



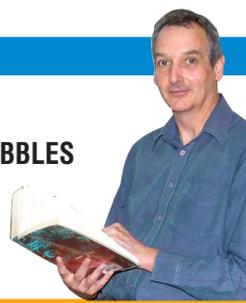
SALMAN
Improvises romantic scene pg III

City Post

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BOOKWORM BABBLES

'I read about 30-40 books a year' pg IV



Cas de Stoppelaar: Dutch author in Nepal

It was in 1970 that Cas de Stoppelaar had come to Nepal for the first time. He had come as a tourist — a member of the first trekking team of Westerners to Manaslu, which also climbed a minor mountain.

The first time he set his foot in Kathmandu, he was amazed that such a country could exist — it was like a "very fairytale country". The people of Nepal were very nice; there were beautiful mountains and excellent landscapes. He especially took to the chaos of Kathmandu, and thus decided to come back again.

It was a mere three years before he returned with some of his friends to carry out a research in the slopes of Everest. Then he started the construction of the Summit Hotel on the Kupondole Heights of Patan in 1978, which took around three years to complete. During this period, he got involved with Nepalis while buying construction materials. There was shortage of everything, and he recalls,

did his Masters in Biology, he likes to write; and he already has three books to his name. The first one was "The Lotus Eaters" which was published in 1983, and the next one was "Beethoven in Daarjeeling" which

released only a week ago with a suitable function at — where else! — the Summit Hotel.

This book is a compendium of his experiences of and in Nepal. As Cas puts it, for westerners, Nepal is a fascinating and puzzling country. Therefore, he wanted to explain this mystery to everyone. He also wants everyone to know that this book is his tribute to Nepal.

He had actually started the book as a history of his hotel — Summit Hotel. However, as time passed by, it turned fictitious. So one can find some real facts in the book, and thus, it is the "untrue history" of the hotel. Readers can also find all of the author's emotions and experiences, which he has channeled in this opus. He says, "I don't regret that I deviated from my purpose and wrote a fiction instead. The result is much, much better than what I intended."

The story of the translation of this book began on August 3 of last year. After a long flight from Holland, he met a gentleman at the hotel reception who was checking out. After greeting Cas, the person introduced himself as Adriaan Verheul.

When Cas mentioned his name, Adriaan asked, "Did you write this book? I liked it very much. Why is there no English translation?"

Cas said, "Well, Mr. Verheul, there is none. That's the only thing I can say."

Then Adriaan suggested, "I have five minutes left before I go to the airport. Let's drink some coffee. I'll translate this for you."

And that was how this book

got translated.

Cas now finds the translated version of the book very good. He is also excited by the prospect of the book since around three billion people read and speak English. So the book has a larger scope as it appeals to a larger number of readers than his original Dutch version did.

When asked why he chose the title of the book as "Elephant Polo", he explained, "Nepal is big, like an elephant. Oscar, the main character of the book, plays elephant polo in Chitwan with Asian businessmen and Western ambassadors. Naturally, he thinks he's riding the elephant, for he's such a successful person: he owns a hotel and lives the life of a young colonial master, surrounded by luxury. But he is wrong — in fact, it is the elephant who is riding him."

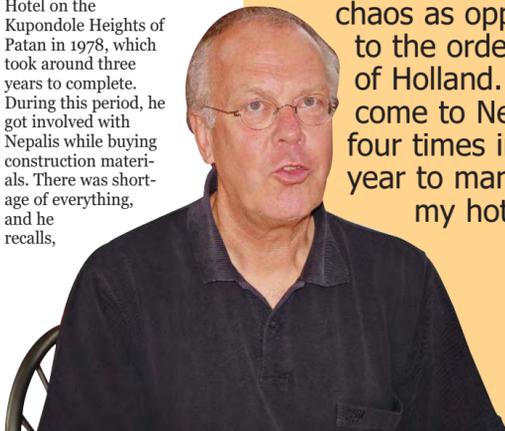
Cas is also the Consul General for Nepal in the Netherlands. He played a very important role in the visit of Willem Alexander, the Crown Prince of the Netherlands, to Nepal as well as organized the royal visit of the then Crown Prince Dipendra of Nepal to the Netherlands.

■ BY AYUSH NEUPANE

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CATCHING UP

"If I wanted cement, I had to go all the way to Godavari and place the order and wait for around two weeks just for that. I liked this chaos as opposed to the orderliness of Holland. So I come to Nepal four times in a year to manage my hotel."



"If I wanted cement, I had to go all the way to Godavari and place the order and wait for around two weeks just for that. I liked this chaos as opposed to the orderliness of Holland. So I come to Nepal four times in a year to manage my hotel."

Sixty-year-old Cas is a Dutchman. However, he is also one of the owners of the Summit Hotel as well as its chairman. Although he

came out in 1990. These books were collections of short stories, and the tales of the first book are based in Nepal. His third book, "Olifantempo", saw light just two years ago. All these three books are in Dutch.

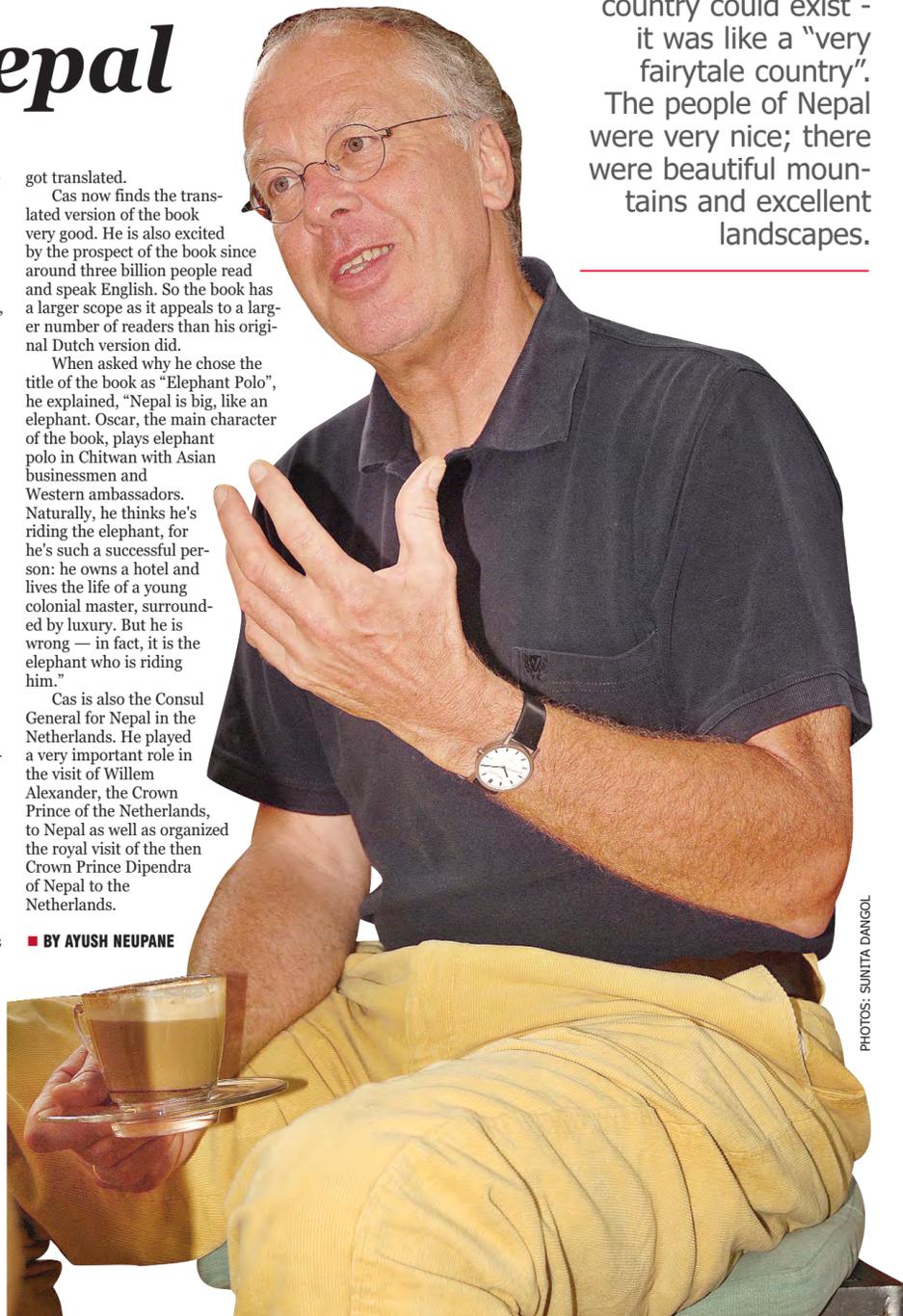
The third book has been translated into English, and is called "Elephant Polo — the Rise and Fall of a Hotel in Nepal", which was

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PHOTOS: SUNITA DANGOL

FSA '07: Reel Reviews and Results

Remembrance of Things Present traces the all-consuming quest of a woman as she confronts her past, a tragic one of course, to gain a better understanding of bygone events. Director and chief protagonist Chandra Siddan lucidly captures her journey as she attempts to squeeze out explanations from her family and relatives, and an answer to the constant gnawing (apparently) question, "Why was I, a teenage girl from the urban middleclass forced (or was it coaxed?) into an arranged child marriage?"

12 years have passed and a lot of things have changed as Siddan returns to Bangalore after a long hiatus in the West. Comfortably settled into a new marriage and a new life, she has come back to meet her family members. She finds her younger brother Ravi with a baby girl from his recent marriage. Both her parents have grown old and frail, pushed to dereliction by old age. As the documentary progresses, her mother reveals her suicidal tendencies and her father, a former State employee, his great disappointment with his life—besides family problems also compounded by the promotion he was entitled to but never received. They paint a picture of a couple wholly disenchanted with life. Yet, to her great surprise, Siddan finds their ways of thinking to have remained



Dipesh Kharel (right) receiving 'Best Debut Film' award

essentially unchanged.

In a series of emotionally intense interviews with her parents, her sister-in-law, her daughter, her ex-husband, her brother and her relatives it is gradually revealed that none had

actually made any serious attempt to dissuade her parents from carrying out the marriage. The script then changes track and Siddan instead focuses on answering a new burning issue, "Why didn't anybody stop it?"

A series of generic, "It would have meant straining relationships," and, "families don't meddle with each others' affairs," follow before the director finally appears to be satiated when an aunt gives a curt albeit succinct reply,

"Do we ask the chicken before we cook it?"

A valiant attempt to address the enduring problem of child marriage in the broader context of gender discrimination in 'modern' India, the documentary ends with Siddan still searching for answers. More interestingly, the heartrending story of their servant maid who, like Siddan, is constantly pushed towards marriage in even harsher and unforgiving circumstances is like an echo of Siddan's life, a gloomy forecast into the future.

After the veritable glut of emotionally intense documentaries, *Prakash Travelling Cinema* was a welcome reprieve. The documentary by Megha Lakhani tells the story of a cart mounted mobile bioscope; a throwback to the pre-multiplex, pre digital sound (even!) days of Indian cinema.

"*Dus Lakh*, a Sanjay Khan film, was the first movie," Feroz recounts with a twinkle in his eye. "Brought to India in the late 19th century, the bioscope was manufactured by a French company," Hanif excitedly adds. "It is the only one of its kind in the world still in operating condition," he proudly claims.

Haif and Feroz go on to reveal that they get their reels (it is hand operated, like the Chaplin movies must have been when first enjoyed!) from Malad in Bombay, a dump for discarded Bollywood reels. They go on to share their deep love for the

classic movies, namely "Sholay" and "Mogul-e-Azaam". The bioscope parked in the middle of the local street, with excited children hovering around is a common sight in town.

As much as their love for the machine, evident in the way they meticulously oil the antiquated parts, Hanif and Feroz's mutual love and respect is equally immense. A bleary eyed Hanif confesses towards the end, "I am nothing without Prakash Cinema and Feroz Bhai." Pity the touching documentary lasted only 14 minutes.

The results of the Film Festival, which were announced at a lavish ceremony held late afternoon, are as follows. *Eisenfresser (Iron eaters)*, set in Bangladesh, and directed by Shaheen Dill-Riaz was adjudged the best documentary film. *Remembrance of Things Present* by Indian director Chandra Siddan was awarded the 2nd prize. The first and second placed documentaries were awarded cash prizes of USD 2,000 and 1,000 respectively. The joint recipients of "Best Debut Film", *A Life with Slate* by Nepali director Dipesh Kharel and *The Sky Below* by Sara Singh, shared the cash prize of USD 1,000. Also the documentaries "Ayodhya Gatha" by Vani Subramanian and "Seven Islands and a Metro" by Madhusree Dutta were awarded "Special Mention" certificates.

■ BY-TASHI G GENDEN