few authors in Nepal whose publications have several times been announced as the best seller of the year. His specialty lies in bringing out works about Nepal, the Nepali people and Nepalese literature as well as folk tales from different parts of the country. He is better known to readers outside the country rather than inside, possibly because he normally writes in the international language of English on themes and topics that create a good deal of interest among foreign readers.

I am proud to have been associated with a person like Kesar Lal since my early childhood, when we grew up together in the same neighbourhood. My house was just a few houses away from his, and living in the same locality we used to share the same drinking water-tap because the facility of piped water supply was not available to individual houses at the time. More importantly, as adolescents we also shared the same environment of scholarly activities presided over by literary giants such as Siddhidas Amatya, the teacher and translator Jagat Sunder Malla, poets Yogbir Singh Kansakar and Siddhi Ratna, and the story writer and essayist Prem Bahadur Kansakar all of whom lived in four different corners of our locality. Moreover, Kesar Lal's father, Jagat Lal, was a well-known teacher and writer of children's books who associated closely with Jagat Sunder Malla. At the time, the books that I read by these famous writers made a deep impression on me. We thus grew up with similar interests, learning and teaching the boys and girls of our locality. Gradually, Kesar Lal and I started writing and ventured to publish a few articles – he in English and I in the vernacular.

As the days passed, he joined the services of an international organisation and I entered the civil service of His Majesty's Government. One day, Kesar Lal dropped by my office in connection with some official business. His professional behaviour and competence at the time impressed me so much that later I decided to seek his advice and assistance while I was working on the 'Know Thy Neighbours' project sponsored by the

Toyota Foundation of Japan. I remember that he made many helpful suggestions on project management and contributed much to setting the project on a secure footing. As someone senior to me, he has always treated me kindly and in later years continued to help me in various capacities whenever I needed him despite his busy schedule. Recently, I am particularly indebted to him for his valuable help in my Royal Nepal Academy project of preparing a children's book on Nepalese folktales, and finalising the compilation of Nepalese literature in English.

I have always known Kesar Lall to be a man of strong convictions, never yielding to any external pressures nor willing to compromise to any terms or conditions that are contrary to his interests or inclinations. He is also a very modest person, always reluctant to make a show of his achievements or to project his personality along with his contributions in meetings or media publicity. He has, however, authored many works and contributed much to highlight the rich diversity of Nepalese people and their cultures to the outside world, and yet prefers not to seek fame and fortune in his own country. I was thus motivated six or seven years ago to recognize and honour the lifelong achievements of Kesar Lall and another dedicated writer Bhim Darshan Rokka who had similarly remained in oblivion despite his unique contribution to the Nepalese literary field. I then organized a small gathering at my own house with some members of the Royal Nepal Academy as well as several luminaries including writers and poets. Some poems were recited and speeches made in their honour. They were offered bouquets of flowers and pieces of coconut as a sign of respect. That occasion was reported in the news and helped to publicize their stature as writers and accord them the recognition they deserve. I regarded the meeting as a very worthwhile event and to be the most memorable occasion of my life. I was satisfied to have played a small part in honoring their literary contributions.

Now that Kesar Lall has crossed into his mid-seventies, I feel it is more pertinent than ever to evaluate what he has accomplished thus far in life and to record the value of his work. He still continues to lead an active life, and is cheerful and energetic in his work and continues to postpone

his retirement as if he has fallen in love with his creative 'muse', ever searching for something never seen before. I also remember that when he celebrated his birthday, some four or five years ago on April 27, 1998 at the age of seventy-two, he found himself brooding on old age and preoccupied himself with experiments in verse compositions. A fragment of his poem reads as follows :

*It is time to spare some moments for friends,
To lead a finger of a tiny toddler down the garden path,
Listen to the music in the trees by the window
Or wait for a flower in the pot to bloom,
And perhaps add a few more words
To a poem begun long ago.*

I am extremely happy to learn that an homage is being published in his honour on the happy occasion of his 77 years, 7 months, 7 days, 7 minutes and 7 seconds of life. I would like to thank those who are so kindly involved in this highly commendable expression of respect and esteem to a worthy scholar. On this occasion, I wish Kesar Lall a long, happy and peaceful life. May God inspire him 'to add a few more years to the poem begun long ago'.

Madhav Lal Karmacharya
Nepal

Snow Leopard

It's all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story.

- Thomas Berry

By moon the leopard leaves its petaled track
Beside the bharal-leaping Tsakang trail.
He prowls the glistening snowfields, circling back,
Elusive as the search for holy grail.
Beyond the stupas and the mani stones,
Where Crystal Mountain thrusts its bare, dark peak,
And lonely monk repeats his earth-deep *ooms*,
The still-breathed leopard seeks its last retreat.
We've come this far, this high in search of hope
Above the wind-cloud, fluttering flags of prayer,
Beyond the serac-ed, icy scree of slope.
In mindfulness as stones are laid to stair,
Can we restore our ancient legacy –
Revert from homo-centric myths, begin to *see*?

Ruth Obee
USA

An Ode to Kesar Lall

Forty years ago, when we were all much younger, you surprised and honored me, Kesar Lall, by writing 'An Ode to Mac Odell' which you published in the fledgling *AWON Newsletter* in Kathmandu. I was a wide-eyed Peace Corps Volunteer in Dhankuta while you, having taught me my first words of Nepali, were back at your post at the American Embassy, still keeping a watchful eye on this first brood of innocents that was now loose in your country. That was the first chapter of what has become a life-long mutual admiration society in which we, and dozens of other early Peace Corps Volunteers, are charter members. Now it is my turn to write in reply my own long-overdue *Ode to Kesar Lall*.

I realized your extraordinary sensitivity, appreciation and ability to communicate the richness of Nepali culture when reading your first book of folk tales of Nepal, probably my favorite book in the Peace Corps' tin trunk of books that was issued to each of us upon arrival in Nepal. From that followed a steady stream of marvelous tales and poems, including many translations from obscure Newari and Nepali sources, right on to your recent *Letter from a Lhasa Merchant to his Wife*, so warmly reviewed in the *Nepali Times* last September by another of your long-time admirers, Mark Turin.

I began to see another whole side of this amazing little man when you turned up one day in Dhankuta in 1962 while we were still settling into a life quite unlike anything we had either experienced or imagined. Your intense curiosity and deep appreciation for life, already evident in your writings, shone through your very way of being as we talked about our work, life in Nepal, and our mutual hopes and dreams for your beautiful, environmentally and culturally rich, but economically poor, country. Yes, you are Kesar Lall, cross-cultural and language teacher, but you are also Kesar Lall, listener, learner, and student of life and all those around you. You wanted to learn as much from us as we from you.

Over the years, as one book after another came from your prolific mind

and pen, I noticed something missing: While you had so richly documented and translated the thoughts, words and ideas of others, where was the *Kesar Lall Story*? This modest man, who so valued and celebrated others, seemed to have overlooked his own life story and the insights and experiences he had to share with others. “Oh, no,” he responded to my first request that he write about himself for a change. “I have nothing to say, and who would ever be interested in my very ordinary life?” “Not true,” I replied. “Your’s may be the best story of all! It’s not a fairy tale, not a folk tale. It’s the story of a keenly observant man who has witnessed and been an active part in the transition of his country over perhaps the most critical time since Prithivi Narayan Shah. This is history in the making, and we need your telling of it; we need your perspectives on it.”

At first my efforts were in vain. And although we enjoyed many cups of tea and meals together during the eight years I spent recently in Nepal, you still kept your focus on communicating, interpreting and translating the ideas of others. Then, a few years ago, your poetry began to emerge, long hidden under the basket you had woven for yourself. Today I’m looking with joy at the collection you shared with me last year, on the eve of my return to the US: *Pop Music and Other Poems* - a lovely collection written almost daily over the preceding several months. Your modesty and self effacement still shine through, but with charm and grace that so typifies your life:

The Fool

*I didn't know I was a fool
Until late in life I began
Stringing words in a haphazard way
And thought my thoughts were poems.*

*I didn't know I was a fool
Until I exposed myself
To everyone I knew by reading to them
What I fondly called my Poems*

March 10, 2002

A fool? Only a fool like the court jester, full of rich insights and lessons cloaked in folly. The dam was broken, however, and more and more poems have appeared these last few years. And, every bit as rich, now come a steady stream of letters on all manner of subjects. This month came *Letter, continuation 19th installment*, a lovely collection of inscriptions in books sent to you by your friends and admirers from around the world... A nice testimony to how much you mean to so many!

So, in closing this modest *Ode to Kesar Lall*, I hope that this collection of recollections by your amazing circle of friends and admirers around the world will, in itself, provide just one more small impetus toward the publishing of the story we're all waiting for: *The Kesar Lall Story*. That's the book I'm looking for, a book that is built upon your string of marvelous letters, woven through with your delightful poems, which captures for us your life and family, your observations, your own story of Nepal's transition and the change that you have so keenly witnessed over the past three-quarters of a century.

Yes, Kesar Lall, you've enriched my life and the lives of so many others, as their testimony shines through in your latest letter. Yes, you've done much to celebrate and share the culture of your precious country, and yes, as you say in your poem of March 16, 2002, you have, indeed...

No Time to Waste

*Like a miser with his hoard
I must be with my time
Not wasteful any more.*

*Let me treasure each day as it dawns
And enjoy every moment as it flies
Like a drunkard and his drink.*

*Let me hail each season as it comes
With rain or shine, snow or wind,
And every month that finds me home.*

As I share my love for you, my admiration for all you've done, my appreciation for your rich contributions to my own life and the lives of so many, I only ask that you keep writing ... keep those letters and poems coming. The full *Kesar Lall Story* is still to be told. We all eagerly await the manuscript and will be checking our email boxes daily.

Mac Odell
USA

Barajuku upalachha ma hardik mangalmaya suvakamana byakta gardachhu

On this jubilant occasion, I wish I could present you, Kesar Lall, with a compact disc of Nepalese folktales translated into Japanese. Please give me a little more time to get it ready, since Mr Tanakamaru and I want it to be a really good one.

Having read through the folktale series, I have discovered that some Nepalese folktales are surprisingly similar to Japanese popular folktales, such as “Titibincha”, “The Children’s Guardian Angel” and “A man with two goitres.” A *lakhe* and an ogress are common characters. The similarity of such tales will give Japanese readers a feeling of closeness to the people of Nepal, which would otherwise be a remote country to most Japanese people, both emotionally and culturally, when compared with America or Europe. On the other hand, the stories involving a *naga*, a lama or various Hindu gods as well as your tradition of sacrifice are rather new to us. The touch of mystery in these stories will be of great interest to our readers.

I feel most obliged to you, Kesar Lall, for being so kind and polite despite your busy schedule, and thank you for answering all of my questions. Your explanations and tips are most helpful and easy to understand. The more I ask, the more I learn.

I am also grateful for the warm-heartedness you have shown to our “blessed” (some say “challenged” or “handicapped”) young daughter. You cared about her and offered her sweet words whenever you wrote to me. I sincerely appreciate it.

I hope you and your family are all well and I also hope to meet you someday.

Toshiko Omura
Japan

A Bodhisattva in an Ordinary Form

January 27, 1990 was one of the most inspiring days of my life. On that day, my mind turned to the path of the Bodhisattva, especially towards the ideal of Milarepa. It was Kesar Lall who became the bridge between Theravada Vipassana meditation and the Bodhisattva's way of life. Up until that day, I had been practising the Vipassana style of meditation as advanced by S.N. Goenka. I had already attended two ten-day retreats at the Dharmashringa center in Shivapuri, Kathmandu, and I was a frequent and regular attendee of Saturday meditation sessions. But for about two years, the center continued to repeat the same meditation instruction each time. I was unable to form a clear picture in my mind of the progressive stages of spiritual experience. I started getting a monotonous feeling during the meditation sessions as well as during everyday meditation. On 27 January, 1990 I happened across a different path of spirituality on account of an incident in the same Shivapuri area. The inspiration was a Bodhisattva in the form of an old gentleman, and his name was Kesar Lall.

It was during the school holidays that I was at the Vipassana hall of the Dharmashringa meditation center, but I was getting rather bored with the monotonous playing of the tape recorder on which Goenka-ji had recorded his meditation instructions. I decided to delve further into my spiritual life and so I climbed up into the forested area of Shivapuri. I reached a hermitage with many meditation huts for Buddhist nuns known as Nagi Gompa, where my future Guru used to live. I felt inspired by that monastery and I could not repress my curiosity. I tried to meet the Lama immediately, but I became disillusioned with the behaviour of the Lama's non-Nepali speaking attendant who did not grant me permission to meet the Lama. Although upset, I hoped that one day I would still have a chance to meet the Lama. It was quite late and I had to climb down the hill to catch the bus at Budhanilkantha. When climbing down, hurrying with my upset mind, I encountered a couple along the road between Nagi Gompa and the Vipassana Center. That meeting was the bridge between two styles of meditation practice: the transition from Theravada medita-

tion to the Bodhisattva way of life. The husband of the couple inquired about me, so I stopped and introduced myself as a Buddhist meditator. Then, as we walked together, he expressed his ideas about Buddhism and told me of the different events in his life which were related to Buddhists. At one point, he uttered the name of the Tibetan Saint Milarepa and explained that he found Milarepa to be the most inspiring holy man he knew of. I asked him whether he was Buddhist. He replied that while he was not a Buddhist, he liked Buddhism very much. He told me of his contact with many Buddhist monks and lay followers, but that he was not satisfied with their conduct. He concluded that Milarepa was a Buddhist practitioner who practised sincerely, achieved his goal and acted according to the principles of the Buddha.

When we finally arrived at the Budhanilkantha bus stop, he offered me a book on Milarepa, so I followed him to his house at Bansbari and he presented me with the *Sixty Songs of Milarepa* which was published by a Buddhist publication society in Kandy (Ceylon) in 1966. This one of the most outstanding events in my life through which I had a connection with the most popular figure in the Himalayas. Kesar Lall is thus the key figure in the transformation of my ideas and ways of meditation. He opened the door to the vast literature in the Tibetan language and especially about the life and realisation of Mila, the Cotton Clad (1052-1135 AD). Though Kesar Lall is not a cave dwelling mendicant, he too is inspired by Mila's exemplary songs and lifestyle. The book he gave me is remarkable because it is selected and introduced by Theravadin Bhikkhu Khantipalo although it is about a Mahayanist ascetic who practised the Vajrayana style of meditation. Normally Tantric Buddhists and Theravadin monks do not appreciate each other, but this is a masterpiece about a Tibetan mystic practitioner and was translated by the Chinese Mahayanist C. C. Chang which is appreciated by the prominent and influential Bhikkhu Khantipalo from Bovoranives Vihar, Bangkok (Thailand).

Since 1989, I visit Kesar Lall regularly at his peaceful residence in Bansbari, and every time I am inspired by his friendly behaviour. He has given me more than 50 books on Buddhism and he always gives counsel from his

heart. He was actually in constant contact with the Venerable Amritananda and other Theravadin monks in Kathmandu Valley, and has helped them a lot. Since he has no direct contact with Tibetan Lamas, I wonder why he is not influenced by Theravadin monks but rather inspired by Milarepa with whom he has no direct contact.

I feel that Kesar Lall is a Bodhisattva in disguise. His motivation and conduct is not different from any Bodhisattva: he helps others all the time without expecting any reward from them, he is always softly spoken, generous and kind-hearted and I have never seen him angry and never heard him utter backbiting or harsh words towards others. In my experience, the chief characteristic of scholars is to criticise others. When I meet learned persons from Nepal and abroad, I hear criticism of their fellow scholars in the same field. But Kesar Lall is an exception: in fifteen years, I have never heard him pass negative remarks concerning other people. If I become depressed or lose my spirit, I always meet Kesar Lall and take inspiration from his words and conduct. He is a secular Bodhisattva who is helping others selflessly and tirelessly into his late seventies. I pray that my motivation and conduct will be like his since it is in line with Mahayana Buddhist Scripture.

Lotsawa Punya Prasad Parajuli
Nepal

A Happy Encounter

Kesar Lall Shrestha is well-known among men of letters as a successful story teller, both within and outside of Nepal. His literary and cultural expositions communicate to his readers more than anything one can claim to know about him.

He dedicated seven years, the prime years of his life, to USOM – a USAID Mission to Nepal, based in Kathmandu. During that time, I am sure that the Mission benefited greatly from his wide-ranging knowledge, his devotion to the work and his sincerity.

In my teens, I used to see him passing along the same route every day to his destination, Rabi Bhawan, even though this aroused no curiosity in me about who and what he was. I would often see him walking in a contemplative mood. Later, when I migrated from my birthplace of Wotu to Balaju, with the passage of time his wholesome personality faded from my memory.

After a long interval, I happened to see him again one day, but this time seated amidst a galaxy of literati at a certain function, and I greeted him with a nod of my head. As soon as the function was over, he introduced himself to me and gently let me know that he was in fact the co-translator of *An Anthology of Short Stories from Nepal*, in which one of my stories “Lingering Pain”, translated by Professor Tej Ratna Kansakar, was also published.

This first encounter with Kesar Lall Shrestha left me with a lasting impression. As a result, I couldn't but resist the temptation to ask him to translate other stories I had written: not one, but as many as he would be willing to do. I dared to ask him if he would be willing to do me this favour, and he assured me that he would happily comply with my request after the completion of other assignments in which he was engaged at the time. *The Women and Other Stories* (1998), immediately followed by *Shat-*

tered Dreams and Other Stories (1999), are two of the recent outcomes of this fortunate meeting.

Despite his busy schedules of research, literary activities and several other projects, Kesar Lall's translation of the third volume of my short stories is already in progress and will be published shortly.

A word on how Kesar Lall works on a translation: before commencing, he first of all tries to conceive of the situation, the theme, the context and the timing. If he has any doubts at all about the sequence of events, the relevance of specific cultural information or terminology or possible ambiguities in the text, he seeks explanations and clarifications from the author. He never fails to send the author a draft copy of his translation for suggestions before the manuscript is finalized for press. He thus keeps himself in constant touch with the author until the whole project takes its final shape and is ready for publication.

I am deeply moved by his simplicity, modesty and the straightforward nature of his character. His skill as a translator is deepened by his full command of English and also of the source languages, notably Nepali and Newari. Above all, his style of writing and translation renders a real life and authentic atmosphere to stories, without distorting in any way the original writings. His mastery in handling the subtleties of theme and context in the tales he translates is highly commendable.

So on the auspicious occasion of the celebration of Kesar Lall Shrestha's 77th Birthday, I extend my hearty congratulations and wish him a long and fruitful life.

Laxman Rajbanshi
Nepal

Kesar Lall Shrestha

Kesar Lall is our friend, scholar and colleague, with whom we have been associated since 1959 - when the first U.S. diplomatic mission was established in Kathmandu - we as U.S. Diplomats and Kesar as a Nepali employee. Shortly after we established our residence with our three young boys, we met two foreign scholars: Corneille Jest from France and David Snellgrove from Great Britain. David and Corneille were on a year's research programme in Nepal, a programme that would take them for a winter's stay to Dolpo. We volunteered to be their Kathmandu base during their time in Dolpo. They and their local assistants became our *gurus* concerning the religious and cultural history of Nepal. We should also like to name the late Father Moran, S.J. (known as "Mickey Mouse" on the ham radio net) as one of our teachers.

It was at this time that, at a publisher's request, Lora wrote two children's books on *Getting to Know Nepal* through which we met the writer Richard Patrick Critchfield who was teaching journalism in Nagpur, India, when he was not walking in the Himalayas. Kesar Lall soon became the key local employee to whom all looked for advice and assistance. As there were few English publications in Nepal, we urged him to write a book, which he subsequently did, entitled *Lore and Legend of Nepal*. Kesar Lall arranged for a local artist to illustrate the book and for Richard Patrick to have it published in Nagpur, and we furnished the Nepali paper on which to print the illustrations.

All this as a brief introduction to those who educated us on the impressive history and the great artistic foundation of the culture of the Newari people, and as an explanation as to why we became such strong supporters and friends of Kesar Lall. We consider it a great privilege to be included in this publication to honour Kesar Lall Shrestha on the celebration of his first Bura Jankhu Bhimratharohan.

Lora and Ralph Redford
USA

The Legend of Manisaila Mahavadana

Before I came to know the honourable Kesar Lall personally, I knew his numerous publications on Nepalese customs, manners, folklore as well as his translations of Newari literature into English. I remember the first of his books that I read: *Nepalese Customs and Manners* (1976). This book was written for foreign readers interested in Nepalese customs and manners, and I was impressed by his way of describing things using simple terms which are still taught in Nepalese families. I then read his next book, *Nepalese Book of Proverbs* (1985). In this book he collected both Newar and Nepali proverbs with their English equivalents. I found this book very interesting because I knew many of the proverbs in this book by heart and am deeply rooted in my culture. This book also inspired me to collect such proverbs myself. However, my attempts did not last for long because of my other obligations, so I was never able to produce any substantial work on the subject.

Needless to say, Kesar Lall's most valuable contribution to English readers is the mass of Nepalese folklore and stories he has meticulously collected and published over the last four decades. In this case, too, I was enthralled to notice his passion for retelling old folk stories, many of which my grandmother told me during my childhood or which I read during my school days in Newari, our own shared language. Similarly, I was familiar with his English translations of modern Newari literature, as I was actively involved in Newari literary circles. I remained an admirer of his because of the valuable work he was doing.

In later days, I conducted research on Newar religion and rituals of the Kathmandu Valley, first with my late colleague Bert van den Hoek (1951-2001), and later for my doctoral thesis entitled *The Ritual Composition of Sankhu* which I defended at Leiden University in September 2002. As a researcher on Newar culture and rituals, I increasingly began to realize the great value of Kesar Lall's work.

My wish to meet and talk to Kesar Lall did not come true for many years.

It was only in January 2000 that I had my first opportunity to meet him in person. This opportunity came when he visited me in Sankhu together with Professor Tej Ratna Kansakar. Meeting Kesar Lall and talking to him was fascinating: he was after all, a renowned person who had become a kind of legend for me through his work. On that day, I was fortunate enough to be able to show them around Sankhu, visit the Vajrayogini temple, and talk about so many different subjects. I was delighted to find him to be a person with many interests and with a sincere dedication to his mission even in his old age. He had the ability to extract stories from every single image and piece of stone. On our way to and from the Vajrayogini temple, while walking around Sankhu and sitting in the living room of my home, he showed a great awareness by asking questions with intense interest. He told me that he had once spent several months in Sankhu meeting old and young people to 'pull stories out of their mouths'.

During this visit, he gave me a manuscript of some of the stories he had collected during his stay in Sankhu, together with his newly published book *Folk Tales from the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal* (2000). I was extremely pleased with his work on Sankhu because I am not only a researcher working in the area, but was also born in Sankhu. As a citizen of Sankhu, I have great esteem for his work on the area. I am interested in Newar folklore and have translated *Folk Tales of Sri Lanka* into Newari (published as *Srilankaya Nyamkam Bakham* in 1994). I was not able, however, to collect such stories in my hometown and therefore greatly admired his work. During our talk he was eager to know if my pending doctoral thesis contained folklore and myths about the creation of Sankhu and of the goddess Vajrayogini. When I answered that I had investigated the legend of Manisaila Mahavadana, which tells the story of how the goddess Vajrayogini came into being, how Sankhu was created following her instructions, and how the legendary king Manicuda gave away his crest jewel from his head, he was most delighted. Now, more than three years later, I am therefore very happy to be able to contribute the following piece on the legend of Manisaila Mahavadana to this festive volume, dedicated to Kesar Lall on the auspicious occasion of his Jamko.

*The Legend of Manisaila Mahavadana*¹

Manisaila Mahavadana (hereafter MM) is a mythical story about the coming into being of the goddess Vajrayogini and the creation of the town of Sankhu. The second main theme of this legend is a rebirth story of the Buddha reborn as Manicuda, the king with a jewel in his head, which he gives away as a gift (*dana*). The Manisaila Mahavadana legend deals elaborately with the creation of the kingdom of Sankhu. This story is in the Newar language mixed with many praise songs in Sanskrit. The story has many versions of which the late Barnavajra Vajracarya printed one version in two volumes. In 1962, the first volume (chapters one to six, pp. 6+72) was published and the second volume (chapters seven to thirteen, pp. 4+162) was published in 1963. In 1999, in the second edition of this book, both volumes are combined in one book (Vajracarya 1999). Later, two brothers Kabirkumar and Birkumar Vajracarya published its third edition for free distribution, but this was undated.

In total, this book contains thirteen chapters. The late Barnavajra Vajracarya does not mention any definite source of the manuscript. The Newar language he used in this print version is not an old form of Newar but rather a modern one. Whether his original manuscript contained both stories of the goddess Vajrayogini, the creation story of Sankhu together with the story of Manicudavadana, is still unknown. My efforts to obtain the original manuscript of the MM have not been successful.

During my research, I was able to obtain a few other manuscripts which deal with the story of the coming into being of the goddess Vajrayogini and the creation story of Sankhu but not the story of Manicuda. One of these is incomplete and undated and written in the Devanagari script. It contains 63 pages but the final pages are missing. The size of each page is approximately 15 x 20.5 cm and the type area measures approximately 13.5 x 18 cm. Each page contains nineteen or twenty lines. Besides the

¹ My research was carried out as a PhD candidate at the Research School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies (CNWS), Leiden University, The Netherlands. A major portion of this article can also be found in my PhD thesis (Shrestha 2002: 42-49).

story of goddess Vajrayogini and the creation story of Sankhu, several historical notes are recorded systematically covering a period between 1516-1699 (636 to 819 NS). A note supplies a date about the family separation of a priest called Jitarideva, which is dated at 1725 AD (NS 845). Studying these historical notes, one can conclude that this is a copy of an older version of the manuscript. The Newar language used in this text does not seem to date from before the 19th century.

The next copy of the legend of the goddess Vajrayogini and the creation story of Sankhu I obtained was from a Vajracarya priest in Sankhu. It is also written in the Devanagari script but on thick yellow-coated Nepali paper. It is a complete manuscript with 27 folios and is written on both sides. The size of each page is approximately 33 x 25.5 cm and the type area measures approximately 17.5 x 24 cm. Each side contains 22 to 24 lines. The final page of this manuscript mentions that a scribe called Astamanada borrowed the original text from Harsamananda and finished copying it on the full moon day in the month of Magha in the year 1944 (1064 NS). It also contains historical notes related mainly to the goddess Vajrayogini covering a period between 1516-1699 (636 to 819 NS). The copier Astamananda's own note about the copying of the text appears first on folio 22a and is followed by a note of an offering made to Vajrayogini dated 1879 (999 NS). He then adds the history and hearsay story about the erection of the Bhimsen temple at Salinadi by Ranadeva Acala and Harisamkha Bharo of Sankhu in 1679 (799 NS) and its restoration in 1862 (982 NS). The text also contains ritual instructions to carry out the repainting of the goddess Vajrayogini including the service to be performed by various castes of the town during its repainting (23b –26b). The final page of the text gives instructions to priests on how to perform the *purasacarana* ritual at the temple.

Unlike the printed version of the Manisaila Mahavadana, both of the manuscripts I obtained in Sankhu also tell the story of the arrival of the great Manjusri from China who cleaved the mountain around the lake of the Kathmandu Valley with his sword in order to let the water drain away. The story tells that after the completion of this task he went on his way

back to China, passing through the sanctuary of Vajrayogini situated on the mountain of Manicuda.

There are many versions of the Manicudavadana which contain the story of Manicuda but which do not mention Vajrayogini or Sankhu. Siegfried Lienhard has translated one Newar version of the *avadana* into English which contains the story of Manicuda. His translation is based on one undated Newar manuscript in the Devanagari script, which he attributes to the middle of the nineteenth century (Lienhard 1963). He presents the transliteration of the main text and its English translation. This text does not relate Manicuda's story of Vajrayogini as in the Manisaila Mahavadana. Handurukande made a comparative study of seven versions of the Manicudavadana and of a comparable section from the Svayambhupurana, all written in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, as well as of a Tibetan drama with the same theme. Among the seven manuscripts he studied, only one was dated, and then to 1793 AD. His work contains 37 pages of introduction with the transliteration of prose sections from seven different Sanskrit manuscripts in Part I while their English translation is in Part II and the transliteration of a metrical version of the fourth chapter from the Svayambhu Mahapurana is contained in Part III. The Tibetan drama is included as Appendix I to this book with a 13-page introduction together with the transliteration of the original text and an English translation (Handurukande 1967). The fourth chapter of the Svayambhu Purana presented by Handurukande relates the story of Manicuda with Ugratara or Vajrayogini. In this chapter the Svayambhu Purana significantly predicts that through the power of Ugratara, the area of Sankhu will be a second Nepal (Handurukande 1967: 180). The Svayambhu Purana of which I have a copy contains the story of Manicuda giving away his crest jewel but this story is not related to Vajrayogini.

The story of Manicuda incorporated in the Manisaila Mahavadana is almost the same as the one translated by Lienhard. However, the story described by Lienhard begins with the pregnancy of the queen Kantimati and does not link her pregnancy to the goddess Vajrayogini. On the other hand, the Manisaila Mahavadana tells that the queen Kantimati became

pregnant only after pleasing the goddess Vajrayogini by taking a vow by herself with the king Bramhadatta.

The Manisaila Mahavadana stresses the power of Buddhist gods and goddesses among the religious Nepalese people. For example it portrays Visnu, the almighty Hindu god, as a subordinate to the Buddha Sakyamuni, Vajrayogini and Mahamaya Vijaybahini Devi. The intricate story of mixed Hindu and Buddhist gods and goddesses are one of the most interesting parts of this book. Such a story has its root in Newar society, since religious Newars combine both Hindu and Buddhist gods and goddesses in their pantheon even today.

Besides the unpublished manuscripts, the Manisaila Mahavadana (MM) is the only published text which supplies mythical accounts of the coming into being of the town of Sankhu and the town's most important goddess, Vajrayogini. Other unpublished manuscripts carry only the story of the goddess Vajrayogini and the town of Sankhu, but do not relate the story of Manicuda. In the following passages, I attempt to summarize important sections of the story of the goddess Vajrayogini and the creation story of Sankhu as well as the story of Manicuda from the printed version of the Manisaila Mahavadana (MM).

Summary of the legend

The legend opens with the line “Om homage to Ugratara Vajrayogini” (Om namah sri Ugratara Vajrayoginyai namonamah), and then begins the story.

Once upon a time there was a king by the name of Asoka in the heaven-like place Pataliputra Patana.² He was a great devotee of the *triratna* (three jewels),³ and he was very generous in giving gifts (*dana*). One day he

² An ancient Indian city, capital of the realm of emperor Asoka, (today's Patna in the Indian state of Bihar).

³ In Buddhism: *Buddha*, *Dharma* (religion) and *Samgha* (association) are considered the three jewels.

went to Kukularama monastery (*vihara*) with his teachers, priests, ministers and attendants to hear the story of Ugratara Vajrayogini from the Buddhist monk (*bhiksu*) Upagupta. Hearing Ashok's request, *bhiksu* Upagupta began to tell the story as he had heard it from the Great Maitribodhisatva Sakyamuni (the Buddha), who told the story in a large gathering at Padmamala monastery, situated above Sankhu at the Manicuda mountain close to the Himalayas (Vajracarya 1962: 3).

In the time of the *Satya yuga*, the golden age or mythical time when human beings, gods and goddesses were able to communicate with each other, in a place called Nepal, there was a mountain called Manicuda which was full of mines of jewels, covered by beautiful flowers, fruit trees and wild animals. In the middle of the mountain there was a "jewel stone" called Manisaila. One day, from the middle of that stone, the goddess Ugratara Vajrayogini emanated in the form of a very bright light. This was the time when the lifetime of human beings amounted to 80,000 years (Vajracarya 1962: 8).

Many years later, when the lifetime of human beings amounted to 70,000 years, there was a large lake in the Nepal Valley where divine serpents (*naga*) used to live. To the north of that lake, on the Manicuda mountain, the bright light of Vajrayogini had become very famous by the name Ugratara (Fearsome Goddess).⁴ Those who will listen to this story of coming into being of the goddess Ugratara Vajrayogini and tell this story to others will be able to win over all the sins of the Kali age and the resulting merit will allow them to unite with the body of the goddess.

The second chapter of the legend begins with the story of the installation of the image of the goddess Vajrayogini. Later, when human lifetime was 60,000 years, Vajrayogini took shape from that light. She had three faces: the central face was red, the right face was blue and the left face was white, with each face having three eyes. Her right hand held a sword and in her

⁴ It is notable that Ugratara and Vajrayogini are both popular names of the goddess Vajrayogini even today. See also Handurukande (1967: xl).

left hand she held a blue lotus (*uphosvam*). She had a smiling face and she looked as beautiful as a twelve year old young girl with all auspicious signs. She showed compassion to every creature of the world: gods, human beings and demons alike, and was willing to liberate them all from their distress. As soon as she took her form, the world trembled. Gods and goddesses, men and demons and all other creatures worshipped her with happiness.

To the left of the Ugratara Vajrayogini a Buddhist relic emerged in the form of a jewel stone (*manisila*), which would become very famous in the Kali age (*kaliyuga*) by the name of Jogesvara Mani caitya. Aksobhyatathagata (one form of the Buddha) emanated just in front of Vajrayogini in the form of Vasuki Naga, a divine serpent, then about one hundred metres below, the Vajrayogini Mahakal Ksetrapala appeared in the form of a triangular stone. Soon after his appearance, gods, demons, men, *yaksa* and monsters started worshipping him.

At that time, a saint named Yogajnacarya lived in a nearby cave known as Siddhaguha in order to worship Vajrayogini on a daily basis. One day, Vajrayogini appeared in front of him and inquired whether he wanted anything from her. Overwhelmed by her appearance, he replied that he would accept whatever she bestowed upon him. That answer made her very happy and she told him that from that day onwards, he should become her priest with the task of worshipping her every day. She also granted that right to his descendants and told him that she would remain there as long as his descendants remained. Then he praised her with a long praise song, which made her even happier. She gave him a new name Vacasiddhi or “the one whose words are perfect.” From that day onwards he became the priest of Vajrayogini.

The third chapter of the book presents the elaborate description of the genealogy of Bacasiddhi’s family and his marriage with Jnanabati, the daughter of Acarya Vikramasila, who lived in the place called Manjupatana, created by Manjusri. Some years after their marriage they had a son, Jotideva Acarya, to whom he taught all the ways to worship Vajrayogini. Jotideva

took over Bacasiddhi's task of worshipping the goddess. One day Bacasiddhi and his wife both decided to end their life and began to worship and pray to the goddess Vajrayogini for her favour to be merged into her body. They recited many hymns to please the goddess. At last, the goddess Vajrayogini produced a mystic flame from her body which attracted both Bacasiddhi and his wife. They found the flame very pleasant and touched the flame with their hands. As they touched the flame it became brighter and brighter, and it gave them great pleasure. Soon both Bacasiddhi and his wife disappeared into the flame and when the flame extinguished only the goddess Vajrayogini remained. In this way the couple merged into the body of the goddess. Their son Jotideva, who witnessed this mysterious incident, cried with joy. He continued to carry out the daily worship until he died. Later his descendants continued the daily worship of Vajrayogini.⁵ The account of the appearance of Vajrayogini ends here.

The fourth chapter of the book describes ways of worshipping Vajrayogini by offering various materials, and the merits one may obtain by such worship:

Anyone who bathes Vajrayogini with pure water and five sacred liquids (*pancamrita*), being unpolluted in his mind, will have a chance to bathe in the celestial sea, gain all happiness and go to the *sukhavati bhuvana* (the heavenly abode imagined by religious Buddhists) in the end.

One who worships the goddess by offering incense mixed with sandalwood (*srikhandā*) and the oyster-like gland of the musk deer (*kasturi*) will receive a very beautiful body, the gods and goddesses will honour him, and he will become a wealthy and fortunate person.

One who pleases the goddess by smearing her with fragrances will have his purse filled with all seven precious jewels and in his next life he will become a king.

One who offers the goddess a variety of dresses will receive invaluable dresses and will become an enlightened person in his next life.

⁵ The Vajracarya priests of Sankhu, who perform the priestly tasks in the Vajrayogini temple, still claim to be descendants of the saint Vacasiddhi.

One who presents the goddess with all possible varieties of flowers grown in the earth and water will enjoy a long life as king, become proficient in *bodhijnana* and the liberation from life.

One who presents the goddess with varieties of garlands will become prosperous and the gods and goddesses will honour him in his next life.

One who presents the goddess Ugratara Vajrayogini with purified butter lights to destroy darkness will become capable of destroying the darkness of ignorance, kings will honour him and he will be the person who takes the vow of *bodhicarya*.

One who presents the goddess Ugratara Vajrayogini with varieties of sweetmeats and food and one who offers her blessing food (*sagam*) with meat and liquor together with five holy Buddhist letters (*pancaksara*) will become the king of kings and he will have all seven jewels.

One who offers the goddess Ugratara Vajrayogini fruits such as the banana, pomegranate, *prunus puddum*, guava, apple, orange, *calladium armacia*, cucumber, radish, and others and also sings devotional songs will obtain a blissful life as well as going to heaven.

One who offers medicines to the goddess Ugratara Vajrayogini and sings devotional songs will become healthy and strong.

One who plays different drums in front of the goddess Ugratara Vajrayogini will go to heaven.

One who offers the goddess Ugratara Vajrayogini worship with rice, popped rice, and flowers will rid himself of all the sins he has accumulated.

One who offers the goddess Ugratara Vajrayogini items of food together with betel leaves, betel nuts and cloves will rid himself of all sins and go to heaven.

One who offers the goddess Ugratara Vajrayogini umbrellas made of gold, silver, copper, cloth, and others will become a great emperor in his rebirth and go to the *sukhavati bhuvana*.

One who offers the goddess Ugratara Vajrayogini metal, jewels and devotional songs will become the richest of rich, and when he dies, he will go to heaven.

Chapter five of the book narrates the story of the suffering of the gods and

goddesses because of the troubles caused by the demon Mayasur and the killing of Mayasur according to the instructions of the goddess Vajrayogini. This chapter endeavours to uncover the great power of Vajrayogini which compelled god Visnu to worship her. The story goes as follows:

Once upon a time there was a powerful demon called Mayasur, who seriously harassed gods and goddesses including Indra by killing several of them. He also chased them away from heaven and took it over. This forced Indra and other gods and goddesses to seek lord Visnu's assistance in fighting the demon. At their request, Lord Visnu went to fight Mayasur, but it was all in vain. Mayasur killed numerous gods and goddess and trapped Visnu by his charm. Visnu found himself helpless and had to flee to hide himself in the Sumeru Mountain. As he began to meditate, he remembered the powerful goddess Ugratara Vajrayogini. Then he thought to seek her help to defeat the demon Mayasur. He immediately went towards the mountain of Manicuda where goddess Vajrayogini lived in order to request her backing to defeat the demon Mayasur. When he arrived at the gate of the goddess Vajrayogini, he saw her guard Mahakal Bhairav. The nervous Visnu asked him for some ideas on how to kill the demon Mayasur. Mahakal Bhairav described a way of taking a bath in the twelve confluences (*tirtha*) around the Manicuda mountain in order to get a chance to see Vajrayogini. These confluences are: Tara tirtha, Pramod tirtha, Ratnavati tirtha, Dharmavati tirtha, Vajramati tirtha, Taravati tirtha, Gunavati tirtha, Yogavati tirtha, Sitavati tirtha, Samanyavati tirtha, Jvalavati tirtha and Purnavati tirtha. Visnu followed Mahakal Bhairav's instructions very conscientiously and took a bath in all of the twelve confluences.

Visnu's vow pleased Vajrayogini very much and she advised him to learn Dharani mantra⁶ from the Buddha Sakyasimha and he followed Vajrayogini's instructions. As soon as he began to recite the mantra Dharani,

⁶ Dharani is a class of Mahayanic literature composed between the 4th and 8th century AD, which refers to *mantra*, *mandala kriya*, *carya* etc. See Bhattacharyya (1992: 221). In MM, Dharani is presented as one of the hymns dedicated to Ugratara Vajrayogini, see Vajracarya (1962: 25).

the omnipotent goddess Mahamaya Vijaybahini Devi ⁷ emerged. She had a thousand hands and four faces with four different colours: red, blue, white and yellow, and each of her faces had three eyes. She assured Visnu that she would favour him at the battlefield to defeat the demon Mayasur and his troupe. Visnu and his fellow gods and goddesses then faced Mayasur on the battlefield. This time, the power of the goddess Mahamaya Vijaybahini Devi possessed Visnu and his fellow gods and goddesses and they managed to kill Mayasur and his troupe. Finally Visnu and his fellow gods and goddesses went back to their abode in heaven.

Chapters Six and Seven of the book tell the story of a sinful lady who attained salvation from her sins after taking a bath in eleven out of the twelve confluences. Then, during the lady's next life, on her way to her parents' home, she arrived at the twelfth confluence which she had been unable to reach in her previous life. As she was very tired after walking such a long distance, she rested above the confluence. When she was asleep, she fell down from the hill at the side of the confluence. As her daughter saw her dying, she took some water from the confluence and poured it into her mouth. This assured her of life in heaven. At the time of her cremation, people heard a forecast from above that at the beginning of the Kaliyuga, the age of destruction, the birth of a king named Samkhadeva and the creation of kingdom of Samkhapur, 'conch-shaped town', another name of Sankhu, and the festival of Vajrayogini in Sankhu would take place.

The eighth chapter of the book describes the birth of Samkhadeva and the creation of Samkhapur. In 1300 BCE (1801 of the Kaligata era), when Vajrayogini was playing in the forest of Manicuda mountain she dropped her ornament, known as *nagakundala*. As soon as it touched the ground, water sprang from the place it landed and a lake was formed, which she named Manikunda. Then she went to another part of the forest called Dathumala, and there she sowed a medicinal seed called *rajautpanna* be

⁷ Vajrayogini herself is also called Mahamaya or 'Great Charm'. Whether Mahamaya Vijaybahini Devi is also Vajrayogini herself is not clear.

low a tree. The tree gave birth to a beautiful child with all auspicious signs. She informed her priest about it and asked him to bring the child home. She named him Samkhadeva and blessed him to become king.

As he grew up, the priest Jogdeva, a descendent of Vacasiddhi, gave him the necessary education. Then one day, the goddess Vajrayogini told the priest to create a kingdom to make Samkhadeva king. The priest formed a kingdom in the shape of a conch shell bringing seven villages (*grama*) together. They were: Nagaca, Gulima, Sasam, Galgal, Pavana. Gudekhva and Cvabaha.⁸ According to the wish of Vajrayogini he made eight quarters in the town: Dhomla, Salkha, Calakhu, Dongahiti, Svamtvva, Ilampa, Imla and Pukulachi.⁹ The town is encircled by a canal and in the centre of the town he also made a palace.

Nine monasteries (*bahalas*) were also constructed in the town. They are Thathubaha, Vapibaha, Yambaha, Suyabaha, Kobaha, Mamsubaha, Obaha, Ducchembaha and Gumbaha. In the month of Gumla (August-September), Buddhist people in Sankhu visit these monasteries. Most of them are unknown to the general public of Sankhu, because only a few of them are still recognisable as containing the remains of a monastery, but the Vajracarya priests in Sankhu still know how to find all the nine *bahals*.

Eight shrines of mother goddesses (*astamatrika pithas*) inside the town and eight outside the town in the different directions were also created. These shrines of the mother goddesses (*pitha*) still exist in the places mentioned in the MM. These eight shrines outside the town are Mahalaksmi at Mahakal, Camunda at Dathumala, Brahmhayani at Sadhusmasana, Raudrayani at Upasmasana, Varahi at Vamdol, Indrayani at Itagum, Kaumari at Salamkhvah and Vaisnavi at Ivica. The guardian goddess Simhini is at Saranakhealgum and Byaghrini is at the bank of the river to the east of the town. Then inside the town: Kumari resides at Ilamtvva, Nilakali Camunda is outside the gate of Salkhadhvaka, Nilabhairav

⁸ Some of these villages are still known places around Sankhu.

⁹ These quarters still exist in the town by those names, albeit with slight differences in spelling.

Raudrayani is outside the gate of Samgadhvaka, Vaisnavi is at Yambaha, Mahesvari is at Calakhu Quarter, Indrayani is at Vambaha, Svetabhairav Brahmayani is at Salkha quarter and Ganesa Varahi is at Bhaudhvaka, Ganesa and Kumar at Gubhala. Occasional worship of these mother goddesses (*pitha puja*) also takes place. The last time such a worship took place was in 1979. Hundreds of people from the town participated in this *pitha puja*.

Four gates were made: one for carrying away dead bodies, one for giving away daughters in marriage, one for bringing brides into the town and one for carrying Vajrayogini to town during her festival. They are Salkhadhvaka, Samgadhvaka, Bhaudhvaka and Dhomladhvaka respectively. The people of Sankhu still use those gates for the above mentioned purposes.

On the mountain of Manicuda, nine holy ponds (*kundala*) were created: Ratnakundala, Dharmakundala, Manikundala, Manakundala, Gunavanakundala, Purnedukundala, Sitalakundala, Tarakundala and Yogakundala. Some religious people in Sankhu still know how to find these ponds (*kundala*) and visit them once a year on the day of *Saparu* (the day of the cow procession carried out by their relatives in the name of those people who passed away that year). Also nine caves (*paku*) with different names were situated around the mountain. The names are all in Sanskrit: Siddhakula mahavihara, Vajracakra mahavihara, Jnanacakra mahavihara, Dharmadhatu mahavihara, Gunakara mahavihara, Jayanakara mahavirara, Dharmacakra mahavihara, Henakar mahavihara and Kirti Purna mahavihara. These are also visited by the people of Sankhu on the same day.¹⁰

Twelve confluences were also created around the town. These are Tara tirtha, Pramod tirtha, Ratnavati tirtha, Dharmavati tirtha, Vajramati tirtha,

¹⁰ *Mahavihara* means 'great monastery', and all these names are in Sanskrit. When and why these caves began to be called monasteries and were given those names is unclear to me. It is possible that these Sanskrit names were given these caves to give them religious significance.

Taravati tirtha, Gunavati tirtha, Yogavati tirtha, Sitavati tirtha, Samanyavati tirtha, Jvalavati tirtha and Purnavati tirtha. These names are identical to those of the confluences described above around the mountain of Manicuda. Some people in Sankhu still know that these confluences exist around the town.

As soon as the construction of the town was completed with all these religious symbols, Samkhadev was crowned king of Samkhapur. On that occasion he initiated the festival of goddess Vasumdhara. One day in 1818, Kaligata era, Vajrayogini asked the priest to start her festival too. She told him to make a golden statue of her which she would name Ekajati Buddhimata.¹¹ The goddess also told him to make statues of a Chibha, a Buddhist image (*caitya*), and of the Simhini (lion-faced guardian) and Byaghrini (tiger-faced guardian) to be made. From that year onwards the festival of Vajrayogini is carried out by taking those statues down to the town every year. One day, at the request of the priest Jogadeva, the goddess Vajrayogini also gave permission to introduce rice pounders to the town of Samkhapur.

Before the invasion of Samkaracarya, the shrine of Mahakal at the Vajrayogini sanctuary was a place of *ashimsa*, so no sacrifices were allowed. However, as a result of Samkaracarya's invasion, the tradition had to change and animal sacrifices became permitted. From that time onwards, no worship was considered complete unless performed with the prescribed ingredient of sacrifice.

After the creation story of the town and the festival, the story in the book shifts to describe the merits of taking a bath in the nine ponds on the mountain of Manicuda. Then the story fully shifts to king Manicuda's life story. Since the story of Manicuda is to be found elsewhere,¹² I shall present

¹¹ In Sanskrit, *ekajata* means 'the mother goddess with one twist (thorny) of hair' but the word *ekajati* is not found. It may be a corrupt form of *ekajata*. *Ekajata* is also a form of Tara whose cult is reported to have been brought to India by Saddha Nagarjuna from Bhotadesa or Tibet (Bhattacharyya 1992: 238).

¹² Lienhard 1963 and Handurukande 1967 have both dealt with the story of Manicuda in detail.

here a brief story of Manicuda as found in the text of Manisaila Mahavadana.

Once upon a time there lived a king called Brahmadata and his queen Kantimati in a city called Sakyatu, south of Jambudvipa. Whether the town named Sakyatu was Sankhu itself or a town situated in India by the name Saketa (Ayodhya) has yet to be verified.

The kingdom of Saketu was very prosperous and everybody in the city was happy. However, having no child for many years, Brahmadata and his queen Kantimati were both unhappy and desperate. Upon the suggestion of their priest Brahmaratha, they went to worship Vajrayogini and took a bath in the nine ponds around the Manicuda mountain and gave away valuables as gifts. On the last night of their vow, the king Brahmadata saw Vajrayogini in a dream, bestowing him with a son. Then they returned to their kingdom, and after nine months the queen gave birth to a child. The child had a jewel rooted in his head. So he was named Manicuda. He was well educated and became very kind to the poor. He wished to give away his wealth and was ready even to make a gift of his own flesh and blood. He grew up with the intention of not getting married, and left his home for penance in the forest. However, his teacher, the saint Gautama, wanted him to marry Padmavati, an adopted daughter of the saint Bhavabhuti. The saint Bhavabhuti found Padmavati as a girl child emerging from a lotus and took her with him, and brought her up in his hut (*asrama*) in the forest.

When the king Brahmadata turned old he enthroned Manicuda. Brahmadata and Kantimati both spent rest of their lives worshipping Ugratara Vajrayogini and went to heaven after their death, while Manicuda continued his religious life. He was always ready to give things away as gifts to all those who came to ask him for something. Because of his meritorious life, Indra, the King of Heaven, was frightened that Manicuda might one day take over his throne.

One day when king Manicuda was performing a fire sacrifice, Indra came

out of the fire disguised as a demon and demanded fresh meat and blood. Since Manicuda was not going to kill any animals he offered himself to the demon. As he found nobody ready to cut out his flesh he himself cut it out and offered his blood and flesh to the disguised demon. As he was about to die, Indra appeared in his true form and apologized for torturing him and asked him to name anything he wished. On hearing Indra say this, Manicuda said that he had no wish for anything for himself, but that he wanted those people who were in sorrow to be happy and that he wanted people to be relieved from their difficulties. Because Indra was unable to fulfill his wish, he simply put some medicine on his wounded body to help him heal.

After the fire sacrifice, Manicuda gave away the merits gained through the sacrifice to a saint who asked him for them. Still another saint came to ask to for a wife and son as a gift, simply to test his patience. Unhesitatingly, he also gave these to the saint.

Then again he returned to the forest for penance. When the king left for the forest, there was nobody to rule the country, so the people of Sakyatu set off to bring back Manicuda's son. Manicuda's son Padmotara was then made king. After many years the saint also allowed Manicuda's wife to go home.

When Manicuda was in the forest doing penance, four Brahmins came to ask for the jewel in his head. The king Dusprasaha of Ajudhya, where a major epidemic had recently occurred, had sent them to him. To stop the epidemic they needed Manicuda's jewel. Hearing the Brahmins, Manicuda happily instructed them to cut the jewel out from his head. When he was going to give his jewel away all the three worlds: Heaven, Earth and the Under World trembled and the gods and goddesses, saints and seers, all praised Manicuda. All the Buddhas also came to see him. When his wife and son received the message they also came to see him give away the jewel from his head.

After giving away the jewel, his wife and son asked Manicuda to return

home but he didn't agree. In the end, he had to be persuaded by the four Pratyak Buddhas¹³ to return home and become the king again. So he returned home and continued his life as a kind, religious and gift-giving king.

The final chapter of the book ends by describing how in his previous life, Manicuda was none other than the Buddha himself, that Padmavati was none other than Yasodhara, that Padmotara was none other than Rahul, that Brahmadata was Suddhodhana and that Kantimati was Mayadevi. Other figures in Manicuda's entourage are also equated with those in the Buddha's company.

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¹³ The 'Pratyaka Buddhas' are in form of the Buddha: 'a kind of Buddha who lives in seclusion and obtains emancipation for himself only (as distinguished from the Buddhas who also liberate others)' Liebert (1976: 227-8).

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Bal Gopal Shrestha,
Nepal

A Few Thoughts about Kesar Lall

I am delighted to learn that there are plans to present a souvenir of contributions from Kesar Lall's friends and well-wishers, I am grateful to the editors for offering me this opportunity to express my feelings about him.

This is undoubtedly a great opportunity and a meaningful gesture to collect thoughts from his friends at this very important event in his life. In view of limitations of space, let me briefly share a few of my thoughts about him.

Before I came to know Kesar Lall from close quarters, by 1957 he was already known to me as the eldest brother of my classmate Surya Lall Shrestha. We eventually became neighbours and family friends, and we were lucky to have had the opportunity to get to know each other better when we worked at the Embassy of the United States in Kathmandu from the years 1964 through 1974, even though we did not work in the same section. I know Kesar Lall as a person who prefers to keep a low profile while at the same time being a person of great dignity, morality and integrity. I also know him to be a person who enjoys sharing experiences. He is a great story writer, especially for young children. He has travelled far and wide and has many publications to his credit.

Mukunda Shrestha
Nepal

The Personality of Kesar Lall Shrestha

Kesar Lall Shrestha has always had a keen interest in trekking in the hills and it is one of his favourite hobbies. He has been to a great many places within Nepal, and has a lot of experience in climbing mountains. He once suggested to me that when climbing mountains, one should never be in a hurry and one's steps should be very slow so as not to tire the body.

People live their lives according to different interests, ideas and principles. This is what gives us our freedom. Kesar Lall is a free man because he approaches his full life with faith, sincere effort and firm determination. My best wishes are always with him.

Kesar Lall also once told me that when climbing a hill, one should not use other people's footsteps since the walker will become dependent on them. He advised me to walk with my own steps, slowly but surely.

Kesar Lall has a positive and liberal outlook and he has always been amicable and helpful to others. When he dispenses advice to friends, it is always based on sound knowledge and experience.

Ramesh P. Shrestha
Nepal

My Incomparable Friend: Kesar Lall Shrestha

In the year Nepal Sambat 1060 (1940 AD), when I was studying in Calcutta (Kolkata) and still a young inexperienced boy, my maternal grandfather Ciikaji Tuladhar of Ason Dagubahal sent me to Lhasa as an apprentice in his business house. There I developed a close friendship with a young merchant named Pushpa Ratna 'Sagar' of the Ghorsyar business establishment. Whenever free from business activities, I used to hold long discussions with him, and these discourses aroused my deep interest in Nepal Bhasa and its literature.

At that time, we decided to raise donations to help uplift our language and literature. With this donation money, 'Sagar Sahu' (as everyone called him) and I took a trip to India to seek the assistance of late Gyan Ratna Bajracarya, who was at the time in Mujaffurpur, to design a Nepal Bhasa script for printing which we then had constructed in Calcutta. Working with the clear aim to publicize writings in Nepal Bhasa, we launched a monthly magazine called *Thaunkanhae* (Nowadays) and published it for six years in succession. The titles of all the papers in this monthly were printed in the Newar script. It was as an editor of this literary magazine that I first happened to meet Kesar Lall Shrestha who contributed regular articles for publication. Later, I also made the acquaintance of his illustrious father Master Jagat Lall Shrestha, who was well known as one of the pioneering teachers of mother tongue education in Nepal.

For some years after I retired from the editorship of *Thaunkanhae*, I ceased to have any contact with Kesar Lall, particularly after he left his old house at Kel Maasangalli and went to live far away from the city centre. In the meantime, I had also made my second trip to Lhasa as a business assistant to my maternal uncle. I later learned that Kesar Lall continued to write in Nepal Bhasa and translate into English some of its literary masterpieces. As a follow-up to Tirtha Raj Tuladhar's English translation of Cittadhar

Hridaya's epic *Sugata Saurabha* (1998), Kesar Lall went on to translate Hridaya's *Mi:manah Pau* (with the English title of *Letter from a Lhasa Merchant to His Wife*, 2002) which was subsequently reviewed with high praise by the British scholar Mark Turin. This culturally important novel on the relations between Nepal and Tibet was also translated into the French language by Professor Corneille Jest on the basis of Kesar Lall's English translation. I also had the honour to make the acquaintance of Professor Jest through Kesar Lall, and he wrote letters to me several times from France, but I regret very much that I was unable to respond to these letters due to language difficulties.

Kesar Lall's ability as a writer and translator, as I see it, is on the par with that of scholars like Tirtha Raj Tuladhar and Tej Ratna Kasaa, the latter of whom obtained a Ph.D. degree in Nepal Bhasa. These three Newar scholars have been taking the lead in promoting our language and literature for foreign readers. Kesar Lall in particular always seems busy with various kinds of writing and translation projects. He continues to amaze me with his new publications in quick succession. He never takes any work lightly, and is very conscientious about completing tasks on time and to his complete satisfaction. I equally admire his personal habit of cleanliness, polite behaviour towards everyone and his willingness to assist or make suggestions. He is a man of principle who lives by a strict code of conduct and never deviates from the path of truth, sincerity and unfailing humility. For him, work is a form of worship and it is his dedication and commitment that inspire and motivate others. Although a Hindu by faith, Kesar Lall has an independent, secular views about religion like the late Revati Ramananda Vaidya, a Newar poet and writer. For all these reasons, I regard him not only as an intellectual but also a devout *Bodhisatva* of our age and time.

Kesar Lall is basically a self-taught person who developed a keen interest in reading articles and books in Newari and English literature already as a young man. In this, he was fortunate to have had the opportunity to associate with several reputed Newar friends of his father Jagat Lall, among

them were Master Jagat Sunder Malla and Master Sunder Man Shrestha, both mother-tongue teachers of distinction, and the senior scholar Baikuntha Prasad Lacoul who imparted to him many literary and scholastic skills. At the time, he also befriended Jagat Sunder Malla's eldest son Hiranyajit Malla and they studied together under the guidance of private tutors. Later, he came into contact with the eminent educationalist late Satya Narayan Bahadur Shrestha who inspired him immensely in his creative writings.

Having lost close contact with Kesar Lall for so many years, I feel very happy and satisfied to be re-united with him in friendship in my old age. I remember in particular his long association with the Nepal Bhasa Parishad, a Newar literary and cultural organization established by Cittadhar 'Hridaya', and his on-going contributions of valuable articles published in its journal *Nepal Rhitu Pau*. Although he now lives in Bansbari, he continues to attend meetings and functions organized by Nepal Bhasa Parishad, of which I am now the President. Our relationship has thus once again become much closer. I also remember his keen interest in learning about life in Tibet. To satisfy his curiosity, I used to describe to him what I knew about the social, cultural, religious, political, geographical and commercial aspects of Tibet and its people. His searching questions later inspired me to write a series of articles on these Tibetan topics based on my observations and experiences during my stay in the country. While collecting and editing these articles after a gap of several years, I realised that I had adequate materials to be compiled into a book form. With this aim in mind, I had them typed on a computer and this collection is now awaiting publication by the Nepal Bhasa Parishad.

Kesar Lall is today recognized as a prolific writer of folk literature and as a translator of international standing. His writings appear regularly in well-known publications of Nepal, India and other countries. He has also travelled extensively to many foreign countries including India, China, Thailand, Hongkong, Japan, USA, France and various parts of Europe. I have recently been meeting Kesar Lall more often than in the past, but he gave

me no indication of his forthcoming *Buda Janko* celebration. I came to know about it from my friend Tej Ratna Kasaa, and I am writing this short article on my friendship with Kesar Lall at his request.

On this auspicious occasion, I wish him the blessings of peace, good health and happiness. May his Buda Janko rituals be a memorable and happy experience.

Purna Kaji Tamrakar
Nepal

Excerpts from an Interview

I had long been intrigued by the mysterious Kesar Lall, ever since I read a 1966 article of his (passed on to me by the Japanese linguist Sueyoshi Toba) in *The Rising Nepal*. The article was written seven years before my birth and exactly thirty years before I became interested in the Thami or 'Thangmi' people of Nepal, who were the topic of Kesar Lall's piece. Entitled simply 'The Thami', the author carefully presented his first impressions of this little-known, yet important, ethnic community of Nepal. To my knowledge, Kesar Lall's piece is the earliest known publication on the Thami in the English-language press of Nepal.

As a direct result of his brief overview, the Thami were propelled into the national limelight for the first time in modern Nepali history. To this day, older generations of the Thami community remember the article as the first time they had read about their own community. Kesar Lall's article was more popular than scholarly, and his description of the first Thami man he encountered ran as follows:

Garbed in a cloak of homespun fabric, he was somewhat different from the rest of the population, as he chose to be detached from them...
(1966: 2)

Yet in a few hundred words, Kesar Lall succeeded in giving an outline of Thami culture, their origin story and an account of how the various clans came by their names. He also provided a list of Thami villages, statistics from the Census Report of 1954, an overview of their material culture and a brief synopsis of traditional birth, marriage and death rituals. The writer concluded with the statement that:

I learnt something about them, but I soon found that a great many questions about their ethnic group remained unanswered, deepening the mystery about the Thamis. (1966: 3)

For those readers who know Kesar Lall well, they will recognise his trademark modesty and open curiosity from the above citation.

In Kathmandu, I started asking around about the writer Kesar Lall. Who was he? Was he still alive? And what kind of man writes only 'Kesar Lall' and not his last name? Was it a conscious statement to de-caste oneself? I was increasingly intrigued. Thankfully I one day asked a senior colleague and friend, Professor Tej Ratna Kansakar. With the trademark humility and calmness which Tej Ratna-ji and Kesar Lall share, he replied, with an eyebrow raised, "Oh yes, Kesar Lall, I know him rather well in fact, would you like his phone number?"

I rang Kesar Lall the following morning, rather nervous of whom I would get at the end of the receiver. A dignified man answered the telephone, responding to my queries in immaculate English. The speaker was Kesar Lall and he immediately invited me over for tea to discuss things further. Thus began the friendship between us which grows stronger and deeper by the day.

By now when I visit Kesar Lall and his family, we settle into a comfortable routine. He opens the front gate and lets me manoeuvre my motorbike inside. He wears white, or cream, and seems younger and more distinguished every time we meet. We go in, sit down, and start working our way through the pile of articles, newspaper clippings and new books (invariably his own) which he has assembled on the coffee table in his downstairs living room. Then tea appears - carried in by his wife - and we exchange a few words about how I have gotten fatter or thinner depending on where I have come from that month. After tea, during which we talk constantly about life, work, writing, politics and history, if I have timed my entry well, I will be invited to join them for lunch or dinner. At the table, I proceed to eat two or three huge helpings of the most exquisite Newari *daal bhaat*. Over the meal we revert to Nepali, having spoken only English before, and I invariably end up leaving their house both physically and mentally satiated - full of good words, thoughts and food.

On one such visit, on Wednesday, July 11, 2001, I went to interview Kesar Lall at his house in Bansbari. I had decided that his story - as Mac Odell writes - should one day be told, and if at all possible, by Kesar Lall himself. This then became a three-hour video interview with Kesar Lall: his history, family, thoughts, loves (no hates), prognosis for Nepal, muses, stories about stories and stories about friends. Below I have reproduced certain sections, transcribed excerpts if you will, of this interview.

Mark Turin: Could you please tell me where and when you were born, and into what kind of family?

Kesar Lall: My grandfather died when my father was seven years old. We have a home in Kel Tol which is between Indra Chowk and Asan. By the time I was born in 1927, my father was teaching the boys of the locality. When I was about three years old, I spoke in English for the first time. At that time, a Chinese monk and his assistant had come to Kathmandu. I don't know how it all happened, but one day a young Chinese man appeared in our courtyard. I think that my father was taking him around, but I was not very sure at that time. When he appeared in the courtyard my father asked me to say "Please come up", so I said "Please come up", and he smiled and came up. That was that. There was a photograph, a small print of him, in our house for a long time, he was named Wan Yeng Tao. These were the first words of English that I spoke. And there is a very interesting sequel to this story: in 1995, my wife and I were in Lumbini for a visit. In Lumbini they have a visitors' book of which two hundred pages were missing since someone had stolen them. In the pages that were left, I found Chinese characters and translated into English by the same man I had spoken to. So I wrote a story, *A Little-Known Chinese Pilgrim*, "In 1929, a Chinese pilgrim named Wan Yeng Tao had come to Nepal. I knew nothing about him, not even that he was accompanying an abbot of a temple in Peking as an interpreter. He was a pleasant young man in Western clothes, when I saw him one day in our courtyard in Kathmandu, and my father bid me to say to him "Please come up". And this is what I

found in Lumbini. I made a photocopy of the visitor's book. Such are the things I like to write about.

Mark Turin: To briefly fast forward in your life, even though we are still in your childhood, I have noticed that you don't use the name Shrestha very often in your writings...

Kesar Lall: No, the way I started was, at the beginning, with an Indian sounding name, Ashok Paul, because Ashok is Indian and Paul is a nice name. That was in the period 1945 to 1950 in the Indian papers. And then in 1951-1952, there used to be a magazine called *Nepal Today* which was published in Calcutta by the Nepali Congress. Then they shifted their office here, to Kathmandu, and they started printing their magazine. It was kind of political as well as social but nothing very much in particular. I worked for that for a while, to learn my trade, maybe 16 months and then it folded. The man who ran it, the editor, was Satya Narayan Bahadur. He was a Shrestha, but he just used the name Satya Narayan Bahadur, he is still running the school called Mahendra Adarsh Vidyalaya in Jawalakhel. A very old man now. And then somehow or other, I just liked a name of two words, Ruskin Bond, Bernard Shaw. I started to write just Kesar Lall.

Mark Turin: So it wasn't a conscious rejection of your caste or your name Shrestha?

Kesar Lall: No, no, in those days people didn't have to use their last names, their caste names, unless they were writing in a legal document or an application. Everyone was known by the first name.

Mark Turin: Was your father, the teacher, motivated simply for educational reasons or was it for him also a question of dharma?

Kesar Lall: No, I think that my father was just very much interested in education. There were not many schools then, the Durbar High School was the only school then and that was only for the elite. And they had started a school in Patan, and after that in Bhaktapur. But there were not

many students who were willing to go all the way to Patan or Bhaktapur at that time, I mean they didn't need to go to school. So I learned a little bit and from then on I went on my own, I kept on reading newspapers and books, all the time up to now, learning all the time.

Mark Turin: If I understand rightly, the major source of employment for you, and a very important time in your life, was working at the American Embassy. How did that start?

Kesar Lall: In 1951, soon after the revolution, B.P. Koirala, who was Home Minister then, was looking for someone to work for him. A friend of my father's asked my father whether he would be interested in getting me an employment. Of course he said 'yes', and I said 'yes'. And so one morning, this man, Maskey, who was the Private Secretary to the last but one Rana Prime Minister (he was also in good favour with the Congress people and he knew B.P. Koirala) took a friend and I to meet B.P. Koirala. He was in Tripureshwor where the Customs Office is now. He introduced us, and B.P. Koirala asked me a few questions and then said "Fine, you are going to work for me." So I started to work as a typist. I had learned typing and knew a little bit of English, that was all. By that time I had, of course, written a few articles, which I showed to him. He was very kind and within a minute he had hired me. So I started to work for him for about eight months as a typist.

Mark Turin: To your career as a writer, what gave you the impetus to start this? Was it being a man of words already, of translating, of interpreting, of reading newspapers, that made you want to write? Or was it because of your father, had he told you stories and told you folk tales?

Kesar Lall: My mother and grandmother told me some stories, and in those days people didn't have that much to do, so around their winter fires people would listen to stories. And I was inspired to write them down in an attempt to learn to write. From the very beginning, when I started with my first book of English, I was never satisfied with what was written in there. I always wanted to change the noun or the tense of the verbs and

to make it my own. I don't know, I just love to write! My father didn't encourage me at all, no, not at all. I wrote something about it: "My tentative efforts to write were frowned upon by my father. Mercifully he did not say that I was being vain, but he thought that mine was an exercise in futility, and my purpose to instruct. To instruct was never my motive nor intention, ever. Besides the pure and simple pleasure of writing, I was certainly learning myself all the time, then as now. There was a friend of my father's, whose articles had appeared in magazines published in Delhi, and I had a vicarious pleasure in reading them." This is very true. Much later, an American who wrote for the New Yorker came to the Embassy, and he got my book, took it with him, and the next thing I knew was that he had published a book of his own, and there I found my story without a comma being changed in the very first section of his book. I was very flattered that he found my English good enough, but unfortunately he didn't say that it came from my book. I was both really delighted and at the same time quite surprised.

Mark Turin: But how did a Newar boy, who worked for a Brahmin Prime Minister, end up feeling so comfortable in the English language with so little education? In a way you have made a career for yourself of translating from Newari and Nepali into English, but never the other way around. How did English become your language of choice?

Kesar Lall: I don't know, it just feels natural. But I am still learning it all the time, and there are certain things which I have learned from different people, like for instance, let's see, there are people who have taught me the usage of English words. When Edmund Hillary was here, the Prime Minister wanted to write a letter to him and he asked me to prepare a draft, so I began with "My dear Sir Hillary", and Mr. Koirala said "No, in English it should be Sir Edmund". These are the little things that I remember. And then there was a friend of my father who used to write and who was an inspiration to me. There was a story I wrote in which I made some mistakes in tense, and afterwards he told me that within brackets 'you can change your tense'. So little things like that, but they matter. I learned from little incidents like that. I also used my dictionary every day, it was

always with me. I like to write very simply, as simply as I can, I write about my travels and treks and I learned a great deal by writing for the daily *The Motherland*. When they said to me that they would publish whatever I write, I became very careful of what I wrote. There was one American officer, Ernest H. Fisk, who was very particular about the English language, and I learned a great deal from him about semi-colons, commas and spelling, sentences, and everything. He was one of my *gurus*.

Mark Turin: If you find conflicting versions of the same folk tale or story, how do you decide which one to use?

Kesar Lall: I hope some day to go into the details of these important questions, but just now I am still trying to collect as many as I can of different versions of different stories, because this is just so fascinating. I have simply not been able to go into this aspect. People simply don't tell stories anymore. There was a Japanese girl named Chiyo Kato who came here to collect stories from Jumla and that area. She made tapes, and then she had those tapes transcribed, but the problem was that she didn't know Nepali, so she had to have those tapes translated, which I did, and I said that I would use the English translation and she would use the Japanese translation. In this way I learned a few new stories from Jumla.

Mark Turin: Do you ever record the stories on tape as well?

Kesar Lall: Well I tried that in Helambu but it didn't help because people were interested in talking to the tape recorder and then hearing themselves afterwards and then you don't get good stories. So I don't do that, but what I do, and have always done, is listen to them and then make notes if I can of the whole story. Sometimes the stories are quite simple, but others can be very involved. There was one story I recorded in Bigu, in Dolakha, from a Sherpa man, which simply went on and on, from nine in the evening until midnight, I didn't get anything out of that. Sometimes I can go back to someone and check the details afterwards.

Mark Turin: Do you ever ask the person to tell the story once and then have

them repeat it while you write it down?

Kesar Lall: Sometimes, yes, but usually I remember enough to get it down. This is because most of the stories are not too long and not too involved, and sometimes they could just be different versions of a story which I have already heard and I know from before.

I should end by mentioning that after I transcribed the three-hour interview, of which some sections are presented above, I sent the transcript back to Kesar Lall for verification. He returned my twenty-two pages of typescript with corrections and amendments all over, helping me spell local names correctly, giving me proper citations...and even correcting my English! What he did not do, however, was edit in any way the content of his own comments. They stand as they were spoken, and will be reproduced in their entirety in a forthcoming publication. Kesar Lall: you are a true writer, a compassionate soul with a kindness and humility from which I continue to learn. I honour you.

Mark Turin
United Kingdom

Kesar Lall : A Promoter of Nepal's Folk Literature

A present interest of mine is writing about the contributions of prominent personalities and to make a critical assessment of their work. In this paper, I describe my impressions of Kesar Lall who has acquired a national and international reputation as a folklorist of distinction.

I shall begin this account by recalling my experiences of the year Nepal Era 1075 (approximately 1955-1956 AD). At the time, I was a student at Tri-Chandra College. Immediately after class, I used to walk to the nearby Ratna Book Store and read textbooks or literary books, and if I found books that would be useful for my studies or books that interested me, I might buy them. After leaving college, my attention was drawn one day to *Lore and Legends of Nepal* (1961) and *The Seven Sisters and other Nepalese Tales* (1967) that were displayed on the shelves of Ratna Book Store. When I came to know that Kesar Lall was the writer of these books, I had a strong desire to meet the author. A work of literature, whether native or foreign, has the power to profoundly attract an interested reader. My contacts with prominent Newar writers like Cittadhar 'Hridaya', Siddhicaran Shrestha, Krishna Chandra Singh Pradhan and Dhuru Swaan Saymi were also initiated by the discovery of their works. Having read several writings by Kesar Lall, I came to know later that he was the son of the well-known teacher Jagat Lall Shrestha who was one of the pillars of Nepal Bhasa and a devoted student of the renowned educator of Nepal Bhasa Master Jagat Sunder Malla. I also came to know, from the biographical notes in his books, that Kesar Lall gave up his formal education due to his dislike of subjects like Sanskrit and Mathematics. Subsequently, he took to travelling extensively in both the hilly regions and the Terai belt of Nepal to collect folk tales, traditional religious tales, old songs, children's songs and proverbs from among the Newars, Khas, Tamang and Sherpa communities. His main interest, however, was directed towards the Newar people and their culture, and he travelled to many areas of the Newar Diaspora to make comparative studies of their changing lifestyles and cultural prac-

tices. He would then translate these materials into English and publish them in a book form for foreign readers. In this way, he has devoted much of his time to researching and writing about the folk cultures of many ethnic groups in Nepal. For these contributions, he must be recognized as a folklorist with a reputation comparable to the two pioneers in the field, namely the late Prem Bahadur Kansakar and the late Karunakar Vaidya.

A few decades ago, I distinctly remember the words of a Newar folk song sung by Kesar Lall at a literary meeting, although I do not recollect the date of this event. The lyrics of this satirical song were as follows:

*You are grown up, oh daughter-in-law, but not yet efficient in work,
When you cook, you burn the rice, and put too much salt in the lentils;
If you are scolded, you immediately lose your temper,
Daughter-in-law, you lack efficiency in your work.*

*Your work is incomplete, but you never hesitate to fill your stomach,
Your behaviour lacks grace and good manners;
You are always vain and negligent in your habits,
Daughter-in-law, you still lack efficiency in your work.*

*You can neither weave cloth nor roll a lamp wick,
You have not learnt to be meek and mild in your ways;
Daughter-in-law, why are you still inefficient in your work?*

*You complain of toothache and stomach-ache,
And refuse to eat popcorn and soybeans;
But consume a whole packet of sweetmeats,
And deceive your husband in this way.
Daughter-in-law, your hypocrisy shames us all.*

This song, I discovered, was first published in the Anniversary Issue of the magazine *Paasaa* No. 75, N.S. 1073 (1953 AD).

I also remember that when Kesar Lall was singing this song, there was complete silence as everyone listened with rapt attention. I then realized then that he was also well versed in singing folk songs. Although I had long wanted to meet him and make his acquaintance, I did not have the opportunity for a number of years. I was thus delighted when he came to meet me at my house on 8 July, 1994 and presented me with one of his new books entitled *Tales of Three Brothers*. I noticed that he had dedicated the book to me with the words “Dedicated to Dr. Janak Lall Vaidya”. I was quite surprised and asked him why he had chosen to do this, and in reply he said, “I have been greatly influenced by Chakradhar Sharma and Hariman Shrestha’s documentation of Patan’s traditional *Baathah Plays* (known also as *Kaatik Pyaakhan*) from the living oral tradition, which they published in the Patan Campus magazine *Khelu-ityaa* Nos. 6, 7, 8 up to 16. Since your research is also related to classical Newar drama, I decided to dedicate this book to you”. Apparently, Kesar Lall had been reading all the issues of *Khelu-ityaa*, and I was pleased to learn that he had already translated and edited the narrative materials of the *Baathah* plays and that it had been published by Ratna Pustak Bhandar in 1994.

My association with him became closer after this publication and our relations continue to strengthen to this day. Later, he also presented me other of his books including *A Hymn by King Rana Bahadur Shaha* (1995), *Gods and Mountains* (1991), *The Origin of Alcohol and Other Stories* (1993), *Nepalese Book of Proverbs* (1985), and *Amritanjali : A Homage* (1986). When I look through his publications, I find that he has written a wide range of books including but not limited to the following genres: travelogues, folk tales, legends, historical narratives, literary narratives, folk songs, narrative songs, nursery rhymes, songs of various festivals, proverbs, dramas based on oral traditions, customs and manners of Nepalese life or society, and biographies of distinguished personalities, as well as creative writings, notably short stories and poems, and a large number of critical articles and essays.

Kesar Lall is also a well-known translator of local literature (in Newar and Nepali) into English. His recent translations include *The Newar Merchants*

in Lhasa (2001), *A Letter from a Lhasa Merchant to His Wife* (2002), and *Eighty Days in Europe* (forthcoming). He uses simple English in all his translations so that readers find it very easy to read and enjoy his work. The notes and glossaries that he provides also help foreign readers to comprehend many aspects of our life and culture. His chief field of interest, however, is folklore and folk culture, and he had published dozens of books on this theme on the basis of his extensive research in different parts of the country. His writings are thus realistic and very authentic in setting and atmosphere. His books are read by many sections of society, both young and old, intellectuals as well as foreign scholars. In this way he has contributed immensely to the preservation of many of our customs and manners which include story telling, the singing of seasonal songs, reciting riddles and proverbs, many of which styles are now rapidly dying out. For all these reasons, Kesar Lall deserves to be recognized as a foremost folklorist who has devoted a greater part of his life to the preservation and promotion of our traditional values and our diverse cultures.

His book *Gods and Mountains* (1991) alone represents a mosaic of Himalayan ethnicity and traditional ways of life. It contains descriptions of myths and legends, folk songs of the Newars and the Tamangs, festivals and their music, as well as historical accounts of Nepal as recorded in Daniel Wright's *History of Nepal* based on materials supplied by Patan's well-known scholar Pandit Gunananda. The book also contains a collection of eight indigenous tales relating to religious and mythological themes.

Many of his books, such as *The Queen's Temple and Other Stories* (1994), *The Origin of Alcohol* (1993), and *The Seven Sisters and Other Nepalese Tales* (1967), contain very simple and interesting stories which could be used as reading materials for students learning English. These texts are suitable for inclusion in the school syllabus and might be made available in all school libraries. Through reading these books, students would learn a great deal about Nepal's history, religion and culture, and thus be made aware of our traditional heritage. On the other hand, Kesar Lall's books on Tibetan themes and travels in Europe would also benefit Nepalese students by expanding their knowledge of foreign countries and peoples. One of the merits of his translated works such as *Newar Merchants in*

Lhasa, Eighty Days in Europe and *Letter from a Lhasa Merchant to His Wife* is that he has also done careful editing of all his works, and his translations thus read like original writings in English and not as translated stories from other languages. This is part of his unique style and technique as a translator which I admire so much.

I also recall two of his earlier works which I think have been out of print for quite some time. One is an illustrated short story entitled *Bhutuccaa* 'A Short Woman' published in *Nepal Rhitu Pau* Vol. 2:9, N.S. 1073 (1953 AD), and the other is *Jagat Sunder Malla-yaa isapan daykaa tah-gu baakhan* 'Jagat Sunder Malla's adaptation of Aesop's tales in Newari' which was published in the *Master Jagat Sunder Malla Memorial Issue* magazine published by the Bhaktapur Municipality in B.S. 2049 (1992 AD). The first original short story written by Kesar Lall, to my mind, represents an excellent model for the historical development of the narrative genre in Nepal Bhasa literature; and the second writing on the pioneer of mother-tongue education in Nepal Bhasa provides little-known and hence much useful information on Jagat Sunder Malla as a person, as well as an insightful critical assessment of his contributions as a writer, translator and promoter of basic education in Newari at a time when publication and education in the mother-tongue were officially banned. Kesar Lall portrays Jagat Sunder as a man of enduring courage and convictions. This essay is thus of immense value for scholars who seek to research on the life and time of J.S. Malla.

Ever since meeting Kesar Lall for the first time several years ago, I have been impressed by his personality and his reputation as a folklorist. His simple and cheerful disposition combined with his energetic commitment to his work are highly commendable. He deserves our high appreciation for his continuing interest and dedication to his writing at an age when most people cease to be productive. My warm felicitations to him on the occasion of his Buda Janko and I wish him well for the fulfillment of all his goals in life.

Janak Lall Vaidya
Nepal

A Writing That Is Inadequate In Every Aspect

The earliest memory I can recall is of the white gold that glistened on its silky strands.

This has always intrigued me since my grandfather was the only one lucky enough to have that kind of hair. I would wonder “Hmm...how is it that his hair is so silky and silver, is he something special?” As far I can remember, I was 8 or 9 years of age at that time, and I was a little mischievous kid who wanted to know everything. I can still remember the day I came home from school, stubborn brat that I was, and that he was there, awaiting my arrival. I paid him no attention whatsoever and continued walking past with a friend. Then he called me and scolded me for my misconduct and told me to go home straight. My foolish instinct, along with my unjustified anger, led us to walk straight past my house, through the neighborhood and past the meadows to a river that flowed some kilometers away. We had a feeling of valour and sheer joy to be on our own and playing in the water. But soon, hunger struck and dusk came creeping in overhead. It was then that the outcome of my misjudged instincts began to ring in my head. I was both scared of the shadows and yet afraid to go back, and I remembered his words vividly “Go home now”. I arrived home only when they came searching to find me, numb with regression. I didn't say a word although he said a lot to me that night. He had taught me my first lesson: to think carefully and to build up a positive conscience.

As time progressed, my thoughts broadened too, under his careful guidance. I discovered that he had traveled to many countries and had worked with Westerners in the past. But I was baffled, since he chose to live in a perfectly buoyant world of his own where modesty and simplicity were the ruling elements. I, on the other hand, was getting accustomed to Western music and pop culture. I now realize that I am indeed grateful to him. Grateful for showing me a sound path to which I became accustomed, even though I didn't follow it then. I'm sure that if it hadn't been for him,

I would still be a wild child in the state of an identity crisis. His uniquely observant and 'no fuss' character is what really appeals to me. I learned that he had hiked across almost the entire country in his early years, and I can truly say that I have never come across another person with such profound feelings for nature's aura. His love for Nepal is neither that of a patriot nor that of an intransigent citizen, but is rather simply serene and subtle as of a mellow butterfly just born and in love with the flowers that surround him. This sensation that he gives me is itself an insight to the sensitive bounds of his heart.

In a way, I simply can't believe that my grandfather is a writer. It's a peculiar feeling, since I am both proud of the fact yet disdainful of myself. I feel silly and even impotent when I think of it over and over again. It's as if he is a King and that I, being part of the Royal Family, had only the will and character of a simpleton. His romance for literature, and especially folk tales, is extraordinary. I can still remember him typing for hours on his typewriter making that *tak tak* sound which never seemed to get weary. I always managed to involve myself in a million things by the time he completed his work. Yet, he worked diligently, like a happy turtle confident that he would win the race, finding each turn to be an interesting development to build upon.

I should not thank him for everything since there is something that makes me sad when I think of him. It makes me sad to know that I have not done enough to make him happy or to think that I have not become what he wanted of me. I feel very guilty that I can't spend much time with him given the frantic pace of the fast world. I think about this over and over, and pray that he understands that deep within, he remains very important to me. Returning to my first thoughts about those silver strands of his hair, it seems that they have been proven to be true. He is indeed very special, special to everyone who has been blessed by him.

Luzal Vaidya
Nepal

Kesar Lall

Kesar Lall was one of the first Nepalis I met when I arrived at the US Embassy in August 1967. For the next ten years we worked together. His diligence, patience and vast background knowledge were a great asset to the embassy.

Because of his insight and his willingness to share information selflessly, Kesar Lall was an indispensable assistant to the Ambassador. I'll always remember the gigantic Rana Family tree he produced. It was used for years until it finally wore out. After Kesar Lall and I both retired and distanced ourselves from the official office atmosphere, we became even closer friends. Our shared love of trekking and love of Nepal always brings us together. I admired his dramatic shift upon retirement when he disconnected himself from the political and diplomatic scene, stopped reading newspapers, and devoted himself full time to his great love, writing.

Now when he calls to say he is coming to my side of town I am thrilled at the thought of a visit and I eagerly await news of, and often the presentation of, his latest publication. One day in July two years ago his visit coincided with the full blooming of my Laburnum tree. The gentleman gardener who brought this tree from Calcutta and who created my garden with tender loving care years ago was an old friend of ours. That very night Kesar Lall composed the most beautiful poem, "A Gift Worthy of the Gods" in a tribute to our deceased friend.

Many attain the 77+ years required to celebrate the Bura Janku but no one I know has used these years as fruitfully as Kesar Lall did and continues to do so. His priorities are family, friends and writing. I am honoured to be his friend!

Betty Woodsend
Nepal

Publications by Kesar Lall

A. Books in English

- Lore and Legend of Nepal*. 1961. Kathmandu: Jagat Lall. Subodh Sindhu Press, Nagpur, India; 2nd Edition Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar; 3rd Edition in 1971; 4th Edition in 1978; 5th Edition in 1991 with additional stories, Kathmandu: Pilgrims Book House.
- The Seven Sisters and Other Nepalese Tales*. 1967. Kathmandu: I.M. Bajracarya; 2nd Edition in 1988, Kathmandu : Ratna Pustak; 3rd Edition in 2001.
- Nepalese Customs and Manners*. 1967. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak; 2nd Edition in 2000.
- Nepalese Fairy Tales*. 1978. Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakashan.
- This Beautiful Nepal* (with photographs by Dorothy Mierow). 1981. Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press (Printed in Bangkok by Craftsman Press).
- Nepalese Book of Proverbs*. 1985. Kathmandu: Dr. Shashi M. Shrestha; 2nd Edition in 1991 Kathmandu : Pilgrims Book House.
- A Brief Biography of Venerable Bhikkhu Amritananda Mahasthavir*, 1986. Kathmandu: Ananda Kuti Vihara Trust.
- Nepalese Language, Folklore and Practices for Foreigners*. 1987. Kathmandu: Himalayan Book Centre.
- Tales of the Yeti*. 1988. Kathmandu: Pilgrims Book House.
- Lore and Legend of the Yeti*. 1988. Kathmandu: Pilgrims Book House.
- An Encounter with the Yeti and Other Stories*. 1990. Kathmandu : Ratna Pustak.
- Folk Tales from the Kingdom of Nepal*. 1991. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.
- Gods and Mountains: The Folk Culture of a Himalayan Kingdom, Nepal*. 1991. Jaipur, India: Nirala Publications (Printed at the Aditya Offset Press, New Delhi – Nirala Series 11).
- Proverbs of Nepal and Other Countries*. 1991. Kathmandu: Pilgrims Book House.
- Amritanjali : A Homage to the Late Venerable Bhikkhu Amritananda* (Edited), 1992. Kathmandu: Ananda Kuti Vihara Trust.
- Nepal – Off the Beaten Path*. 1992. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.
- An Anthology of Short Stories of Nepal* (Translated from the Newar Language with Tej R. Kansakar). 1992. Kathmandu: Foundation for Literature.
- Proverbs about Man and Woman*. 1992. Kathmandu: Pilgrims Book House.
- Proverbs from the Animal Kingdom*. 1993. Kathmandu: John Snyder, Pilgrims Book House.
- A Nepalese Miscellany*. 1993. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.
- Black Rice and Other Stories*. 1993. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.
- The Story of Bungadyo*. 1993. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.

- The Origin of Alcohol and Other Stories*. 1993. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.
- Tales of Three Brothers*. 1994. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.
- The Queen's Temple and Other Short Stories*. 1994. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.
- Forbidden Fruit and Other Short Stories* (Translated from the Newar Language with Tej R. Kansakar). 1994. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.
- Proverbs and Sayings from Nepal* (Translated from the Newari and Nepali Languages). 1994. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.
- A Hymn by Rana Bahadur Shah, King of Nepal, 1777-99*. (Translated from the Newar Language). 1995. Kathmandu: Pilgrims Book House.
- Anecdotes and Stories of the Gurkha Soldier*. 1995. Kathmandu: Pilgrims Book House.
- Lumbini, Annual* (Edited). 1995-2000. Buddha Nagar, Lumbini: International Buddhist Society.
- Hiranyavarna Mahavihara: The Golden Temple* by Dharma Ratna Shakya 'Trisuli'. (Translated from the Newar Language, with photographs by Bhai Ratna Bajracarya). 1996. Lalitpur : Hiranyavarna Mahavihara Vihara Sudhar Samiti.
- Quotations from the Buddhist Scriptures*. 1996. Kathmandu: Pilgrims Book House.
- Faulty Glasses and Other Stories* by B.P. Koirala (Translated from the Nepali Language). 1997. Delhi: Book Faith, India.
- Women and Other Stories* by Laxman Rajbanshi (Translated from the Newar Language). 1998. Kathmandu: Koselee Prakashan.
- Shattered Dreams and Other Stories* by Laxman Rajbanshi (Translated from the Newar Language). 1999. Kathmandu: Laxman Rajbanshi.
- A Pilgrimage in China* by Bhikkhu Dharmalok Mahasthvir (Translated from the Newar Language with an Introduction, Notes etc). 1999. Kathmandu: Bhikkhu Aniruddha Mahasthvir.
- The Stolen Image and Other Stories*. 2000. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.
- A Tree to Cherish* (Poems). 2000. New Delhi: Adarsha Enterprises.
- A Crooked Tree and Other Tales*. 2000. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.
- A Girl with a Meaningless Name* (Essays and Poems). 2000. New Delhi: Adarsha Enterprises.
- The Newar Merchants in Lhasa*. 2001. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak.
- The Black Serpent : A Collection of Short Stories from India* (Translated from the Nepali Language). 2001. New Delhi: Adarsha Enterprises.
- Mimmanahpau – Letter from a Lhasa Merchant to his Wife* by Cittadhar 'Hridaya' (Translated from the Newar Language). 2002. New Delhi: Robin Books.
- The Housewife and the Giant* (Translated from a Folktale in Newar adopted by Ananda Ratna Bajracarya). 2002. Kathmandu: Gaurav Ratna Bajracarya.

B. Publications in other languages

The Origin of Alcohol (Translation into Japanese). 1996. The Society for the support of Education in Nepal.

Marchen, Sagen und Legenden aus Nepal (Translation into German by Martin Lutter Johann) 1980.

Contes et Legendes de la Vallee de Kathmandou (Translation into French by Corneille Jest). 1998.

Nepal, Landet Under Jordenstak (Translation into Swedish by Ake Sparring). Stockholm, Sweden.

A Selection of Asian Legends and Folk Tales by M. Yegar (in Hebrew).

Tier magazine, Frankfurt, Germany (in German).

Yama To Keikoku magazine, Tokyo (in Japanese).

Japan-Nepal Society Bulletin, Tokyo (in Japanese).

In Nepal Bhasa (Newar Language): Altogether about two dozen stories and articles in local periodicals including *Dharmodaya*, *Paasaa*, *Thaunkanhe*, *Raajamati*, and *Nepal* (Quarterly).

In Nepali Language: Altogether half a dozen articles in local Journals and Newspapers *Swatantra Vishwa* and *Gorkhapatra*.

C. Stories and articles in English published in books, magazines and newspapers

Buddhist Nepal. In: A Memorandum from the Dharmodaya Sabha to the Second World Buddhist Conference, Tokyo, 1952.

Nepal: The Birthplace of the Buddha. In: A Memorandum from the Dharmodaya Sabha to the Third World Buddhist Conference, Rangoon, 1954.

Over 300 articles published in Nepalese and foreign journals and newspapers, and these include *The Motherland*; *Vasudha*; *The Rising Nepal*; *The Nepalese Perspective*; *The Mountain Tribune*; *Nepal Digest*; *Nepal Traveller*; *Kathmandu Valley Directory*; *Nepal Review*; *The Commoner*; *Nepal Today*; *Ramjham*; *Lumbini*; *Ananda Bhumi*; *Lok Sahitya (Folklore)*, among the Nepalese publications.

UCON Directory of World Penpals; *The Week-End*; *Peace Corps Volunteer*, Washington, D.C.; *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi; *Pen Friend*, Bombay; *Buddhist World*, Colombo;

Bosaat, Colombo; *The Mahaa-Bodhi*, Calcutta; *Burmese Review and Monday New Times*, Rangoon; *The Mainichi*, Tokyo; *The Struggle*, Bombay; *Bombay Chronicle*, Bombay; *The Statesman*, Calcutta; *The Orient Illustrated Weekly*, Calcutta; *The Treasure Chest*, Bangalore; *Pushpa*, Bombay; *Peace Corps Nepal Resources Handbook for Cross Cultural Involvement*, Peace Corps, Kathmandu; *Destination NEPAL, Video Guide*, WorldWide Schools, The Peace Corps of the US, Washington D.C.; *The Wildest Dream of Kew* by Jeremy Bernstein, London, among the foreign publications..

D. Stories, letters and scripts for television, video and radio programmes

Ce petit personnage animé – Le Conte népalais – la Télévision romande (An adaptation of a story in French by the Swiss Television, Geneva).

Amritanjali : The Life and Time of Venerable Bhikkhu Amritananda (A script in English).

Nepalese Folk Culture (A script in English for Radio Nepal).

Stories, letters, commentaries for Radio Sri Lanka, Colombo (in Nepal Bhasa / Newari).

