


# FAAN

Newsletter

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# FULBRIGHT



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## From the President's desk...

Scholarship rides the tides of times, but their sensitivity to historical events is legendary. In fact, it is the scholars who create atmosphere of change. Speaking as President of the Fulbright Alumni Association of Nepal I can only say this much, the past several months have seen unprecedented changes in Nepali history. When a scholar says a stable situation will come and peace will reign, she is essentially saying that history has taken a new turn. At this stage we can say that. What the future has to unfold we have yet to see.

The story of Fulbright in the world is writ large in the history of scholarship though the history is short. There have been Fulbrighters who have gone on to become Nobel laureates. They have made contributions in different fields of learning-humanities, social sciences and pure science areas. A large number of scholars in our own country have achieved much and have 'made their names' at the national level. Therefore, what one does after receiving the grants is the responsibility of the one who receives it. People who have received the Fulbright grants have spent different lengths of time in America studying and carrying out research, or teaching at different universities. To be a Fulbrighter is in itself an achievement, to work towards a greater understanding of what it is to be a Fulbrighter and what one can achieve for the benefit of our own respective countries because of this is an added achievement.

With the election on January 15, 2006 we, the new executive committee besides taking up the responsibility of promoting mutual understanding between the US and the people of our own country, hope to share with the people of our Nepali community what we have acquired in the process of our, socio-cultural and academic education over the years. Many activities and programs we had tentatively scheduled for those past few months, remained so only on paper due to obvious reasons. But with some pride I would like to say that we received the US State Department Grant for which we had submitted a proposal to compete in the international market. So for the next one year we have a solid program framed out for which we will need voluntary participation and good will of our Fulbright friends. Modest activities though, like talk programs and participation of Fulbright scholars in Conferences in the South Asian Region have continued to take their course without any hindrances.

Now with the changed political context where democracy will be encouraged to flourish and bear the fruits of peace and stability, we look forward to greater interactions, voluntarism, more interdisciplinary engagements and academic activities which will reflect in many ways a globalization of intellectual life and newer discourse formations among us of the Fulbright community.

— Sangita Rayamajhi

## Happenings

### People's Movement II: Spring 2006

One-and-a half-month ago Nepal was known for having the highest peak in the world, Mount Everest, but now it has a new identification, the democratic Nepal.

The day the parliament was restored, it took upon itself the task of saving the monarchy from a king who nearly took it down with him.

In one razor sharp resolution, which undoubtedly can be described as a glimmer of hope for democratic forces struggling against military dictatorships and monarchies, the parliament cut off powers and privileges enjoyed by kings of the Shah dynasty for the last 237 years.

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, in a speech to the parliament delivered a warning to extremists of the left and right.

"The whole nation will rise up against anyone who works against this historic proclamation," Koirala declared before asking the new speaker of the parliament, Subash Nembang, to continue.

### FAAN Election

The FAAN general body meeting elected the new Executive Committee for 2006-08 on January 15, 2006 attended in by Nepali Fulbrighters in Kathmandu. Vice-president and Secretary were chosen uncontested. After introductory remarks by candidates on their platform for effective FAAN programs, the following were elected for the respective positions:

Dr. Sangita Rayamajhi -President  
Mr. Madan Mohan Das -Vice President  
Mr. Hriseekesh Upadhyay - General Secretary  
Dr. Shreedhar Gautam -Secretary  
Mr Ram Bhakta Amatya - Treasurer

The other Executive Members elected are:

Miss Dyuti Baral, Mr. Suman Basnet, Mr. Damodar Gautam, Ms. Jharana Joshi, Dr. Bijaya K.C., Mr Pratik Pradhan.

The outgoing FAAN President Dr. Ananta Raj Poudyal handed over the FAAN documents/office materials to the new Executive Committee the same day. A three member election committee headed by Mr. Tula Raj Basyal conducted the elections process smoothly. Other members of the elections committee were Dr. Anand Sharma and Mr. Binod Bhattarai. The newly elected executive committee thanked the election committee members for their contribution.

### Advisory Board

FAAN Executive Committee in a meeting decided to form the Advisory Board with request for consent to the following dignitaries : Professor Dr. Ananta Raj Poudyal

Dr. Shanti Basnet  
Mr. Ajit Narayan Singh Thapa  
Dr. Mohan Man Sainju  
Mr. Robert Huggins



Photo: first monthly talk program on March 23, 2006

The first monthly talk program organized by FAAN took place at the newly built hall in the Fulbright premises, on March 23, 2006. Dr. Mark Hilderbrandt from the Department of Geography, Southern Illinois and currently a senior scholar undertaking research on Environment Sciences in Nepal gave a talk on "Air pollution in Kathmandu."

A conference of Fulbright scholars in South Asia was held in Vishakaptnam, India from March 6-8 this year. The Conference "Synergizing Fulbright Activities in South Asia and the US" was organized by USEF India. There were approximately a hundred participants, from the US and the South Asian Region. Ten scholars participated from Nepal and made their presentations, four were Nepali alumni—Mr. Tula Raj Basyal, Dr. Suresh Shrestha, Ms. Agatha Thapa and Dr. Sangita Rayamajhi and six American scholars currently doing their research work in Nepal—Dr. Mark Hilderbrandt, Dr. Frank Ettensohn, Ms. Andrea Petrini, Dr. Scott Steinkerchner, Mr. Michael Baltutis and the director of USEF Nepal, Dr. Peter Moran.

The Third Annual Fulbright Alumni Conference organized by USEF Pakistan was held in Islamabad, from April 28-29. The theme of the Conference was "Fulbright Alumni Respond to Critical Issues," which reflected the concern of Fulbright Alumni to assist in the development of Pakistan. The Conference was dedicated to the Fulbright Alumnus the late Dr. Syed Hamidullah, Professor at the University

of Peshawar. Dr. Hamidullah had lost his life in a helicopter crash on October 16, 2005 while on a relief work in the earthquake damaged area. Three scholars participated from Nepal. Dr. Mark Hildrebrandt whose presentation was, "Air Pollution in Nepal," Dr. Frank Ettensohn with, "The Geological origins of major hazards and crisis in South Asia" and Dr. Sangita Rayamajhi whose paper on "Internally displaced persons in the conflict zone, with special focus on women."

Secretary of FAAN, Dr. Shreedhar Gautam, visited Pakistan 22 - 29 May as part of a Nepali scholars delegation at the invitation of Pakistan Government. The delegation visited research centres, university departments, Strategic Institutes, South Asian Study Centre, and Area study Centre based in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad, and exchanged ideas about the common problems as well as the academic issues concerning the scholars of the region.

Writers- Fulbrighters  
FAAN President Dr. Sangita Rayamajhi has brought out her latest literary publication, an English translation of the classic Nepali drama *Masan* (Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathamandu, 2006.)

FAAN General Secretary Hriseekesh Upadhyay has published a collection of English poetry *In Love of America and other observations* (Society of Nepali writers in English, 2006). The title poem narrates the life experience of six Nepalese characters who visit and work in the United States.

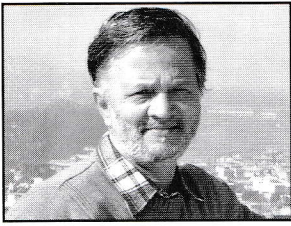
## On Being a Fulbrighter

Suman Basnet

I still vividly remember the damp monsoon day in August of 1999, when my family had come to see me off at the airport. After what seemed like an endless wait since being selected for the Fulbright scholarship, I was finally heading to the US for my masters study in management. Oh boy! I was a Fulbrighter. At that time, this meant that I was one of just a few hundred such scholars from Nepal, I could boast of some international personalities as being "fellow" Fulbrighters and I was going on an all expenses paid study trip.

I spent three years in the US as a Fulbrighter: the first 21 months as a student and the remaining 14 months on "practical training" in a management consulting firm. The first advantage I had as a Fulbrighter was that I did not have to scramble around trying to get a good teaching or research assistantship. Besides this, my Fulbrighter status came up one or two times during these three years. The first was in the welcome speech of the Admissions Director, when he specifically mentioned that there were two Fulbrighters (the other Fulbrighter was from Romania) in the MBA class that year. The other was when I had to go to the University finance office every semester to convince unbelieving officials that IEE in New York would pay my fees. However, "Fulbrighter" meant little or nothing to a lot of people I met during my US stay. I was also selected to attend a Fulbright Conference on the role of the UN in New York City. In addition to acquiring an MBA, I was involved in a lot of extra curricular activities. This helped me to get to know the American society and also about my fellow students who were from all over the world. I was also elected the President of the Graduate Management Students' Association.

It has been just under three years since my return from the US. What does it



## Keeping Fulbright Flame High

Professor Dr. Pitamber Sharma is a well-known academician of Nepal. He was professor of Geography, T.U. till he resigned in 1998. He has authored several books and edited journals published from Nepal and abroad. He earned his M.sc. (1971) from University of Edinburgh, UK, and PhD (1979) from Cornell University, USA. He served as a regional planner in International Center for Integrated Mountain Development [ICIMOD], and as a chief advisor to National Commission on Population from 1982-1984. *FAAN Newsletter* requested Professor Sharma, a Fulbright Alumni, to share his experiences as an Alumni on issues related to the objectives of FAAN, recent development in Nepal and about the need of reform in education sector. Excerpts of the interview with Professor Sharma :

The Editor : Could you share with us your experience as a Full bright Alumni ?

Dr. Sharma : I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity of studying in the USA in the Fullbright scholarship. It has broadened and enriched my view immensely.

The editor : What should be the objectives of FAAN in today' context ?

Dr. Sharma : it is a good forum as it gives opportunity to share experiences with Nepali and American scholars on different issues. It has done good job so far and I hope it will continue its activities in future too. It is an important link between Nepali and American scholars. However, it should not be over- ambitious. It should complete the task that has already been introduced. It should create more opportunities for academic purposes and mutual benefit of the two countries.

The editor : Do you think FAAN has helped in strengthening Nepal- America relationship ?

Dr. Sharma : I am not directly involved in the activities of the FAAN over the years because of personal reasons, and so I am not in a position to say anything authentically about the contribution. However, I feel that even bringing out a newsletter in itself is an example of contribution.

The editor : As an academician and analyst of Nepal's development, how would you view the present situation of Nepal ?

Dr. Sharma : Nepal is in a critical juncture today politically. Our polity, and I hope development endeavors, is on brink of making drastic departure from the past. People's expectation have risen to new heights. The focus should now shift towards strengthening institutions and strategizing development and democracy in concrete terms.

The editor : You have a long experiences of working in education field. What measures, in your opinion, should be taken to make education system more effective ?

Dr. Sharma : I think the state must make a difference between school level education and higher education. It is the state' responsibility and obligation to provide quality education for all at the school level. However, higher education should be primarily based on merit and the state should ensure that meritorious students, irrespective of caste, class and creed, get the opportunities they deserve. The quality of public sector education should be improved in countries like ours.

The editor : How is FAAN a different organization in your view ?

Dr. Sharma : I think it is different as it is fully devoted to academic activities only and has no other interest. It establishes contact with academicians from different sectors by regularly holding programs to arouse awareness and exchange experiences.

The editor : What are the advantages of becoming a FAAN Alumni ?

Dr. Sharma : FAAN Alumni can draw several advantages. I have taken advantage of free access to over eight hundred refereed journals in my capacity as a FAAN Alumni. It is especially important in countries like ours, where libraries are not well equipped. We can access the latest journal through this innovative linkage of the State alumni.

The editor : Any more suggestion or comment you would like to make ?

Dr. Sharma: If possible the number of Fulbright scholarships to Nepal should be increased because those who go to the US to study under Fulbright return home as their roots are already grounded in Nepal by the time they go. I also think that Fulbright should basically focus on individuals from public education institutions. That way a largest audience can benefit from the knowledge and experience of the Fulbright alumni. □

### On Being a \_\_\_\_\_

mean to be a Fulbrighter now? Being a Fulbrighter has given us a status in society and has earned us credibility. Being a member of a select group of professionals selected through a rigorous process is special. Secondly, the Fulbright experience has widened

our perspective and has made us much more receptive to learning and exchange of ideas and views.

The Fulbright experience will be an integral part of me. I think I have got a lot from this experience. Now my thought should focus on how I can give back to my society what I have been

fortunate enough to get thus far. However, a "potential unrealized" for me as a Fulbrighter is the networking that should be possible among the Fulbrighters in Nepal and the world. We could do much more to learn from each other and also to work together towards the development of our society and to help our fellow citizens. □

## FAAN Set to Launch Fulbright Democracy Forum

The Nepali Fulbrighters through their association -FAAN- are set to launch Fulbright Democracy Forum in Kathmandu from July 2006. FAAN's proposal for this initiative won project funding from Fulbright Association from Washington DC. The project support grant is part of worldwide competition among the Fulbright alumni to conduct programs in their respective countries.

The Democratic Forum will conduct discussion, interaction and informed debate on regular basis in the style of ancient Athens/Rome and Town Hall Meetings still taking place in many communities in New England region of USA. The Forum will take on issues of making democracy work in the traditional society like Nepal with a view to educating, sensitizing and activating citizenry for informed participation and gaining continuous exposure to democratic discussion and debate.

### The Democracy Forum will have the following objectives:

- Organize a monthly meeting for interested/ invited citizens at the open public theater to hear brief presentations (20minutes each by two speakers) and conduct discussion and interaction among 200 to 250 participants from among the citizens from 34 metropolitan wards of Kathmandu,
- Provide forum for citizens to propose topics, issues and concerns and organize discussion and debates on the issues selected. (Democracy is about citizens being able to identify problems and having opportunity to freely discuss them to understand how the problem really affects the society and weighing possible ways/ alternatives to resolve them.),
- Engage municipal/civil society groups/ Fulbright Alumni in creating opinion on wide ranging issues facing Nepalese society, their individual communities and certain global issues impinging their lives and having those opinions aired publicly for better understanding, and
- Help develop community groups in forming citizen's forums to replicate all the above points in diverse municipal/ rural areas.

**Goals:** The Project seeks to bring the large groups of Kathmandu citizenry in the meaningful discussion and understanding of what democracy is and how to make democracy work for the citizen's interest. The Forum will engage homemakers (housewives), self-employed individuals, small shop-keepers, interested individuals, citizens' groups and various unorganized professionals --all constituting non-conventional audience for democracy debate in Nepal-- to interact on critical issues facing nascent democracy like Nepal's. For example,

citizens have heard from political parties and organized groups that democracy is panacea for all the ills facing the Nepalese society. But the citizens have never been warned that democracy must be made to work and that informed and active citizen participation is essential to make democracy work. The central goal of the project is no less than shaking the complacent attitude to democracy promoted by the Nepalese political parties that the citizens can rest assured for democracy to deliver all the good thing of life if the multi-party polity remained in force in the country. For democracy to take roots and to make the political parties to function responsibly, active and informed citizenry is essential. The Forum aims at reaching the common citizens to make them informed citizens about democratic processes and making them active participants on the everyday issues facing them and discussing alternatives to deal with those problems.

**Activities and Events:** The Forum will be set up in the metropolitan Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. The main event of the project will be to organize monthly discussion forum on pre-selected topic related to democracy, citizen's concerns and enlightening the public on making democracy work successfully. As a pilot project, the Forum will be organized every month **for one year** with a total of 10 discussion sessions after the project is initiated. During this phase, efforts will be made for other municipal groups to organize similar initiatives in their areas. FAAN would continue exploring the possibility of organizing such forums in other municipal areas within the Kathmandu and other regions of the country.

FAAN Executive Committee in consultation with Fulbright alumni will assign Fulbrighters and other concerned public figures as speakers and facilitators in the Forum meetings. The overall project will be led by FAAN president or FAAN official assigned by the president. FAAN will coordinate with municipal/civil society/volunteer groups to canvass about the educational, cultural and empowering effect of the public discussions. While the monthly discussion will be held with participation of 200-250 persons in the open theater or in a hall (depending on the weather), the Forum will utilize the local already functioning reading room/library as the bulletin board to post topics for future discussion and collecting ideas for inclusion in the Forum.

This Forum is of great importance for Nepal because democracy needs strengthening at the citizen's level as the post-1990 democratic experiment has stalled for lack of informed citizens' participation, for lack of forums for people to come together to

discuss ideas, develop alternatives and understand what can be achieved through democratic process.

FAAN will act as the lead organization in running citizens' forums and bringing people together to share, to argue, to disagree in good spirit while listening to alternative opinions and create conducive atmosphere for responsible citizenship. The Forum will be active only in creating ideas, developing democratic debate and not engage in campaigns for political action. The latter of course is the domain of political parties which have done not much to educate their masters - the electorates.

The Forum will address the need of common citizens to come together to hear political issues of their direct concerns being debated and to get an opportunity to have their views expressed before the wider public audience. This will enlighten them about the crucial fact that democracy is not just a political system of party based election and government, it is more of a process where citizens make democracy work for the benefit of all.

The Program will be run **for one year** with 10 monthly installments of Democracy Forum Sessions in Kathmandu.

**- Hriseekesh Upadhyay**

General Secretary

### Notice

We would like to make the FAAN Newsletter as informative as possible. We request members to keep in touch with us and thus with the rest of the Fulbright Family. Share, promotions, transfer, etc. etc. Also, is there any social function, celebration -a wedding, bhai tika, mha puja functions, bartaman or paasni-that you would like to share with our fulbrighters from across the seas? Would you like to invite them for a Home Visit and share with them a bit of Nepali hospitality and culture? Let us know so that we can facilitate the home visits.

**For further information :**  
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