

Bel Prasad Shrestha
**The Man
Behind Dhulikhel**

Editor
Hari Manjushree

The Man Behind Dhulikhel

Publisher



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Bel Prasad Shrestha: The Man Behind Dhulikhel

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The Guardian of Dhulikhel

I fell in love with Dhulikhel on my first visit in August 2000 when I came to see the hilly town after being selected for a faculty position in Kathmandu University. I wanted to see whether I could build a family and settle down here, with the prospect of a long-term teaching job in the University. When I began to live in the University quarters, and became a part of the local life, the stories of development in Dhulikhel began to unfold to me gradually. Every story I heard carried a common character: Mr. Bel Prasad Shrestha.

I met Mr. Shrestha (aka Bel Dai) on many occasions in the ensuing days. All our meetings were fairly short and very formal. In all these short interactions, he was inquisitive, friendly, easygoing and hospitable. It was as if he wished to inspire every new visitor, every potentially good human being, to love and settle down in his little town permanently.

I have always seen him as a guardian. He has seen me as a University teacher and a scholar. For more than 17 years, I have been a witness to Dhulikhel growing and changing. So many years I have wanted to spend long hours with Bel Dai to listen to his stories in his own words. The moment is yet to come!!

I was handed this book with a request for a foreword. Initially, I pondered: was I expected to read and comment on it in the same ordinary manner as for other books? To me, as a reader of a book about Bel Prasad Shrestha, it was a responsibility as much as an opportunity. The responsibility was that I had to say as much as the book deserved because it deserved good words. It also offered an opportunity to better get to know Bel Dai and Dhulikhel through a single collection of first-hand

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sketches presented by his close friends, acquaintances and long-term colleagues.

Bel Prasad Shrestha – The Man Behind Dhulikhel, whose very persona embodies Dhulikhel is presented to us almost as a rags to riches narrative. More importantly, it unfolds a simple thesis that depicts Dhulikhel as a prominent place worth documentation in history's pages. It also rightly presents Mr. Bel Prasad Shrestha as the main factor who has been Dhulikhel's almost singular 'driving force' through his stable leadership. To put it another way, the book mainly demonstrates the truth that any rural settlement that dreams of and bears potential for the boons of modernization, requires a leader with vision and dedication like that of Bel Prasad Shrestha. A majority of the writers here stress that true leadership does not necessarily come from political grooming, but from the spirit of service, entrepreneurship, and the involvement of local people.

Through the pages of this book, readers can easily infer the economic, social, infrastructural, and educational history of Dhulikhel and the evidence of Bel Prasad Shrestha's major share in the making of that history. The portrayals of his love for the place, his passion for the service of his townsmen, his consistent and effective communication skills, and his skills in the generation and utilization of resources all make this book a good reference on development and local governance. As a number of its contributors have said, Bel Dai's example and this book should inspire other contemporary local government leaders and convince them of the value of public engagement and of ceaseless struggle for success.

The book immortalizes the guardian of Dhulikhel. May it have sustained readership. I also wish a healthy, productive and long life for Bel Dai.

- Dr. Hem Raj Kafle
Kathmandu University

Editorial

Dhulikhel:

Dhulikhel is well-known all-over Nepal these days. Its fame has reached even outside the country. Why is the place so popular?

- A) From Dhulikhel you can see beautiful view of mountain and valleys. Dhulikhel stands between hilly region and *Chure Bhawar* area and adjusts different environmental conditions between them.
- B) Dhulikhel is just 30 kilometers from Kathmandu and, thanks to the facility of transportation, nicely connected to the capital.
- C) There are different religious spots around and they all are of ancient and historical importance.
- D) Due to adequate lodge and resorts in the area, all services for local and foreign tourists are available here. Tourists arriving at Kathmandu also come here to view the scenic beauty of mountains and study the lifestyle of Nepali people.
- E) There is no environmental pollution in this city even after having all services available, it has managed to avoid almost all negative aspects found in a city.
- F) Dhulikhel and its surrounding areas are populated by *Newar, Tamang, Chhetri* and *Brahmins*. This diversity provides a great opportunity for study and research on Nepalese people, cultural, religious or anthropological aspects.
- G) Dhulikhel and places nearby have archaeological and historical interest for researchers.
- H) Araniko highway touches Dhulikhel which makes it an important place for business with China. After China-India road network, Dhulikhel will reach its peak as a center.

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- I) Banepa-Bardiwas road (from the capital to Eastern Region) also goes through Dhulikhel providing shortest connection from the capital to the east.
- J) Businessmen of *Newar* community renowned as 'Dhulikhele' have spread throughout Nepal helping the fame of Dhulikhel to reach far and wide.
- K) Dhulikhel drinking water project has been considered a model project in Nepal.
- L) No municipality of Nepal has its own university like Dhulikhel does. Kathmandu University brings students from all over the country and beyond.
- M) Dhulikhel Hospital is a model community hospital in Nepal.
- N) Despite having differences in political opinions, *Dhulikhele* people are unified as a community for development work.
- O) Working hard expecting nothing from government for their community is a very special character of the people here.

Context of Bel Prasad Shrestha:

Bel Prasad Shrestha: This name has now been a synonym to 'Dhulikhel' for people inside and outside the country. He is the lead of this book. He has provided leadership in the following areas:

- A) Transforming *Dhulikhel Nagar Panchayat* from *Gaun Panchayat*.
- B) Creating a benchmark for the future lodge and resorts of Dhulikhel by opening 'Dhulikhel Lodge'
- C) Deploying foreigners to the development work of Dhulikhel since he met them as a Nepali language instructor to Peace Corps volunteers and during his time as Dhulikhel municipality chief.
- D) Gathering everybody's support and assistance in every development related work.
- E) Running drinking water project management including running of taps, toilets and sewers systems.
- F) Establishing different schools and reconstruction of existing schools.

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- G) Making available necessary lands for Kathmandu University and Dhulikhel Hospital and providing necessary assistance as a member of the University senate and board of trustee.
- H) Doing road expansion and re-construction of other roads.
- I) Starting campaign to stop different kinds of pollution.
- J) Being actively involved for playgrounds and *Hazaar Sindhee* along with 'Dreamland Project'.
- K) Being actively involved in many of the organizations and institutions and providing services through them.
- L) Creating a perfect example of how one can contribute to the society from ground level without having a big position, huge budget or political power.

Purpose of this book:

- A) Keeping record of a man who works for the society as a role model for the next generation.
- B) Keeping the history alive to inspire the future generation.
- C) Developing the culture of honoring a hardworking individual during his lifetime.
- D) Reflecting that no-one's contribution should be overlooked and history should not be forgotten.
- E) Helping our coming generation follow all the good deeds of their previous generation.
- F) Showing that if someone has true desire for development, dissimilar political opinions do not matter.
- G) Presenting an example that the government cannot work against the will of a community if the community is united to work for the greater good.
- H) Presenting an example that a community should not just sit their hands folded depending entirely on their government.
- I) Showing an example that if one has strong willpower and self-confidence, any challenge can be faced easily.
- J) Sending a message to show that Dhulikhel has been developing in all fields.
- K) Sending a message that if one has financial transparency, donor's help would not be a barrier.

Issues addressed by this book:

The book contains detailed introduction to both Dhulikhel and Bel Prasad Shrestha. Furthermore, it has raised certain issues to be addressed by the people of Dhulikhel indirectly. Studying all the articles, some of the major points raised are:

- A) Not only contemporaries of Bel Prasad Shrestha, the earlier generations have also been doing social services and their contributions should also be recorded and published as well.
- B) Dhulikhel should establish bodies working on language, literature, religion, culture and other form of arts as well.
- C) Every person, whether inside or outside Dhulikhel area working for betterment and progress of Dhulikhel should be honored or motivated to do more.
- D) Kathmandu University and Dhulikhel Hospital should go through an internationalization process so that Dhulikhel could also stand out for education, culture and health.
- E) In the name of modernization, the things that reflect the original identity of Dhulikhel should not be destroyed.
- F) Dhulikhel should welcome more talented and successful people and take maximum advantage of their skills.

Context of gratitude:

Many people deserve special thanks for the publication of the book. I would like to give them a big thanks:

- A) To all the writers involved who expressed their feelings, experience and sentiments in the book along with the context of development- activities of Dhulikhel.
- B) To Dr. Vaskar Humagain and Er. Roshan Adhikari for translating these important articles from 'Dhulikhel Ka Sarathi Bel Prasad Shrestha' to English language.
- C) To Dr. Hem Raj Kafle for his preface on the book.
- D) To 'Shabdayatra Prakashan for giving me an opportunity to edit and publish the book.

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**Editor
Hari Manjushree**

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Bel Prasad and Education

- Aidan Warlow

In the autumn of 1997, I was a tourist happily staying in the Himalayan Horizon Hotel. The very friendly owner of the hotel introduced himself and we had coffee together on the terrace. It gradually became clear to me that he was the Mayor of Dhulikhel with links to Kathmandu University. He knew I was an educationalist in Britain. He asked me, "What can we do to make schools better in Dhulikhel?"

I said, "Maybe you should set up one very good school that can become a model for others to copy."

He seemed to like what I said. It appeared to match an idea already being proposed at Kathmandu University to set up a new school for its own faculty staff families. Within minutes he was on the phone to the Vice Chancellor who joined us on the terrace immediately. And soon after that the three of us were walking round the campus identifying a suitable site.

I slowly realized that I had talked myself into a job. I was to be Principal of the new school - start in four months' time, no buildings, no staff, no idea what sort of school we were creating. A daunting opportunity, yet challenging.

Bel Prasad was marvelous. He was my Chairman but generally left me to get on with the job without interference. He was always at hand when I needed him. I found a defunct hotel to use as a temporary school building. Bel Prasad promptly negotiated a lease for it. I needed financial and moral support from the town's leaders. Bel Prasad promptly organized a committee of supporters who came up with generous subscriptions.

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And so, he became a sort of father figure for my school, always interested in what was going on; always there when he needed him. I was particularly pleased when his own grandchildren became my students.

Bel Prasad's concern for education in the Dhulikhel area was of great importance. He never claimed to be an educationalist himself but he had an instinct for knowing what was needed and he made sure that right action was taken. His greatest achievement was facilitating the establishment of Kathmandu University in the town. He pushed the landowners into providing space for the campus. He made sure the other town leaders understood the value of what was happening. We can now see that Kathmandu University, together with Dhulikhel Teaching Hospital, Dhulikhel Medical Institute and Kathmandu University High School, have brought far more wealth and employment to the area than tourism. Education and Health are Dhulikhel's new big industries.

At a more grassroots level, Bel Prasad was largely instrumental in establishing Dhulikhel's Quality Education Project which set out to improve resources and teaching standards in the local government schools. Many of these schools suffered from low morale and lack of staff training. An increasing number of families were transferring their children to new private boarding schools. The Quality Education Project didn't solve all these problems but definite improvements were made. Without Bel Prasad's support much less would have been achieved.

A month ago, I came back to Dhulikhel after a four-year absence to rejoin KU High School. I invited Bel Prasad to speak at our Parents Day event. As always, he made his audience laugh as well as think seriously. That was often his style; make a few very good jokes to gain people's support and then come up with wise comments that have a real impact; Dhulikhel owes a great deal to him.

Dhulikhel: Making It Happen **- Bhagirath Yogi**

Until a decade back, Dhulikhel was a small, traditional town, a business hub on the way from Kathmandu to Kodari, which borders Tibet. Overshadowed by its larger neighbor Banepa, Dhulikhel was only a non-descript town away from the attention of the political masters of Kathmandu.

No longer. With its community-run Kathmandu University, the well-equipped community-run Dhulikhel Hospital and a community managed Water Supply system, Dhulikhel now has a distinct identity. Behind this 'silent revolution' is a dedicated visionary - Bel Prasad (B.P.) Shrestha. Originally elected to the Pradhan Pancha of then Dhulikhel Town Panchayat many years ago, B.P. has since then twice been elected mayor of Dhulikhel.

Dhulikhel is situated at 5100 ft. above sea level and is surrounded by the panoramic snow peaks of Himalayan ranges on the north, and green belts of Mahabharat ranges to the south. The municipality now consists of 9 wards and has a total area of 1087 hectares. It has been the headquarters of Kavre district since the regime of late King Prithvi Narayan Shah.

The municipality's more than 11,000 people are engaged in agriculture, business and service. Very few have other jobs. About 42% of families are poor while only 4% have good economic status. Approximately 35,000 children are enrolled in Dhulikhel's 20 schools, six of which are privately run, 12 government-funded and 2 primary schools funded by the municipality. The number of enrollees exceeds 100% of Dhulikhel's school age children, as children from outside the municipality enter its schools.

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Most of the people in the municipality belong to the ethnic Newar community. The largely homogeneous composition of the municipal area may have been the main factor behind community and social works for common good. With devoted social worker and hotelier B. P. Shrestha, as their leader, the people of Dhulikhel had only new goals to achieve.

When he first became Mayor in 1991, B.P.'s first test was to find a source of drinking water for the parched town. With the help of local community, he was able to identify a water source at Panchakanya, about 13 km from the municipality. Inaugurated in December 1997, the project supplies 5,50,000 liters of water daily to nearly 7000 people in the municipal area. Out of the total project cost of Rs. 37.6 million, the German government provided a grant assistance equivalent to Rs. 35.7 million. The project, probably the best of its kind in Nepal, is now considered a model consumer-managed project by agencies like the World Bank.

Soon after the multi-party system was restored in 1990, the educationist Prof. Dr. Suresh Raj Sharma and his team were looking for a place where they could set up Nepal's first private sector led university in the vicinity of Kathmandu. Dhulikhel Mayor B.P. Shrestha took the initiative and had the foresight to offer 200 ropanis of land free of cost and the Kathmandu University was set up in Dhulikhel in 1991. "KU is purely a public institution," says Prof. Sharma. "What we want is an institution based on the government-community participation. As such an institution doesn't have to wait for the decisions from the government bureaucracy; it will help in the operations."

Five years later, a young medical doctor gave up his well-established profession in Austria to launch a hospital in Dhulikhel. Dr. Ram Kantha Makaju pulled in his contacts and resources from his beautiful adopted European country to set up and run a state-of-the art hospital in Dhulikhel. Inaugurated

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in December 1996, Dhulikhel Hospital is a collaborative project between Dhulikhel Municipality, Nepalimed VlbG. Austria and Dhulikhel Health Services Association. Sprawled over 46 ropanis of land, the 50-bed hospital provides services to nearly 150 OPD patients every day as well as 24-hour emergency services. About 3,000 surgical operations take place at the hospital every year; nearly half of which are major ones. "We carry out complete endoscopic and laproscopic operations here as good as anywhere in the world" said Dr. Makaju.

The list doesn't end here. A University of Buddhist philosophy has been proposed for Dhulikhel and with the support of local community, KU has also developed a full-fledged medical college in Dhulikhel on 500 ropanis of land. A proposed Technology Park could not take off because the land allocated for it was used by the Sindhuli-Bardibas road. That very road however, has opened up new economic opportunities for the region and serves as an all-important alternative land route linking Kathmandu to central and eastern Nepal. A number of quality restaurants, lodges and resorts have opened up in Dhulikhel to attract both domestic and international tourists who can now enjoy glimpses of majestic Himalayas, a peaceful nature, hiking or rafting.

"I want to make Dhulikhel a pollution-free, rural city, rich in cultural heritage with immense tourist potential," said the mayor, who used to walk around the city early in the morning asking people to dispose of their garbage timed for pick up by the municipality's tractor. Now people are so attuned to it that when the bells ring, they know that it is time to take their garbage out.

"The marketplace is comparatively cleaner now and people don't throw the wastes along the road." said Ram Krishna Byanju, a local shopkeeper. The Economic potential of Dhulikhel is immense. Kavre's farmers are important providers of milk and fresh vegetables for the people of Kathmandu.

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Situated 74 km southwest of Kodari, Dhulikhel offers all-important trade links with the Tibetan autonomous region of China. With an industrial district along Kodari highway, Dhulikhel may emerge as an important trade point in near future.

The Entertainment Park at the Tundikhel, the Dhulikhel Technical School, its Quality Education Project and the Dhulikhel Conservation Project all are brain children of B. P. Shrestha. He has invested his time and energy in all these projects to take off and is a happy person to see things moving.

One of the positive aspects of these developments is that new sustainable institutions have been set up over this period of time will only grow and expand in the days to come. Some analysts cite Dhulikhel as proof that individuals have to take leadership in order to make things happen and that individuals need to design their own systems rather than wait the system to function. People, ideas and resources are not enough without effective leadership.

Those working in Dhulikhel think that local people will come out to help sustain the developmental activities taking place in the municipal area. "Whether it is education, drinking water or a playground, people's participation here is highly encouraging," said Ganga Ram Gautam, coordinator of the Quality Education Project (QEP) in Dhulikhel municipality. "The main strength of the projects run here is that we have very much encouraged community participation in the project activities in every stage which is a key for its success in terms of sustainable development."

Before carrying out any activity, the municipality invites the communities and discusses the proposed activities with them. The details of the developmental work are then prepared and participation of the community is then decided. "Community mobilization is an integral part of our projects which has so far been very successful and sustainable," said

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Gautam. "As far as the leadership issue is concerned, it cannot be said whether there will be someone like the present Mayor."

Others don't agree. "I don't think there will be a leadership crisis in Dhulikhel in the future because it has become prestigious to be in the leadership of Dhulikhel municipality," said Bikram Subba, a development worker, who has observed activities in Kavre district from close quarters. "A young leadership has already emerged which will be instrumental in furthering the process of local development."

Local people have already taken the initiative to set up a 'Natural and History Museum' and a Science Center in the municipality. A playground cum stadium is under construction with the support of the Japanese government, HMG/Nepal and local people. A German architect, Mr. Wolfgang, is working as a volunteer to develop a master plan to preserve historic buildings, temples and community places.

Such developments can be broad based and sustainable only if supplemented by similar efforts in the adjoining areas, say experts. "There should be a master plan involving Dhulikhel, Banepa and Panauti municipalities in an integrated way," said Amrit Rai, an urban planner. "The Banepa-Bardibas road has opened up new development corridor for this region which needs to be tapped properly."

The long-term Dhulikhel Structural Plan (1989 - 2004) prepared with the support of UNDP/World Bank can serve as a basis for the further planned development of Dhulikhel. The 1991 Integrated Action Plan for Dhulikhel was prepared through joint efforts of Urban Development of Housing and Urban development of HMG/Nepal. The plan identified projects which could be undertaken by the municipality over the next five years by mobilizing local resources.

While deteriorating law and order situation is becoming a major problem in rural areas, businessmen in town are worried that the Kathmandu-centric development pattern

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could leave them high and dry. "What is needed is a rural-urban partnership approach to tap local potential," says Rai. "The role of the government agencies and donors should be that, of strategic facilitator only."

For this, there is no lacking of vision. "We are trying to make this a model municipality for the South Asian region," said B. P. Shrestha. It will not be a distant dream provided he continues to mobilize his community for further development of Dhulikhel.

Spotlight, Aug 25-31, 2000



Bel Prasad: The creator of Modern Dhulikhel - Bharat Jangam

There are many stories regarding how Dhulikhel got its name. Some say the name is derived from wind and dust (dust=*dhulo*). A more plausible explanation is that the name comes from the Newari language name which was *Dhoukhel*. In Newari, *Dhau* means curd or yogurt (Dahi) and it can be assumed that animal husbandry nurtured by fodder from Dhulikhel's surrounding green hills and the many milk products produced here caused it to be called *Dhoukhel* and later, Dhulikhel.

In Dhulikhel town, most people in the Newar community are involved in business and are considered skilled businessmen. Many of the business people in Ramechhap, Okhaldhunga, Bhojpur, Dhankuta, Dharan, Pashupatingar and even Indian towns like Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Sikkim can trace their ancestry to Dhulikhel.

Not many years ago Dhulikhel was nothing more than a quiet town and rather a dull place. Walking over the hilly terrain from Khadpu and Banepa one reached the old city of Dhulikhel and saw a few houses, stone-paved streets, open sewers and dirty ponds. Ducks, dogs and pigs roamed free.

Around 2020 B.S. (1965 CE) construction began on Kodari-Kathmandu highway and the number of tourists coming to Dhulikhel gradually increased, but the services provided were poor. Most of the tourists were hippies who used to camp on Dhulikhel's Tundikhel (open field) in their tents. Gradually a few small-scale lodges were built. All the supplies for foreign tourists, including food and shelter used to

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come from Kathmandu. No buses like today. No phones. Buses used to run up to Banepa, but usually people walked.

That was the Dhulikhel I first saw half a century ago. Even though the town's outer appearance has changed, Dhulikhel remains the same in its inner core, at least in spirit. Physically, it has been transformed. During the Rana dynasty, the kingdom was divided into various administrative areas. The country was divided east and west outside of Kathmandu Valley and numbered 1 to 4. What is today known as Kavre district was then called Eastern (Purba) 1 Number, which began at Sanga Bhanjyang and also included the administrative areas Kavrepalanchok and Sindhupalchok. The Rana period administrative chief of Purba 1 lived in Chautara and was called the *Bada Hakim*. Dhulikhel was the headquarters of Kavrepalanchok, except for the Bada Hakim, all district level government offices, e.g., Malpot (Land reform) office and the court were located in Dhulikhel.

There has long been a kind of rivalry between Dhulikhel and Banepa. Despite the short distance between them, for many years Dhulikhel lagged behind Banepa as a business center. Even during the Licchavi Period, for centuries Banepa which is called *Bhont* in Newari, was a major trading center for the Nepal- Tibet trade. Banepa is still the dominant Kavre business town even now.

By developing tourism and other businesses in Dhulikhel, Bel Prasad Shrestha challenged this historical imbalance and has not only proved himself as a successful businessman but also helped convert his town into a tourist hub. He has indeed transformed Dhulikhel.

In the 1980s, when Dhulikhel was still a Village Panchayat, Bel Prasad Shrestha entered politics and became the Pradhan Pancha (mayor) of Dhulikhel. Thanks to the tremendous efforts of Bel Prasad and other political people and social workers from Dhulikhel, the town finally became a Nagar Panchayat during the 1980's, an accomplishment that Banepa was unable to pull off.

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I was first introduced to Bel Prasad in about 2044 B.S. when he was the Pradhan Pancha. He was a good friend of my elder brother, Durga Prasad Shastri and the two of them arrived at my house one fine morning. After that, I always thought of Bel Prasad as if he too was my own elder brother.

Bel Prasad and my brother explained that Dhulikhel had just announced its new status as a Nagar Panchayat and they needed my help because the town was facing a financial crisis. There was not even a car in Dhulikhel at that time and converting old Village Panchayat's office to city panchayat was a difficult and costly task. They wanted to strengthen Dhulikhel Nagar Panchayat financially and thought that perhaps Hari Bol Bhattarai, then the Pradhan Pancha (mayor) of Kathmandu city could help. I knew Hari Bol Bhattarai very well because he used to live in my house and we were bonded by a strong emotional relationship.

At the time, Kathmandu City Panchayat was empowered to collect a local tax called *chungikar*. Bel Prasad and my elder brother thought that perhaps Kathmandu and its Mayor might be able to assist Dhulikhel with a similar arrangement to build its own revenues. For my part, I was sure that Hari Bol Bhattarai would not deny any reasonable request for assistance that I might make of him.

So shortly afterwards I arranged a meeting in Dhulikhel with Kathmandu Pradhan Pancha Mr. Hari Bol Bhattarai, his Upapradhan Pancha (vice mayor) Mr. Tirtha Man Dangol, Dhulikhel's Bel Prasad Shrestha, my brother Durga Prasad Shastri and myself. The five of us sat and brain-stormed on how to make Dhulikhel City Panchayat financially viable. The result was that Kathmandu pledged to help Dhulikhel with financial advice.

During the half century I have been observing Dhulikhel, I have seen so much development right in front of my eyes. Most of it is thanks to none other than Mr. Bel Prasad Shrestha, successful businessman, politician and social worker, the *Creator of Modern Dhulikhel*.

Mr. Bel and Dhulikhel's Development - Bihari Krishna Shrestha

In 1971, when I was a Section Officer of the government, I was invited by the American Peace Corps office in Nepal to direct its first ever in-country training program for 27 new Peace Corps Volunteers. That was when I first met Bel Prasad Shrestha or 'Mr. Bel', as we fondly addressed him later. He had already worked with Peace Corps as the program's language coordinator, a role in which, despite his engineering background, he had firmly established his credentials. Already it was obvious that there was much more to Mr. Bel than met the eye. Since the Peace Corps wanted to hold the training away from the urban bustle of Kathmandu, Mr. Bel had already successfully arranged it to be held in Dhulikhel, his then sleepy little, predominantly Newari hometown, which had only recently already been connected to the capital by the Chinese-built Kathmandu-Tibet road. His own huge traditional 5-storied Newari house was hastily converted into a makeshift hostel for the 27 American trainees, both boys and girls, by installing temporary wooden partitions and basic washing and sanitation facilities.

These were installed in the courtyard, but constantly under-performed due to chronic water shortages in the area. Ram Bhandari of Thapathali, the best among the few caterers in Kathmandu in those days, was contracted to provide the meals. However, in a comical show to mark the training's end, the hotel was accused of 'unleashing gas warfare' against the Americans', because its food generated lots of gas in the Americans' stomachs.

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For the Peace Corps volunteers, those experiences marked their introduction to 'culture shock' with which they were to live with during their two-year sojourn in Nepal. In hindsight, for the inhabitants of Dhulikhel, that event marked the town's first major step into modernity. Soon afterwards, the hostel was re-designed as Dhulikhel Lodge, thus, incidentally giving us the distinction of being the very first customers of the very first hotel in Dhulikhel town. Dhulikhel Lodge, now relocated and renamed as Hotel Himalayan Horizon, is one of the most popular of the many tourist facilities in the scenic town and it all happened thanks to 'Mr. Bel'.

During those days, Dhulikhel was confronted with a major challenge that could affect its destiny for all the times to come. As the district capital of Kavrepalanchok, the town hosted a large number of government offices and officials, which was both a matter of pride and a ready source of business for the townspeople. But the town's drinking water system, which had been built some decades earlier, became increasingly nonfunctional, to the point where the government offices threatened to shift to the rival and larger town of Banepa, some four kilometers downhill to the west. Since Mr. Bel was increasingly seen as the change maker in the town, the Dhulikhel denizens looked upon him to do something about the problem even as he willingly took it upon himself to do so. He led a small team of local youths in their quest for solving the problem.

Although it was more than three decades ago, Nepal was already in the grip of foreign aid, i.e., people looked to foreign aid agencies for help in doing something about their problems. Mr. Bel and his team, as they frequently moved between Dhulikhel and Kathmandu, had noticed the Germans ferociously at work in Bhaktapur, restoring that archeological town for posterity and providing basic amenities such as paved roads, drinking water, drainage and so on. So, with some effort, the Dhulikhel team managed to get close enough to the German

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technical cooperation agency (GTZ), to present their case. This team incessantly coaxed and cajoled them to the point that it would require a formal letter from the government so that they could act on the latter's request.

Some five years later, around 1976, Mr. Bel ran into me again, this time when I was working as an Under Secretary in the Local Development Department. He and his friends were looking for some support for his drinking water mission. On that very first visit, I, wrote a letter to the Foreign Aid Division of the Ministry of Finance, based on their application for support, requesting the Ministry to line up the necessary resources for solving Dhulikhel's acute drinking water problem.

I recall telling Mr. Bel and his friends that the letter was not more than a 'first shot on goal' in what could be a long football game and it would take a lot of persistence before the ball would eventually pass the 'goalpost'. Mr. Bel immediately carried my letter to the Finance Ministry because it took several days for an official letter to make it to the relevant desk of another office. The Ministry of Finance then became the Dhulikhel team's new target for their continuing campaign of coaxing, cajoling, beseeching and even occasional threats and protests.

Mr. Bel found himself more and more drawn into developing Dhulikhel. The town at that time was merely a village Panchayat which received only meager grants from the government, which were in turn channeled through the District Panchayat office. On the other hand, Town Panchayats had a better standing, received more grants, and also could raise road tolls on the imports and exports from the town. The three towns of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, together had installed a tax collection depot at Thankot and had been sharing the enormous proceeds, based on their respective populations. If Dhulikhel were to become a Town Panchayat, it too could get a share of that pie.

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By the mid-80s a new round of elections for the parliament, then called National Panchayat, was taking place in the country. Mr. Bel and his team, along with the citizens of Dhulikhel decided to use those elections as an opportunity for upgrading the town's political status. They negotiated with one of the strongest candidates in the election and ensured that the entire town's ballots would cast in his favor, in exchange for his promise that once elected, he would guarantee that the town would become a Town Panchayat. The politician was elected, went on to become the Foreign Minister, delivered on his promise and Dhulikhel became a Town Panchayat in 1986. Bel Prasad Shrestha became its first Pradhan Pancha, or Mayor.

As for the drinking water plant, it did turn out to be a long 'football game' with the Dhulikhel activists running between pillar and post all the time, but it was finally approved by the UDLE (Urban Development through Local Effort), the urban development wing of the German aid agency GTZ, in 1986, and its construction finally got under way in 1987. Still, it was not a smooth affair locally either. The Dhulikhel leaders had to go through enormous hassles, because the water had to be brought from a distant source and all the settlements en-route wanted some benefits as payment for allowing Dhulikhel the right of passage for the water. Dhulikhel was required to and did build schools or small drinking water schemes in the settlements all along the way.

In 1989 I was the joint secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning, responsible for drinking water sector and therefore, also for the Dhulikhel Project. As the innovator of the concept of user groups in the government's decentralization policy, I was aware that the user control of management system was vital for the sustainable management of any development project, including the Dhulikhel Project.

However, the Department of Drinking Water and Sewerage under my Ministry ran all such projects directly with their own people resulting in considerable inconvenience to

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Dhulikhel because of DWS's unresponsive management. So, I personally took it upon myself to design a user-based management system for the project, the first such urban drinking water project whose management was entrusted to an autonomous users' group.

This is when I had extensive discussions with the Mayor Mr. Bel, his municipality members and with a cross-section of potential users in the town. An ad hoc user committee headed by Mayor Mr. Bel himself worked throughout the construction phase. A full-fledged 'user committee' was formed in 1993 on the basis of a one-tap one-vote election system. It has since gone through three elections even as it has managed the drinking water system very effectively. The drinking water scheme and its model user managed urban system became the first (and unfortunately remains the only one of its kind in the country. It still draws many visitors from inside and outside the country.

Despite the unduly long time it took to materialize, the water project has emerged as the prime mover of Dhulikhel. Because of the availability of good water supply and other facilities offered by the municipality under Mr. Bel's leadership, many modern institutions have moved in there and bring with them clients from far and wide. Kathmandu University was established in the south-west of the town in 1991. It has six important faculties and is rated as being by far the most outstanding seat of higher education in the country. Affiliated to this university is also a medical school run as part of the 160-bed non-government and non-profit Dhulikhel Hospital which is equipped with most advanced surgery and diagnostic facilities and attracts patients from far and wide. The town is also a very popular destination for tourists due to its fantastic panoramic view of the Himalayan range. It now has 24 hotels with 302 rooms, of which two major ones belong to Mr. Bel and his brother. Although 77% of the town's total area is used for agriculture, only 29% of its workforce is engaged in the farming sector.

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While Dhulikhel has come a long way from what it used to be only three decades ago, many more projects are in the offing. By all accounts, the town is one of the most prosperous in the country and remains committed to the fast-track growth that has now spanned the last three decades.

One unmistakable lesson from the nature and pace of Dhulikhel development has been that committed and persevering leadership that is dedicated to the greater good of the community and nation makes a world of difference. That was what Mr. Bel has been during these years. Mr. Bel has also shown, however unwittingly, that when genuine growth takes place in the community, the leader himself becomes a beneficiary.

Along with the growth of Dhulikhel, Mr. Bel has grown in stature and in material standing. He was the Mayor of the town for three consecutive terms, commanded the near universal respect of the local populace and emerged as an example at the national stage, all at the same time. He also went on to own one of the biggest hotels in Dhulikhel, The Himalayan Horizon Hotel Sun 'n' Snow Pvt. Ltd. Despite his age and prosperity, he remains a passionate visionary about the development of Dhulikhel. His shining example proves that Nepal needs many more Bel Prasad Shrestha's for the making of 'The New Nepal.'



The Utilization of External Resources for a Municipality: The Experiences of the Mayor of Dhulikhel

- Bishnudatta Gautam

Introduction

In any democratic society, local units are crucial bodies for the effective implementation of development activities. Accordingly, local bodies must have the resources and authority so that the representatives will be able to perform according to the expectations of the citizens. The central government allocates certain levels of budget grants to these local units, but those amounts are almost always insufficient for the task at hand. That's why local bodies have the authority to manage local funds by borrowing from other institutions or receiving loan grants from home or abroad.

In the Nepali context, municipalities' financial resources are largely comprised of the local development tax along with the grants from the central government. Even though municipalities can levy taxes on businesses, service, integrated assets, advertisements and so on, they have largely failed to do so. They can also obtain loans from Town Development Fund (*Nagar Bikash Kosh*), financial institutions and commercial banks, but very few have adequately exercised this option. Borrowing money from international agencies and governments is even rarer because most municipalities in Nepal are not organizationally prepared or sophisticated enough to do so. There are, however, some municipalities which have been able to tap and manage external sources for their development and Dhulikhel Municipality is one. I'll try

below to shed some light on the achievements made by this municipality.

The State of the Utilization of External Resources

Dhulikhel Municipality has been using external resources for the development of infrastructure since its establishment in 2043 B.S., but not without challenges. For example, in order to take advantage of the donation it received from GTZ for the Dhulikhel Development Project, Dhulikhel had to become a Nagar Panchayat, or municipality. Once this was accomplished, some very important undertakings were built under the project, including a drinking water system that supplied the city with water from a spring 14 kilometers away using pipes imported from Germany as well as stone-paved lanes, roads, squares and drainages.

Dhulikhel had an annual income of Rs. 225,540.84 with Government grant Rs. 55,000 and internal income Rs. 170,540.84 (Source: Dhulikhel Municipality Memoir, 1997, pp. 43). Yet the municipality managed to run projects such as that for drinking water worth 30 to 40 million by utilization of external fund resources. Then, the construction of a well-equipped hospital kicked off. The municipality itself allocated six million. Local people donated about 30 ropanies of land for free. With the donations from local inhabitants, Nepal Med Austria, GTZ, AVSC America, USAID Nepal and so on, the hospital has been serving the people since 1996.

In addition to Dhulikhel Drinking Water Project and Dhulikhel Hospital, the municipality played a crucial role in establishing Kathmandu University. The municipality managed the acquisition of the necessary land, constructed the road to the building site and played a pivotal role in collecting all the funds for the establishment of the university. The university has become iconic because of its efficient leadership, the cooperation and the support of the local people and the municipality and the quality education it imparts to thousands of students from home and abroad.

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Established facilities like the hospital, the adequate supply of high-quality drinking water and the university have had cumulative effects on the development prospects of the region. The Quality Education Project is an example. Nearly Rs. 23.3 million (1.64 million from the Danish Government, 6.4 million from Dhulikhel Municipality, 500,000 from Kathmandu University) has been invested in Dhulikhel's community schools. In addition, this project also runs the Dhulikhel Medical Institute (DMI) to produce skilled man power. Every year, hundreds of Health Assistants, Staff Nurses and Lab Assistants pass out. Once again, the municipality, the university and the hospital have collaborated to positive effect.

The Dhulikhel Municipality administrative building is another instance of the utilization of external resources. The building in typical Nepalese architecture was built in two phases with a loan grant from the urban development fund. It was a bold undertaking of the municipality that in 1993-94 it dared to execute the project with a loan of about 15 million Rupees despite having limited sources.

In the same way, the municipality has made a fun park, constructed a science building for Sanjeevani Higher Secondary School and a school building for Shreekhandapur Primary School with a loan grant of 4.2 million from the same fund. Likewise, with a loan and grant from the fund, the municipality built drainage and stone-paved roads in Shreekhandapur.

Other notable examples of the utilization of external sources are:

- the construction of a playground built by obtaining land from five different institutions, including a Rs 5.3 million grant from Japan and collecting donations from the local inhabitants.
- obtaining a donation of about Rs. 30 million from the Indian government to construct an excellent auditorium hall at Kathmandu University.

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- Obtaining a grant and loan from the Asian Development Bank to executing the long-term plans like improving drinking water supply in the city, building drainages, building treatment plants, improving city roads, developing integrated settlements in order to develop the healthy environment in the city.
- conducting several programs with the assistance received from agencies like GNHA, UN Habitat, ADRA Nepal, DED and German Embassy.

The Secret of Success

Many factors account for Dhulikhel municipality's success in mobilizing external funds. However, the most important factor is the leadership. Mr. Bel Prasad Shrestha's leadership from the time of its inception has been invaluable. There are very few municipalities which were fortunate to have the same person in the steering seat for such a long time.

I remember one incident in 1998. In those days the mobilization of internal sources was very poor and needed to be improved because after all, internal resources were the most sustainable source of income for any municipality. I was trying to find a way out to increase the sources of internal income when the idea of charging consumers for drinking water, drainage maintenance and sanitation flashed in my mind. I shared the idea with Bel Prasad Shrestha. "How much can we collect?" he asked I quickly calculated and replied, "about 300 to 400 thousand rupees." Then he said "Let's not lay this burden on the consumers for this. I can go to Kathmandu and easily fetch this amount from any of the donor agencies."

He was right. Donor agencies were only too pleased to receive such proposals, provided they could be assured that their money would be used wisely. There is a saying that alms should only be given to those who deserve them. Bel Prasad Shrestha and Dhulikhel municipality have proved their worth more than once.

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Bel Prasad Shrestha was aware that it was very difficult for a small municipality without large scale enterprises and industries to generate revenues so he always focused on tapping external funds for large projects.

Bel Prasad Shrestha knew that the first year of his tenure as mayor would be consumed by attempting getting to know and understand the personnel and in trying to figure out the problems of the municipality and that the last year of his five-year term would spent on planning for the next election. So, there would merely be three years for the constructive activities. So, he formulated his schedule for every month and planned small and big projects with the consultation of a team that was comprised of a group of professionals and civic society.

I had the opportunity to work under his leadership as a member of his task force for about three years. During this period, I was able to learn lots of things from this task force of professionals. A number of exemplary works took place during this period. He had played a crucial role for the desirable environment for those developmental activities as the leader of the municipality. He never intervened on the ideas and approaches of professionals. He always was and is imaginative in nature. Because of this character, he is always thinking of some newer and better ideas on development projects. He would then share the idea with the team of professionals and the professionals would convert the idea into proposals that would then be submitted to the donor agencies.

Bel Prasad Shrestha had a clear vision on the importance of mutual understanding and the delineation between the roles of representatives of the people and of the executive branch of municipal government. Very often would he say, 'My job is to bring innovation, and yours to execute it, *Hakim Saab* (officer) ' Once the MOU with the donor party was signed, he would explain, 'My job is done now, and the rest is up to you.' The culture of discharging own's responsibility with sincerity was

thus developed and everyone was inspired and obliged to it. This resulted in materialization of each plan in the designated time frame.

Conclusion

A municipality requires effective utilization of internal resources for large developmental activities. but many small ones must seek some external means to be realized. The success Dhulikhel municipality has achieved in this regard can be a lesson for other municipalities in the nation. Since the inception, Dhulikhel municipality had Bel Prasad Shrestha as mayor in the steering seat. His foresight, dynamism and commitment to the development made success in mobilizing external resources possible. Merely submitting a sound proposal to the grant agencies is not enough. The success of the plan relies on the effective execution and sustainable operation. Donor agencies must be satisfied that the funds have been properly used. Dhulikhel has been successful in fulfilling all these requirements. As a result, it doesn't have to worry about funding in the future. This has all been possible because Prasad Shrestha was mayor for more than sixteen years. His tenure was exemplary.



Belji of Dhulikhel

- Cheryl Colopy

I first heard of Bel Prasad Shrestha five years before I met him. An article in the Nepali Times lauded his efforts to establish a water system in the town of Dhulikhel while he was its Mayor. I clipped it and set it aside. Fifteen miles from Kathmandu was a municipal utility that put Kathmandu's to shame. I wanted to know more.

Perhaps I saved Bel Prasad for last, expecting the visit to Dhulikhel to be a pleasant excursion—a hopeful encounter that would show me that the breakdown of urban management I saw every day in Kathmandu was not an inevitable part of development in Nepal. After all those discouraging discussions about Melamchi and about Kathmandu sewage and water supply problems, perhaps I was going to meet a Newar who had a gift for water like his ancient forebears.

I went to Dhulikhel the day before May Day, 2010, when Nepal's Maoists were planning to outdo their usual May Day Celebrations with protests all over the city. They were massing their cadres in Kathmandu, ostensibly to pressure the prime minister of another party to resign.

On a Friday Morning I get out with my friend Ram, a Kathmandu taxi driver who was always available when I needed to venture out on a longer excursion. The shocks on his little white Maruti Suzuki were shot, as they were on more taxis in Kathmandu, but Ram was a good driver who knew all the roads and back roads.

Aside from worries about being able to return to the city in the face of demonstrations and roadblocks— or perhaps the

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complete countrywide shutdown that the Maoists were threatening- Dhulikhel was a green and quiet escape, a fine place to wait out urban riots if any were to materialize. And I found a charming host in Bel Prasad, a unique and now elderly gentleman who had straddled the wide gulf between the rural Nepal of his childhood and the world he had seen in visits to Europe, America, and Japan. He had knit ideas from these two worlds together in ways both clever and inspiring. Here was a social entrepreneur whose approach to problems like water scarcity and lack of sanitation would seem to point the way for others.

When I reached the Himalayan Horizon Hotel, the popular lodge he has owned for several decades, Bel Prasad was not there. I worried he had forgotten our appointment. A Man who worked at the hotel accompanied us the hill to find Bel Prasad, who was overseeing work on a new family home that morning. He was going to move out of the rooms in the hotel where his family had lived for years and into a spacious, hilltop house.

The weather lower in the valley was getting hot, but Dhulikhel was a thousand feet higher and ten degrees cooler than Kathmandu. Bel Prasad wore a natty outfit that looked like a leisure suit a yacht captain might wear-cream - colored slacks and shirt, a pale-yellow windbreaker, and a cap with a bill. Actually, these were mourning clothes. Bel Prasad's mother had died a few months earlier, and though stark white is the typical color of mourning in South Asia, light color like this were also appropriate. He would wear such colors for a full year.

Bel Prasad showed me around his new home, after which we made a plan for the day. He couldn't walk very far because of trouble with his ankles, so we rode the taxi back to the hotel. We settled down with some tea in the upstairs dining room overlooking a lawn and the hills and mountains beyond. I asked Bel Prasad to tell me about his life.

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The Dhulikhel in which Bel Prasad was born in 1940 was a village whose way of life he calls "primitive": it had local healers but no doctors; it had only a few old standpipes from the Rena era along with some *dhunge dhara*, ponds, and wells; and it lacked toilets. "But we had some good things," he said. "We can see the mountains, the climate is good." Dhulikhel is located east of Kathmandu, where the valley starts lifting up towards the middle hills. Now it's less than an hour's ride if the traffic is not too bad. When Bel Prasad was young there was a partially paved road that came only half way from Kathmandu. After that travelers usually had to walk because there was no regular transportation and the road was bad.

And there are no schools. The Ranas were still ruling Nepal when he was a boy and they had forbidden schools. When he was nine years old, Bel Prasad's father, a cloth merchant, told him "school is coming." He had no idea what that meant. What was school, and how was it coming? It was moving to Dhulikhel? The teacher wore clothes from India and eyeglasses, which Bel Prasad had never seen before.

He was the first in his family to go to school, and his father exhorted him to do well. His parents had helped start the school and bought books printed in India for the students, who sat outside under the tree for their classes. School was a puzzle for Bel Prasad, who had not learned to read or write. He had been out in the hills tending cows and goats. Slowly he got the hang of it.

Bel Prasad stayed in school and eventually went to the engineering campus in Kathmandu, where he trained to be an overseer. He got a job with the Nepal government and also opened a small bookstore in Dhulikhel, the first of its kind in the area. After six years he decided that he wanted to go back to school. He went to Kathmandu, studied history, and got a BA.

The Peace Corps had begun working in Nepal. A volunteer in Dhulikhel recommended that Bel Prasad teach

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Nepali to new Peace Corps volunteers. Bel Prasad traveled to the United States to teach an incoming crop of young Peace Corps volunteers at the University of California at Davis. He says his life was never the same. "I learned so much about myself, and I wanted to change my small Dhulikhel."

He could see the connection between the education system in Nepal, one which taught children merely to memorize, to be "parrots," and the continuing stagnation of his country. He saw that Americans were "so free. They can do so many things — drive, sing, dance, swim-free like a bird. Here is like handicapped person. Here they said 'don't do, don't do.' Parent and teachers wanted to keep children traditional. Bel Prasad, or BP as the Americans called him, saw that if people cannot be free to do things on their own initiative, to thing on their own, they cannot grow. And his town's problems would never be solved. "If everything stays the same who will bring water to Dhulikhel, who will make toilets?"

By then "hippies" from the United States and Europe were settling in Kathmandu and a few had discovered the rural quiet of Dhulikhel. Bel Prasad's father wanted him to come home. He was worried about foreigners having bad influence on Dhulikhel. Bel Prasad was the oldest son; his father felt his place was near his family.

Adjusting to life back home was hard, but Bel Prasad coped by starting new enterprises. The first was a small lodge he opened in 1969. He had one room with four beds he could rent to travelers. "I had six spoons, six glasses, a burner and a bucket." And he built Dhulikhel's first toilet. "My grandmother was not happy that I put a toilet in the house. God doesn't like a toilet, she said. It's smelly. Not clean. That's why nobody puts toilets next to temples."

The lodge expanded. Bel Prasad housed groups of Peace Corps trainees and his lodge became a training center as well as a favorite stopover for foreign guests. After he mastered the

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twenty-four-hour-a-day responsibility of guesthouse and savored the satisfaction of having his own restaurant, he started looking for new challenges.

"I listened to what they talked about in my restaurant. They talked about past events. Not about ideas. I was tired of listening to them. They asked about life in America. My shirt, my trousers. I was tired of telling them. I tried to stay a little away."

He had a daughter, but there was no school for her. People didn't like girls and boys to mingle in school, because there was so much fear at the time of inter-caste marriages. So, Bel Prasad decided to start a school for girls. And in the back of his mind, he was still worrying about the lack of toilets in his town.

He talked to a hermit, a holy man. He wanted to understand how the hermit lived on the little rice and money that people gave him and why people trusted him. The holy man had been a friend of Bel Prasad's first teacher, whom the town had honored by erecting his statue. Bel Prasad told the holy man that he wanted to put his statue at the first girl's school in the town. "He was excited. He asked me what he should do. I told him to collect some funds."

Volunteer teachers started holding classes outside, near the main street, much as Bel Prasad's first school had begun. The girls came in the afternoon after they finished working in their houses and fields. "The girls were excited, they learned faster than the boys. And many boys came to see the girls." But there was no school building and there was a shortage of land for building one.

People had been using a piece of land at the edge of the village as an outdoor toilet area. Bel Prasad announced that he wanted to use part of the land for a school and then abolish the outdoor toilet. He thought this strategy just might make Dhulikhelis change their habits. Some women asked him to

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make the toilet area cleaner, which gave him the opportunity he needed. "So, I said: see my toilet. See, it's not smelly. I am a university graduate, the son of a businessman. I am doing it. You can do it too. You can make a toilet. I can subsidize if you make a toilet in your house. They started thinking it was not a bad idea."

His family and others donated some additional land. He put up a photo of the hermit, calling him the founder of the school for girls, and asked people to help. They did. "Tourists and Indian visitors pulled out handful of money for the school." Soon the hermit was unhappy because it was taking so long to build the school; but this not daunt Bel Prasad. "I want everyone unhappy with me-it helps to get thing done."

Bel Prasad maneuvered so that people in the community started competing to donate money for the school, and eventually there was enough for construction. On the toilet front, some German donors offered cement and pans to build the squat toilets. A few Dhulikhel residents then went to India to learn about the "sulabh" toilets Bindeshwor Pathak was promoting in Bihar.

Soon the town had a few toilets, but there wasn't much water for flushing-not even for the water-thrifty *sulabh* toilets. A drought came; the only water was what was in the ponds. "My wife worked very hard carrying water back and forth." Aside from his wife's discomfort, Bel Prasad was happy. "I want problems to make people think. Once people start realizing problems, then they think of ways to solve. This is the best way. I get very excited."

Bel Prasad laughed at himself as he remembered those days and his genial face opened up as his eyes crinkled closed. His prominent nose was framed, when he smiled, by the crescent moon of his mouth below and a pair of arched white eyebrows above. His white hair was a halo above a broad forehead. He says he wondered during this time if maybe

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Americans faced the same sorts of problems he had encountered before they had water and sewage systems that worked. Maybe there were leaders in America who had to employ the sorts of strategies he had been using. That idea seems to have comforted him.

At that time Dhulikhel was a district headquarters, but there was talk of moving the headquarters to another town nearby because of Dhulikhel's extreme water shortage. Now here was a really big problem — and Bel Prasad loved it. "Big pressure on the people to make them think about water."

Bel Prasad invited a foreign friend to come to Dhulikhel and advise them on how to solve their water shortage. The friend offered fifty thousand rupees. A man from Dhulikhel said: "We don't want money from you, we want water." Bel Prasad was surprised but happy. "I thought it was very good- a Nepali thinking of water, not money." The foreigner was agreeable, indicating that once the people of Dhulikhel could find a water source, he would try to help them set up a water system. "We made a team to look for the water source. I didn't want to be the head. Everyone looking at me." Bel Prasad wanted someone else as a figurehead for the water supply project, the same way he had wanted the hermit out in front during the girl's school campaign.

"I used up four, five pair of shoes looking for water. Dhulikhel is located at 5,000 feet. Someone said I know a place higher where there is water. He showed us a small stream, beautiful clean water. We prayed, please God let us bring this water to Dhulikhel."

Bel Prasad requested help from a German government representative he knew, which angered someone in Nepal's government. "You are not supposed to talk to the Germans. Who do you think you are?" So, I asked him to please write a letter to the Germans asking for help for Dhulikhel. He said no. I said okay, we will all resign from our posts on the town

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council and say you are not helping, that you are not supporting a water for Dhulikhel." Eventually the government official made the request.

"We took the Germans to the water source. They liked it. They made a design. Then we made an agreement with the government to put a water system in Dhulikhel." Part of that agreement included the germ of the unique management system that has served the town well for twenty years. The people who drink the water manage the system.

But plenty of challenges remained before the user group could take over management of the system. All along the eight miles from the water source to Dhulikhel where the pipe would travel, local people complained that they didn't want the pipe coming through their land. Each obstacle required a different solution: the group building the water system for Dhulikhel had to build a separate water system for a neighboring village, then a school for another one. One woman had already planted her rice that monsoon season and couldn't bear to see it dug up for the pipe. "We told her we would pay for the rice, she was not happy. 'I don't want to remove it,' she said. I said okay we will do it and plant it again and you won't have to see it. She said okay."

The problems arose, and were solved, one by one: funds, right of way, technicians. And the pipes had to be purchased in Germany, because those manufactured in Nepal and India were not sturdy enough for the intense water pressure in the new system they were planning.

"Once the water was here most people forgot they had promised to pay for it. They said in Kathmandu they're paying only 15 rupees a month. You want to charge us 35. The German and Nepali governments gave money to build the water system. Why do you need money to operate it?"

"We told them that in Kathmandu they get dirty water for two hours in the morning, maybe two in the evening, maybe

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some days no water. But here you will get clean water nonstop. Women can sleep, not get up at three to go get water." Sounding a little like a public broadcasting tout, Bel Prasad told people in Dhulikhel that the daily cost of the service was only half a cup of tea. For the price of a coke they would get ten days. For the price of a beer, they would have a month of service. So give up one beer, and the water is free for a month, he told them.

"So are you ready now to pay for water? Please raise a hand. They raised their hands and then clapped." They paid their deposits and their connection fees. They got meters. I saw one of those meters, still in service. With a glass face a few inches in diameter, it looked very much like the one I had seen at my own home in California.

Bel Prasad had taken his time telling this story, and I had asked him questions, so by now I was hungry. We ordered lunch. As Bel Prasad continued talking, he broke off little pieces of a grilled cheese sandwich, smacking a little as he took a bite. He ate slowly, while I wolfed down paratha and cord. In the occasional silences while we ate, I could hear the rhythmic horns of trucks on the road. They were passing through town just down the hill from the hotel on the main and only highway from Kathmandu into the eastern hills. The two-lane road was slowly going a little deeper into the wooded hillside each decade, getting closer to the Khumbu.

I had once taken that road to its end and started walking, trying out the longer, slower route into the trekking region instead of flying. I hoped the road would never penetrate the Khumbu the way roads have almost encircled the Annapurna region, the other most renowned trekking region in the nation. But Dhulikhel is no longer a trekking village like those in the Annapurna region that are now losing their charm. It is a regional hub of activities, and the road is necessary if noisy.



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In 1986 Bel Prasad was elected Dhulikhel's mayor. Once construction of the water system was underway, he started trying to find a way to bring a modern hospital to Dhulikhel. That dream materialized as a handsome campus with a medical school spread itself on the hills south of the road. Then a popular university also started up, called Kathmandu University, drawing students and professors from the metropolis but making its home in Dhulikhel. Neither of these developments could have happened without the water supply. And Dhulikhel remained district headquarters. "Everyone was so happy. Can use water for toilets. Women can sleep. Stomachs are healthy because water is clean."

Bel Prasad believes it's good to borrow ideas from anywhere; but the initiator of a project has to be local. After he finished his story, Bel Prasad took me up the hill just outside town to see the water treatment plant and to meet Rameshwar Parajuli, the manager of Dhulikhel's water system. Parajuli commutes from Kathmandu to his job; he's been doing this since 1986, when the water system was under construction.

The day I visited, Parajuli was busy trying to solve a problem. The gravel beds that filter sediment from the stream water were going to need extra cleaning because of changes in the system. In order to get a stronger discharge of water down to Dhulikhel, a sedimentation tank closer to the source was now being bypassed. All the filtering would be done here at the plant, so the gravel beds would get dirtier and need to be cleaned more often. Digging up the beds requires strength. But most of the strong, young men had gone "to the Gulf," to countries like Dubai and Iraq to do construction work. There was little work in Nepal and what there was typically paid low wages.

Parajuli discussed the issue with Bel Prasad. Bel Prasad is no longer mayor, but he is the town's senior statesman and people still turn to him for advice. While foreigners call Bel Prasad "BP," Nepalis call him Belji-the suffix being an honorific

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in Nepali and Hindi, conveying affection and respect-or Bel dai, older brother.

We walked around the treatment plant. Parajuli showed me the stair-stepped gravel beds of the filtration system. It's a redundant system, so that one series of rock and gravel beds can be in use while the other is closed off for cleaning. After one month the gravel beds develop a buildup of algae, so the water is switched to the parallel set of filters. The gravel beds trap particles and clean the water, which during the monsoon is especially turbid. These are the chief impurities, since the stream that is the source of this water, unlike urban ones, has relatively little human or animal contamination.

The water passes horizontally through three gravel beds-the first with stones the size of tennis balls, the last with much finer gravel-then through a slow-sand filter. The water percolates through more than a meter of sand, which cleanses it of suspended solids and bacteria. After this cleansing the water goes to a rectangular, covered reservoir and a small amount of chlorine is added for a final purification.

The system is run by gravity. The water descends several hundred feet from its source eight miles away to reach the plant, then continues down to the town. At the outset when there were fewer users, there was such good pressure in the system the pipes could send water up to rooftop tanks at each home without electric pumps.

The grounds surrounding the treatment plant are like a garden. Rosebushes scent the air, honeysuckle clings to the fence, and pine trees circle the perimeter of the property. We walked slowly back to where Ram was waiting with the car, just outside the gate. One the way I saw a faded sign in English and Nepali: Dhulikhel Water Supply Project - German Nepal Cooperation.

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Over the years Dhulikhel has outgrown what was once a twenty-four-hour, on-demand water supply. The town of six thousand now has double that population depending on the plant. Once there was a continuous flow of water in the pipes; now it's released from the tank for several hours twice a day.

The diminished eight-hour availability, half in the morning, half in the evening, makes Dhulikhel's system more typical of South Asian water systems. Still, the water is of good quality and so far there are no waterless days. A well-trained staff has kept the twenty-year-old system functioning as intended. Parajuli told me he has visited other water projects in Nepal that cannot say the same. The Dhulikhel community takes pride in the system. "They let us know even if they see a little dampness on the ground. So we catch leaks early."

The cost has gone up from 75 to 105 rupees a month for basis household use. That's still a pretty good deal, about a dollar and a half a month. Dhulikhel's hotels-of which there are now many since the town has become a tourist haven, conference centre, and weekend getaway destination for Kathmandu residents with money-pay more. They not only use more, they pay at a higher rate, which helps to sustain the system for everyone.

But there are still conflicts with neighbors. One pragmatic decision made at the outset eventually backfired. Dhulikhel needed to be municipality in order to get foreign funds, but its population back in the 1980s was not sufficient for that designation. The town had only six thousand people and needed ten thousand to be a municipality, so Dhulikhel incorporated some adjoining rural areas that were not to be recipients in the water allocation scheme. As time passed, some of these areas asked to be connected to the system, but the water supply for Dhulikhel alone was already shrinking. The user's committee stalled on a decision.

People in villages that had been incorporated into Dhulikhel's municipality held a demonstration in 2007,

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demanding water. Later, in retaliation for what they saw as inaction on the part of Dhulikhel's water officials, they cut the water line.

Dhulikhel was without water for two weeks. The act of vandalism plunged the grown-up, developed Dhulikhel with its modern hospital and university back into the dark age of water insufficiency. Residents had to go to streams and standpipes again, filling buckets for kitchen use, forgoing showers, carrying laundry out into the woods to wash.

Eventually the town and the village reached a compromise; the water lines were repaired and water was shared.

Bel Prasad said he wasn't surprised that the conflict with the neighboring village led to a crisis. Starting a system is one thing, while managing it for several decades is another. Bringing a hospital and a university to the town without increasing the supply compounded the problem. The system was superb in 1997, unparalleled in all but a few cities in South Asia, but by 2007 water availability had diminished both because of the inclusion of the outlying area and the increased demand from Dhulikhel itself. Still, the water was reliable and clean, something people in Kathmandu can only dream about. Bel Prasad believes people even now aren't so worried about vicissitudes in the amount of water they get. What's important is that it's there every day.

Because of the increasing population in the area, Dhulikhel plans to participate in a bigger project in concert with neighboring municipalities. Together they will install larger pipes to siphon water from the source, and the expanded system will require a new management structure. A board will oversee the whole system, in turn empowering Dhulikhel's user's committee and whatever management structures the other municipalities choose.

Upstream villages will receive royalties from the towns in the system, along with schools and other infrastructure.

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There will likely be an array of problems to solve with this new system. The population is increasing in the villages higher up in the hills. Local people are worried they won't have enough water for their own villages. And maybe the sources are shrinking, maybe global warming is affecting the streams.

Construction on the new project was set to begin in late 2012 with a loan from the Asian Development Bank, which has recently begun to foster smaller-scale endeavors. The project is to be completed by 2017. Perhaps then, Dhulikhel will again have water flowing in its pipes twenty-four hours a day. Before then, the current eight hours a day may shrink. Maybe Dhulikhel residents will receive water only every other day. But Parajuli says the people understand why this is happening. Like Belji, he says people who can remember the shortages of the past know that even the reduced service is better than relying on hand-carried water from streams, springs and wells.

Before I left Dhulikhel I met some of the members of the users' committee. Parajuli had called an emergency meeting to get approval from the committee for spending extra money for workers to clean the gravel beds.

The nine members of the committee are elected by fellow citizens who own private water taps. There are 1,500 taps in Dhulikhel now, and that determines the number of votes: one tap, one vote. By law, there must be at least two women on the committee.

Yog Lakshmi Shrestha has been on the committee for six years. She was half way through her second term and said she would run again; maybe eventually she would run for chair. Yog Lakshmi lives at one of the higher elevations in Dhulikhel, so she gets less water than people in other parts of the town. Instead of several hours, sometimes her neighborhood has a flow for only half an hour each time the water is released from the tank. She runs to let people know when water is coming so her neighborhood can get its share.

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I asked Yog Lakshmi why she wanted to be on the board. "It's social work. In Nepal most women need water. Men don't work in the kitchen, so they are not so interested in these things." Yog Lakshmi also teaches fifth-grade English and social studies. She can remember the old days, before the water system. I asked her what she does with the extra time, not having to fetch water. She did not always understand my questions without help from Parajuli, but she could answer in English. "Now it's easy. I can study. I can sleep more. We used to spend all our time washing clothes and getting water. I used to get up at three to get water. Then after work I went again. "



"Why do you think Kathmandu can't solve its water problems?" I asked Bel Prasad before I left Dhulikhel. "When you go to meetings where people are making decisions, what do you see on the tables?" he asked in response. "You see Coke and bottled water. The people who really need water are not at the meetings. "Bel Prasad advises other towns in Nepal not to go to the government or the World Bank if they need water. Waiting for "God or the government" to help will not get them water. "If they are thirsty and they need water, they can pay for it and then they will have it. Unless they do this they won't get water."

Later I asked Dipak Gyawali why other towns in Nepal have not developed a system like Dhulikhel's. They lack the kind of charismatic leadership Bel Prasad provided, he said, and the commercial culture is different in Dhulikhel. "Dhulikheli shopkeepers don't trust the government to do anything." Dipak was part of the team that recommended handing over the German-funded project to the local user' committee.

Shedding some more historical light on the Dhulikhel phenomenon, Dipak said the townspeople decided that if their water project were put in the hands of a users' committee, they

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would all be willing to pay the amount the committee set. But not if it was to be managed by Nepal Water Supply Corporation, as all the other water projects in Nepal had been.

Bel Prasad sets a high standard for anyone who would follow in his footsteps. He has not slipped into the kind of self-serving performance that is so common among officials, here and elsewhere in the world. And he does not congratulate himself. He implied that other towns in Nepal could accomplish what Dhulikhel has if people take the initiative and set a fair price for the service. I asked him what role his own leadership played. Yes, he agreed, leaders are necessary, "to make people feel the importance of the goal. I was mayor for sixteen years. I put water at the root, not at the leaves. I was not a big boss. I went to the people to see where I should work."

That night I stayed at the Himalayan Horizon, curled with a blanket under my chin in the chill mountain air. I woke to a view of the hills under a light fog the next morning. Belji introduced me to some other people in town that morning, and I went to see the hospital.

We heard the roads were still clear, but I was feeling anxious. Ram and I ate a quick lunch, then headed back to Kathmandu. It was a Saturday and there was little traffic on the roads. Ram had no difficulty reaching Kathmandu and getting across town on the roads he chose, but we knew the May Day demonstrations were underway toward the center of the city.

I reached my apartment with relief. The countrywide shutdown the Maoists had been threatening started that night. No vehicle moved on the roads of Nepal for six days, except a few ambulances and the motorbikes of Maoist organizers.



Dhulikhel's water system, even with its diminished supply after ten years of population growth, is admirable. But sewage treatment here lags behind. It got off to a good start when Belji

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started constructing toilets in the town. Later when the new hospital was built, the first reed bed wastewater treatment system in Nepal was created at the bottom of the hill behind the hospital. This is an inexpensive system, a step above simple settling ponds and more aesthetically desirable.

That system is still working well to handle sewage from the hospital, but the rest of the town is only beginning to progress beyond the toilets Bel Prasad helped to establish. Some people have septic tanks, and there are still some functioning sulabh toilets, but a lot of sewage is going to nearby rivers. Bel Prasad said the municipality was "working on it"

But down the hill on the road back toward Kathmandu, several Newar villages are installing their own reed bed treatment systems, using the Dhulikhel Hospital's system as a model. I arranged to see some of these very small but successful sewage treatment systems. Ram came to pick me up in his taxi one morning and we went across town to fetch Mingma Gyaltzen Sherpa, who was to be my guide.

Mingma was working under the auspices of UN Habitat, helping villages near Dhulikhel set up sewage management systems while he finished a PhD from a university in Bangkok. (This was the second Mingma Gyaltzen Sherpa who helped me understand water in Nepal. He shares his name with my friend Mingma from the Khumbu; the latter translated the stories of Sherpa farmers who witnessed the Dig Tsho flood in 1995.) This Mingma was born in Solu, the region just south of the Khumbu, which together form the district Solukhunbu. We discovered as we chatted in the taxi that I had walked through his village the previous year after visiting my friend Cholendra's village, a day's walk from the main trekking route.

First on our itinerary that day was Shrikhandapur, a village whose reed bed sewage system had been in operation for a year, following the model that had worked so well at the hospital campus in Dhulikhel. The village is situated on a small

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hill so the town's sewer line can take advantage of gravity. Sewage used to go directly to the nearby Punyamata River.

Purna Karmacharya came down the path from the village to meet Mingma and me; he is both the chair of the town committee that set up the system and the plant's only employee. After he retired from teaching social studies, Purna turned to community activism. People in Shrikhandapur, a village of farmers and a few merchants, had begun to think it was bad to keep sending the town's sewage to the river.

The Punyamata is holy just like the Bagmati, said Purna; pitting dirty water into it was a sin. The townspeople wanted to find a way to send treated effluent to the river, and they liked the idea that they could use biogas for cooking. Biogas systems have been used in village in Nepal, where cow dung is available and supplies of wood may be dwindling, for some years now. Propane canisters and kerosene have replaced wood in some place, but biogas is a cheaper alternative to those fossil fuel sources, and recent technology allows human feces to be put to good use.

Wastewater that comes down the line under Shrikhandapur's hill is first channeled through a trap that catches plastic and other garbage that could clog the system. It then passes into a biogas chamber where it is digested by anaerobic bacteria to produce methane gas. From there the water can be channeled into one of six different filter beds. Right now, the town needs only two of them, but can use the others as more people join the system.

Purna said only about half the households have connected to the sewage system so far. Some are not able to connect because their houses are too low on the hill, below the sewer line, so they would have to continue using pit latrines. Others were in the process of connecting to the the system, but at least the sludge from their pit latrines could now go into the biogas digester instead of into the river as before.

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The bulk of the discharge into the system occurs in the mornings and evenings when people are busy at home bathing, cooking, using the toilets-most of which are the simple pour-flush variety, not commodes. Gray and black water are mixed in this system. Sludge from biogas is automatically pressed down in to a concrete tank while the water passes on down to the reed beds. The sludge is available to be used as fertilizer after it is dried.

The 'reed beds' are square, slightly sunken pits about fifteen feet on a side, covered with gravel, reminiscent of the gravel pits I saw in Dhulikhel that filtered out impurities at the beginning of water cycle, before the water went down to the town. The reed bed pits that aren't in use yet are just smooth gravel. Those that are in use show a crop of tall grasses, somewhat like pampas grass, growing up between the rocks. The wastewater moves through the gravel, guided by gravity, while the roots of the reeds oxygenate and cleanse it, Aerobic bacteria eat the waste.

The cleansed water is caught in a small canal and channeled down the slope toward the Punyamata. A thick plastic lining keeps the wastewater in the gravel pits to avoid contaminating groundwater. There is no odor. I would not have known this was a sewage treatment plant without someone telling me. Only near the domes of the biogas chamber is there a vague odor of sewage, but nothing like what one smells crossing the bridge above the Bagmati.

Purna says maintenance of the reed beds is simple. All he has to do is cut the reeds and wash the gravel from time to time. He said people from other towns, both near and far away, had been coming to look at Shrikhandpur's system and he hoped they would learn from what his village is doing. The bulk of the money to set up the system, which cost about \$100,000, came from UN Habitat. The village itself paid for less than 10 percent of the construction but donated land for the site; the municipality also contributed. The villagers who use the sewage system pay nothing.

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The biogas system was a pilot program; when I visited only a few houses were using the gas in their homes. As the system expands, more homes can run gas lines into their kitchens. Shrikhandapur started out seeking only a sanitary sewage system, but the potential for biogas may lead the town to become a sewage entrepreneur. Purna Karmacharya said the town was planning to use some land it owns on the other side of the river to build a septic waste treatment plant. This would allow it to collect sewage from other towns on the floodplain. Shrikhandapur would produce biogas for the sludge, charging fees both for taking in the sludge and for providing biogas to people in and near the village.

The villagers who currently use the biogas in Shrikhandapur pay 350 rupees a month for the fuel.

At the end of the tour Purna took us down to the Punyamata so I could see the treated water going into the river. A pipe discharged just a trickle at midday. As I watched the clean water joining the small river, I saw that the water coming from upstream looked murky and pieces of garbage were floating in it. Purna acknowledged that this is sadly true. Most of the pollution comes from Banepa, he says, a large town down the hill from Dhulikhel, which was once its rival for the privilege of being district headquarters. Banepa has not managed its sewage very well. It plans to do so with help from the Asian Development Bank, but that could take a long time.

A smaller town upstream called Nala was much closer to setting up a system like Shrikhandapur's. Mingma was working with that town as well, so we bid goodbye to Purna, got back in Ram's taxi, and headed up the road. In the taxi Mingma told me that efforts like those in Shrikhandapur and Nala - very much like Dhulikhel's celebrated water system require a community champion. There has to be someone like Bel Prasad Shrestha or Purna Karmacharya with an "ability to visualize the future," as Mingma put it; someone who can focus people's attention, persuade them to join an effort, show them it's in their best

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interest. An effort like this requires someone who won't get distracted and drop the ball.

Nala is larger than Shrikandapur. It is famous for its potatoes, Mingma told me, though we both agreed the potatoes up in Solukhumbu are tastier than those grown in lower Himalaya. Nala has several historic temples, and legend has it that when the Shahs launched their conquest of the valley back in 1768, people in Nala dug a tunnel under the road to hide in and that's how the town got its name, since "nala" means drain in Newar. The tunnel didn't help. Nala fell to the Shah invaders just as the kingdoms of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktpur did.

One problem slowing Nala's progress toward sewage management was lack of public land. Unlike Shrikhandapur, which had enough open space down the hill for its system, either Nala had to buy land or landowners in town had to contribute it. Mingma told townspeople they could not get everything from donors. The town had to contribute money and land.

Twenty percent of the houses had no toilets whatsoever; those residents had to resort to the river or to land outside the village. Those who had toilets mostly had single-pit latrines (not the two-pit sulabh toilets) that had to be de-sludged. Often the sludge also ended up in the river.

As we walked down the sloping stone streets of Nala, we stopped from time to time to talk to a resident. I had to bend over to get through the small doorways. We stopped to look at a toilet with a septic tank behind one house. It was a pourflush toilet used by two households. The lady of the house told us the last time they emptied it was one year ago.

Another woman, Krishna Lakshmi Shrestha, showed us into the ground floor of her small house, situated on a dark, narrow street near one of the main squares. The toilet cubicle was set in the back of the small ground-floor space, which was dark because there were no windows on this level. The house

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was a typical brick Newar home with a narrow stairway leading up to the higher stories; the delicately carved wooden grilles so typical of Newar houses covered the windows on the upper floors.

Krishna Lakshmi, a tiny, elderly woman, was pleased about the project and eager to talk. She said she had attended planning meetings to discuss the new sewage system. She wanted a new system because the wastewater from her kitchen one floor up was running into the street. It flowed directly down into the narrow sloping passageway outside her house before joining the storm water system. She told Mingma she had wanted to cover up that drain but the community would not allow it. Mingma explained that enclosing such drains was forbidden because people might start discharging their sewage into them. He said that some people used to wait for a big rain and then open the pipe from their toilets and let the sewage pass out into the storm drains. Here in Nala there is a plan for separate lines, one for gray water and storm water, one for sewage. The smaller, more compact village of Shrikandapur combined the two.

Lakshmi Sharma of the Asian Development Bank told me the bank was no longer funding storm water projects in the region because of this misuse. She said people who were supposed to have septic tanks were often just connecting their sewage to storm water systems and the municipalities were not policing this violation. "So we have stopped supporting storm water drainage because we know it will become illegal sewer lines later." Instead the bank was beginning to help set up reed bed systems in small towns. Unlike Kathmandu, she said, these towns still had enough land to accommodate the size of settling ponds they needed. The bank was funding these efforts as an experiment, to find out for itself how well they worked.

Mingma said discussions were underway with the town's user's committee to determine an appropriate payment for

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residents who were going to use the sewer system. The town is divided into wards, each with a user' subcommittee. People will have to pay for their own connections to both the storm water and sewage systems.

Mingma was working with the user groups on a final report and the plans were almost complete. The wastewater system could be built in a year, but the storm water system would take longer because the town's brick and stone streets would have to be dug up. Money was allocated to build toilets for the 20 percent of the houses that lacked them, and for hygiene campaigns to educate people about waterborne disease

People were very friendly in these villages, frequently greeting us with smiles and "namaste," much as they do in more remote villages. Kathmandu isn't unfriendly. It's just that everyone is in more and more of a rush, and foreigners are not a big deal because they're all over town. Here a visitor is unique. Mingma asked me if I wanted to try the yogurt. "It's really good," he said brightly. As we savored our little pots of buffalo milk yogurt outside a small shop, Shyam Sundar Shrestha, the chair of the users' committee, joined us. I asked him why his village needed the new system. He said the main reason is that they would stop polluting the river. And it would be good to get biogas and manure for the fields as well.

Nala chose the reed bed system like Shrikhandapur. Maybe later, if the village was offered some financial help, it would start a pilot project so that some houses could participate in a urine-diversion program as well. Many houses in town were still using an old style of urine management that preceded toilets in the valley. This was essentially a spot on the ground floor of the old Newar homes that people could use as urinal. In some cases there might be a pile of straw. Ash would be sprinkled on the area. Once the smell became too strong, the pile would be taken out and spread on the fields, where the phosphate-rich fertilizer would not be wasted.

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Progress in delivering public services sometimes seems paralyzed in the capital; but at the fringes of the valley, there is movement. Roshan Raj Shrestha, who pioneered the reed bed system for treating wastewater and is working to expand it throughout Nepal, says there is plenty of talent in Nepal for innovation and good management of resources. "We just need some political stability and then we can jump very fast."



My visit to Dhulikhel brought home what Ajaya Dixit said a few months earlier, explaining why "a century since modern technology was introduced in Nepal we still haven't figured out a way of using those system to deliver basis services."

Ajay agreed that Dhulikhel is an exception. He sees it as evidence that once the right structure is in place, with right kind of decision making and transparency, some of the contradictions between Western technology and Nepali social and political structures are eased. I thought of the nine year-old Bel Prasad. What is school? he asked. How is it coming? He was at first baffled by the whole process. A gifted individual, he caught on, and took his whole town with him.

How many Beljis will it take to get Nepal on the right road? The kind of leadership he offered has not emerged at the national level and may never prevail. For now, Nepal lingers in a kind of twilight under the heavy hand of the Maoists who once promised much but have delivered little social progress. They have shown instead plenty of ability to manipulate a weak democracy. There is political resistance to pouring any more resources into the overpopulated and attention-stealing capital. Combined with general instability, this leaves potential foreign doors unable to spend money to rescue Kathmandu from decades of bad management.

Journalists, who might explore public policy issues to the benefit of Nepal's citizens, are not safe in the country right now.

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Many are afraid to expose the corrupt practices or are not allowed to do so even though there has been constitutional freedom of speech in Nepal since the early 1990s. Meanwhile, a sense of public responsibility thrives mainly in a few pockets, chiefly the progressive, nongovernmental groups working on water and sanitation, and various other social and environmental issues.

When we were talking about the *dhunge dhara*, the Ranas, and Melamchi, I asked Ajaya if Kathmandu really needed a centralized system. He talked for a while about the Mississippi River and the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Ganga canal and the British colonial system. What these had in common was that the agencies had redefined the hydrological system for their own benefit. Anything that did not belong to the state and generate revenue for it was wasted, subject to "reclamation."

"You can't isolate what is happening here from that historical process," Ajaya said. "It's same paradigm." That paradigm is expertise-led, finance-dominated, technological, centralized, and bureaucratic; in it, local ideas and needs are disregarded. The water development system that came to India was the U.S. model of big dams-big river valley transformations for flood control and hydropower. India had been following this model for fifty years. Nepal is smaller, its progress looks nothing like India's, but the guiding philosophy is the same: trying to fit the Western model into the South Asian context.

"Melamchi is an extension of the U.S. model," Ajaya concluded. "You have a desert, you have scarcity, the solution is to bring more water. The lesson of the *dhunge dhara*," he said, coming back to Kathmandu, "that it was decentralized. Supply and demand were decentralized."

"And communally maintained," I interjected. "Yes, but not bureaucratically maintained. The users themselves assigned roles, clothed in religious ritual to some extent. The

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water system was not transferred to an external, alien organization. There is some element of hierarchy and centralization even in a decentralized system. Perhaps the lesson is to see how the interest of the users is reflected and articulated."

Here in Kathmandu, and in most of Nepal, "that space has to be created," said Ajaya. But in Dhulikhel the "space" for the local people's interests and abilities was created, thanks to Bel Prasad's efforts. And it helped that it was a small town, growing slowly. A place like Dhulikhel could simply slip out of the gilded net of foreign money to some extent. Too small to figure in big loan schemes, the town could go its own way.

Twenty years ago Ajaya and his colleagues argued for decentralizing water in Kathmandu. divide the city up into maybe ten distribution sectors, they said, with different supply systems. Try to match demand and supply in the sectors, using whatever water was available. Some would have enough, some would not. In that case "you could deal with the shortage at the sector level," not try to take on the entire valley all at once.

Ajaya says the World Bank and the ADB argued against the idea because it lacked economy of scale. For the thirst of the whole valley,"the only solution" seems to be torrents of Melamchi water shunted through a tunnel.

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Dhulikhel's Living Legend

- Don Messerschmidt

Who and what do you know of Dhulikhel? Located 30 km east of Kathmandu, Dhulikhel was once a major stop in the trans-Himalayan Tibetan trade. Today, astride the Araniko Highway (the modern motor road to Tibet), it is one of the premier hill resort destinations in Nepal, with sparkling views of the snow-capped Himalayas, the foothills and valleys. It is an eco-tourism destination, with line bird watching and photography, and day hikes to popular destinations as Namobuddha, Panauti and Nagarkot. The municipality's infrastructure is modern, efficient, with many fine schools all the way up to Kathmandu University and the Dhulikhel Institute of Medicine. It has exemplary health facilities, topped by the Dhulikhel Hospital, and one of the Nepal's most efficient drinking water systems. It also houses headquarters for Kavre, one of the Nepal's most progressive districts. There are several fine civic institutions, including an active chamber of commerce and industry, a senior citizens' center and a busy Rotary Club. It has all of this, plus a multi-purpose park and an old town center that rivals many for its temples and traditional Newari cultural setting. The *Nepali Times* recently entitled Dhulikhel as Nepal's 'Perfect City'.

All of Dhulikhel's progress and modernity, its attractiveness and its fame, reflects open, honest and visionary leadership. And if you asked local residents to name the most outstanding leader of the past two decades, Bel Prasad Shretha ('B. P.' to his friends) usually tops the list. He did not lead Dhulikhel's development alone, of course; but he is considered its most famed advocate and driving force.

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B. P. Shrestha was born in 1940 in the old part of the town. He was an active and enterprising youth, who began his career as a high school teacher, followed by work as a government engineer-overseer. Along the way, B. P. was hired by the American Peace Corps to teach Nepali language, an assignment that soon took him on the first of many trips to the USA. When he left to go abroad the first time, his father admonished him not to eat beef or pork. 'They eat lots of jutho', (defiling food) in America, he said. B. P. was careful, but one thing he wasn't prepared for was the American penchant for leafy green salads - 'like animals eating grass' was his first thought!

In time he opened Dhulikhel's first tourist lodge, which became a popular language training center. It featured an outdoor privy, cold showers, and room with low, ceilings and lumpy straw mattresses. It also featured fine Newari cuisine and some of the world's most powerful *aila*, Newari wine. In the 1980s, when I brought 24 American college summer students to Dhulikhel Lodge, we were impressed with B. P.'s hospitality and, each evening before dinner, his funny stories. The first time he traveled abroad, for example, he had to stay overnight in a Calcutta hotel. His first shock was entering a little room with other hotel guests, watching the doors shut, standing quietly for a minute or so, then seeing them automatically re-open at a different place. It was his first elevator. Then, when he got to his room, he turned on a faucet in the bathroom sink and promptly scalded himself. He had never encountered hot running water before. When he finally reached his American destination, alone, he was worried that nobody would recognize him in the crowd, so he put on his Nepalese *cap* to be recognized: not easy, since being short he was completely dwarfed by the other passengers.

An important moment for Dhulikhel came in 1987 when BP was elected the town's first mayor. He served three terms during the time when Dhulikhel began to modernize and grow. As a mayor, his true talents came out. With the help of other

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local leaders and businessmen, he saw to it that the town's infrastructure was revamped, expanded and modernized. With great patience, in the face of some remarkably conservative resistance, he led the development of the municipal drinking water system, the opening and improvement to many schools, the installation of town sanitation scheme, the building of a modern community hospital, and the founding of Kathmandu University. He was a master fund raiser, and secured support for some projects from international sources. Today, the health, education and civic welfare projects that came on the line during his tenure are the pride of the municipality. Their existence and fine management speak volumes to B. P.'s style of leadership, modern outlook, and perseverance.

In time, B. P. envisioned building a marvelous new resort hotel, something far better than the original lodge. He founded a company called Sun 'n' Snow Pvt. Ltd., got a European architect to draw up a design, secured the necessary funding, and found skilled construction engineers to help put it together. The result was Himalayan Horizon resort, one of the first and finest hotels in the community. Since retiring from his mayoral duties in 2003, B. P. spends much of his time at the hotel, greeting international guests and his many Nepalese friends who drop by to visit. He's also building a modern cottage near the hotel for his own retirement.

A few months ago, when B. P. and his wife Meera heard that my wife, Kareen, and I were coming to visit, they cooked up one of the finest Newari meals we've ever had. We sat outside to eat, with all the greenery and the birds and mountain views to enjoy, and the sounds of busy Dhulikhel a faint buzz in the distance. That hour was spent laughing with B.P. over stories about leading Dhulikhel's growth and modernization, and about family.

Over the years, in recognition for his leadership of the town development projects and his hotel and tourism promotion, B. P. Shrestha has received many accolades and

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awards, nationally and internationally. Of them all, he is most proud of the Prabal Gorkha Dakshinbahu from King Birendra, and the Pride of Asia International Gold Medal, which he received in Singapore in 1992. These and all the others were well deserved.

The next time you visit Dhulikhel, look him up. B.P. likes company. Take the time to ask him about his career as a mayor. He's proud of his accomplishments and if he's free he may even offer to take you on a tour. Do it and you'll see his proud accomplishments and meet some of the other leaders with whom he worked. You will also see how respectfully the residents of his home town greet B. P. Many still call him 'Mayor Sahib'

In Dhulikhel, the visionary, social activist and hotelier Bel Prasad Shrestha is a living legend.

ECS (Enriching Life the Nepali Way), Sep 2008



Bel Prasad as a Writer

- Hari Manjushree

Most people know of Mr. Bel Prasad Shrestha or B. P. Shrestha for his development work in Dhulikhel, but relatively few know him as a writer. Even though he is not one of Nepal's most famous writers, he is highly skilled writer, with several published books, articles and speeches to his credit.

The first book written by Bel Prasad Shrestha was entitled '*Sajilo Nepali Kitab (Easy Nepali Book) Primer*', published in 1986 by 'Saraswati Pustak Bhandar' of Dhulikhel. In his Foreword to '*Sajilo Nepali Kitab*, Durga Prasad Shastri wrote: "I believe that this book which has been written for our own kids for the purpose of teaching reading-writing, even as a small volume will be very useful for teaching reading-writing all the consonants for small kids. I believe that this book will also help illiterate adults."

Bel Prasad Shrestha in 'My Words' says: "Our children, unlike others cannot be fed more because they cannot digest more. Likewise, they cannot read and write more at the same time. Like we feed them slowly, same manner should be applied while teaching. If they find it hard, they cannot learn no matter what we do. For this reason, these little kids could easily read, write and speak three letters a day, this small book has been written. I hope that this small book will help them to read, write and speak well. All the suggestions and comments that could help improve the book are welcome."

Bel Prasad Shrestha, along with Kabindra Raj Sharma, has written a book entitled 'Speak with the Nepalese'. This book which was published by the writer duo themselves and

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printed by 'Nepal Press' of Shukrapath, Kathmandu has its publication date missing. It consists of a total 242 pages. The preface of the book includes the following words: "Welcome to Nepal, and to the language of Nepal. This book will help you to speak to anyone, anywhere and to understand what others are saying. Although there are several tribes or castes in Nepal, each with its own tongue, Nepali is the national language. You will learn it step by simple step, as native speakers do from childhood. There is a section on reading and writing to help with pronunciation, but we expect that you will want to speak with Nepali people. I will make you feel more comfortable, being able to converse, and we hope we have helped to make your stay more enjoyable. This is the first edition of this book. The authors would like to thank Declan Quigley, Janet C. Sturgeon, Director of the American English Language Institute, Kathmandu, Andrew Bloomer, and Janak Pyakurel for their invaluable help. The authors are aware of some of the error that have already crept in (and will correct them at the next edition). Your suggestions, comments and contributions are most welcome."

Among these two books, the first book 'Sajilo Nepali Kitab Primer' teaches Nepali language to little kids and the second book 'Speak with the Nepalese' tends to teach Nepali language to foreigners.

Bel Prasad Shrestha has also written some memoirs and articles. His three memoirs have been published in Hari Manjushree's edited 'Shashiko Sathi Warsa', 'Hari Krishna Nahasiju Smritigrantha' and 'Samaj Sewa Ka Sahanayak Ramchandra Ghinanju'. His articles and speeches have also been published in some newspapers. The collection of his articles, speeches and memoirs reflects the writer personality of him.

Bel Prasad Shrestha has also written articles in English. These articles are focused on education, tourism and development work. An article related to education field is also

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included in 'Dhulikhel ka Sarathi'. According to him, he started his journey of writing since 1981. But, the publication of articles started from 1983. Congratulation speeches given to different magazines, bulletins, manifesto could sum around 50-60.

Bel Prasad Shrestha likes to read Nepali and English books that would give a positive message to the society, teach to empower skilled manpower, increase willpower, motivate to perform duties and social services.

'It feels easy to read books written in English, but I feel more comfortable writing in Nepali', he says.

I would like to also add here a short paragraph of my own article in the book 'Dhulikhel Ka Sarathi': *"And now, the need of him writing his autobiography has also risen. So, let's hope that his feelings would now be poured in coming days. If we Nepali got opportunity to read his experience and feelings, we certainly can hope that it will erase all negative feelings and thoughts that could arise on one's mind."*

And after this, Bel Prasad Shrestha published an autobiography entitled "Ma Ra Mero Dhulikhel". Dr. Vaskar Humagain later translated the book and named it "Me and My Dhulikhel".

Behind Bel Prasad Shrestha's personality, there is also a writer who should now express himself for the welfare of the nation.



One should be developmentalist like Bel Prasad - Kamal Rupakheti

"Greetings sir, Greetings (*Namaskar*)! Saw you after so many days. Let's seat. Everyone remembers you."

Bel Prasad Shrestha or Brother Bel is heartily welcome and liked by all.

The always smiling and active Bel Prasad is recognized by almost everybody. I don't really know how people judge him, who treats foreign, local or rich, poor in same manner. I judge him as a group leader.

- 1) Beldai and Dr. Suresh Raj Sharma, Kathmandu University
- 2) Beldai and Dr. Ramkantha Shrestha, Dhulikhel Hospital
- 3) Beldai and Late Hari Krishna Shrestha, Ramchandra Ghinanju, Manik Lal Shrestha
- 4) Beldai and Dhulikhel Municipality
- 5) Beldai and different organizational groups

Foreigners also trust them who perform his/her work. Nobody wants to invest in an incomplete plan.

Showing no tantrums, rarely wearing a tie, and innocent looking, Mr. Bel is perfect at maintaining understanding environment. His unique way of finding project partner in a clear and easy way is praise-worthy. The same attitude whether project is approved or not. God has given him this rare gift.

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When staying in Dhulikhel's first hotel, he was the Nepali teacher of my president Andreas Falk. Mr. Bel is active in every sector - tourism, health and education.

Bel brother (*Beldai*), I hear this name from every person's mouth. Dhulikhel's development leader who always discusses and takes leadership among the senior citizens like Hari Krishna Dai, Ramchandra Ghinanju, Manik Lal Shrestha, Shree Lal Makaju and others. Discussing with everybody and taking leadership, that's Beldai.

Beldai and I were introduced a long time ago. At that time, there was a *thumko* (small hill) where Dhulikhel Hospital resides now. On Beldai's leadership, me with a group of German doctors went to view the plan of establishing Dhulikhel Hospital. After that, I met Beldai many times in Dhulikhel. With him, it was always the same intimacy, those short conversations, his cheerful attitude and the dream to make Dhulikhel a model municipality.

In 1994, with German-Nepal Help Association's president Andreas Falk and vice president Miss Heidi Ralph from Germany, our group of six people went to visit Dhulikhel. We met Beldai. He took us to see drinking water plan. He described every aspect clearly like drinking water plans, assistance from donor agencies, water source problems, assistance required from local community people and more. Our foreign counterparts were surprised. Everyone said in a single voice, "Belji! We are ready to help with your small-scale drinking water plan. But on one condition, people's participation should be guaranteed."

And then after some days, Beldai called us to come to Dhulikhel. There was a request for drinking water plan from *Panchkhal, Lamidanda*. Hari Krishna Nhasiju, Beldai and I reached *Lamidanda*. We had some conversation with Gopisahu, Kailashsahu, Haladhar brother, Dhan Lama of *Lamidanda*. After listening to their issues like the difficulty faced due to scarcity

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of drinking water forcing them to go *Dolalghat* or Dhulikhel for drinking water, regular arguments between women at taps etc., we decided to look at the source. It took us almost one and a half hour to reach there. We were shown a very small and unbelievable stream at the middle of jungle.

Even I was not that convinced for a donor. But after seeing the eagerness of people of *Lamidanda*, I sent the plan to the donor. After receiving positive response from Germany, we held a small meeting at Gopisahu's house. Hari Krishna Dai, Beldai and me at one side and all the people of *Lamidanda* at another side. Discussion began on money and manpower involved. Everyone said, "We don't have money. But we are ready to provide manpower."

Beldai is excellent at motivation. He communicated his ideas, "What will happen if we stop having meat, cigarette, and beer only one day a month."

Hari Krishna Dai had a commitment. He decided, "OK. Gopi Krishna Sahu 5,000 Rupees. Kailash Sahu 3,000."

And after that, everyone on their own was ready and 56,000 was collected. Hari Krishna Dai asked people to bring cash, too. Cash arrived. He said, "Kamalji, accept this. Our participation."

I was puzzled. That was the first time when we saw a people's participation with the plan supported by German-Nepal Help Association. In 22 days, the plan was completed. Everybody in *Lamidanda* was simply amazed.

But in my heart, there was still a curiosity. And I asked the people of *Lamidanda*, "You people had water tank, human power and money. German-Nepal Help Association's two lakhs financial assistance was nothing. Why is that even after five years of making the tank was the plan not executed?"

Everybody's said in one voice was, "Because, we did not have someone like Beldai and Hari Krishna Dai amongst us."

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That was Beldai's unique way of helping going outside of his work area Dhulikhel.

After the drinking water plan of *Lamidanda*, drinking water at *Danuwar* village, *Golmadevi* School at Lamidanda, drinking water at Mahadevsthan, well maintenance at Palanchowk Bhagwati and *ECCA's* programmes in all drinking water plans were conducted by German Nepal Help Association. Beldai was present in all projects.

After that, drinking water plans were initiated in several places in Dhulikhel Municipality like Pakucha, Thakle and others with the combined effort of Dhulikhel municipality and German Nepal help Association. Despite small problems, the camp of ECCA was successful.

For conducting German-Nepal Help Association's plan, Beldai and people of Dhulikhel were always helpful. Even if the plans like bridge construction in Roshi river, help for Kathmandu University, Tundikhel projects were refused assistance by German-Nepal Help Association, Beldai and his development-loving friends were always helpful and their behavior was always the same.

German Nepal Help Association helped with some physical infrastructure of Dhulikhel Hospital like - Water tank, Public toilets, Monika Pati etc. Construction work in some schools of Kavre like Golmadevi School, Binayak Child School at Badalgaon, infrastructure development of Janaudhar School, Keraghari etc, salary of teachers, skilled education training for quality education (Rato Bangla School) etc. were conducted. School teacher training is still running.

With Beldai's effort, Primary School building and Sanjeevani School's Science Building were constructed with the help of Dhulikhel municipality, German-Nepal Association and GTZ (UDLE). This was the first combined project of German Nepal Help Association and German government.

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I was a bit disappointed with Beldai when in the given time, 10+2 science classes were not started in Sanjeevani School. He also was sad when the plan failed. But within two years, I was informed that 10+2 classes were running. I was convinced about his concern for success of his plans.

I had a chance to attend King Birendra's inaugural of the drinking water plan, Dhulikhel Hospital and Sanjeevani School. German-Nepal Help Association received a certificate of appreciation during inauguration ceremony of Sanjeevani School and Dhulikhel Hospital. King Birendra's developmental aspirations, especially going to people's place and consoling people was a great virtue. It was amazing moment when King Birendra walked from Tundikhel to the water tank and talked with the community people, shaking their hands.

Beldai's team had vice mayor from Peoples Front Party (*Janamorcha*) and all other members from chief parties. Beldai was an independent candidate. And still everyone voted for Beldai. The people of Dhulikhel always went above their political and personal interests.

"C'mon Mr. Kamal, need some more help."

Short, fast and clear talk with Beldai about any project makes us believe that this project will be handled properly. The people suffering from Kavre's muddy roads can clearly describe the services provided by Shreekhandapur ambulance better than me. Such a continuous support from German-Nepal Help Association! God bless people of Shreekhandapur! God bless Beldai's hope!



My Old Friend B. P.

- Karna Shakya

Bel Prasad Shrestha and I have known each other for almost 40 years now. We were introduced while both of us were working with the American Peace Corps. During the initial days of our intellectual journeys, we had our own ways. We each started small scale businesses that have since grown. He opened a lodge in his own house for tourists in Dhulikhel and I opened the Kathmandu Guest House in Kathmandu's Thamel neighborhood.

Peace Corps played a large role in the development of tourism in Nepal. At one time Peace Corps Volunteers were trained in Kathmandu, but the process of informing them about the villages happened at the Dhulikhel Lodge opened by Bel Prasad Shrestha in what had been his own house. That later became the sprawling 'Hotel Himalayan Horizon'.

Gradually, B.P.'s interests broadened to include the local development sector. He started assisting people of Dhulikhel in the field of education and health sector too. Because of his works, he gained fame and the respect of the people of Dhulikhel. He succeeded in different campaigns he started in the field of education, health, drinking water etc.

One cannot be a leader unless one wins hearts of his people. Some people, when they get involved in politics, only do politics, target for a high position, prosperity and so on. But B.P. is considered more of a social person than a politician.

Sadly, because of our work loads and because he is in Dhulikhel and I am in Kathmandu, we do not see each other often, but I keep track of his accomplishments and his social

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activities and I know that he was elected mayor of Dhulikhel for four times. I am pleased to hear about my friend's good deeds, happy to be his colleague and very happy that he is so loved by all.

Bel Prasad Shrestha's name and fame will live on long after him, but it will be society's loss if it does not recognize this man's ability while he is alive, not after his death. This always inspires individual to do more which eventually benefits the society.

I wish him good health and long life and wish that the almighty blesses him with more and more strength to perform social services forever and ever.



A Role Model for All Nepalis

- Kedar Bhakta Mathema

My father Dhruba Bhakta Mathema met Bel Prasad even before I did. Like many others, I became acquainted with B.P. in 1970, while both of us worked as trainers for the American Peace Corps. Occasionally, I would take Peace Corps trainees or participants in the Experiment in International Living Program to visit Dhulikhel where Bel Prasad Shrestha was running Dhulikhel Lodge at the time.

Among B.P.'s great virtues are liking to meet people, keeping himself busy and remaining affirmative. Very few people have these dispositions. He is such an intellectual person that he can undertake any enterprise efficiently, whether it be running a lodge, development work or public service. Many foreigners would stay at his lodge not only to see Dhulikhel but to meet B.P. He became popular and lived in the hearts of the people. Even though it seemed every American who came there knew him, he never swelled up with vanity. Nor have I ever seen him lose his temper. His ability to deal with the most complicated issues is remarkable. His words never hurt others. He is not only full of ideas; he possesses the ability to materialize them.

B.P. could have joined the civil service or remained in America but he chose to return to Nepal and dedicated himself to bringing about change. Improving the situation of municipalities in Nepal is challenging, but under his leadership Dhulikhel that has defied the trend and has witnessed many positive changes.

Some believed that a leader must be stern, but that has never been B.P.'s attitude. Many foreigners say that Nepalis are

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clever but that they lack management skills, but B.P. belies all such stereotypes, as does Dr. Suresh Raj Sharma, his friend colleague and the founding Vice Chancellor of Kathmandu University.

Bel Prasad Shrestha has done so much for Dhulikhel (e.g., Dhulikhel Hospital, Kathmandu University and developing Dhulikhel as a tourist destination) that sometimes I call Dhulikhel '*BP Khel*'. Nepal's Staff College would do well to make a presentation on his insights and methods of working to the mayors of the country.

Nepal needs more Bel Prasad Shresthas.



A Pillar of the Community

- Keshav Kunwar

During 1983-84, in the last phase of construction of the Lamosangu - Jiri road, I often traveled from Kathmandu to Jiri and back via Dhulikhel. That town always thrilled me because of its geographical location and enchanting natural beauty. I often dreamed of buying some land and raising some cows there and to live out my old days. I finally succeeded in buying a piece of land in Bakhundol-7 in 1990.

I had never met Bel Prasad Shrestha in person before, but I had heard a lot about him during my trips to Jiri and back to Kathmandu. People would talk about the Dhulikhel Lodge and the Horizon Hotel. They said he was a visionary, that he had toiled hard to unite people for modernizing Dhulikhel. These stories made me keener to meet him. I had a distinct image of him in my mind. Years passed but I still had not had the chance to do so.

I have been fascinated by plants and nature since my childhood. So, I made sure that I would be able to enjoy nature when I built my house on the land that I had purchased in Dhulikhel. The location had a complete face lift after adequate plantation of fruit and flower plants. I started spending my Fridays and Saturdays in the two roomed small house in 1996, when it became clear that I needed an adequate supply of water for the plants and other constructions. As an engineer myself, I surveyed the feasibility of drilling a well. I found a spot on the top of the hill and drilled about 140 feet, which yielded a good water supply for all my needs. 'If we can pull water by drilling even in the hills, we will be able to rid Dhulikhel of water problem', I thought.

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News of my successful well drilling reached Bel Prasad so he came to my house to learn more about it; but I was in Kathmandu. He tasted the water even though I was not at home and became even more curious to meet me, and learn about my well drilling technology.

When we finally did meet, brought together by the success drilling on the top of the hill, I had an immediate feeling of closeness to him and apparently, he felt the same way about me. That was the start of our collaboration and our friendship, which has provided not only the opportunity to work for the upliftment of this beautiful city, but also come to know better such a foresighted and visionary person who knows what development is and how it can be achieved. In my view, he exemplifies how sustainable development can be achieved by utilizing the available skills, means and resources.

No country in the world can develop on the lips of its leaders. Leaders can easily make promises, but they must be committed. This is what guides Mr. Bel Prasad Shrestha. He also believes that the community must be involved themselves to make any development sustainable. That's how he has earned his reputation as an impartial social worker who has played a key role in every one of Dhulikhel's major development projects, from the water system to the University, the hospital, the schools, improving the roads, lanes, preserving greenery and supporting the Dhulikhel Dream Land Project and the tourism sector. In the mission of developing Dhulikhel, I have always felt his readiness, regardless of the time of the day or his old age.

The mobilization of the local resources is a must for infrastructure development, as is the ability to get and manage external resources. For that, developing trust and reliability with donor agencies and government is even more important. Fortunately, Bel Prasad Shrestha has all these dispositions and Dhulikhel was successful as a consequence. All of this allows Dhulikhel to stand as a model municipality for the nation.

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However, I know that Bel Prasad Shrestha would be the last to claim all the credit for these accomplishments himself. It was possible because of the collaborative efforts of the inhabitants of Dhulikhel. Nevertheless, nothing would have been possible without Bel Prasad's leadership. His belief that development precedes politics brought Mr. Bel Prasad Shrestha and me together. He stands as the pillar for the prosperity that Dhulikhel has achieved.

Many volumes could be written on Bel Prasad Shrestha. It would be futile to attempt to describe him in just these few paragraphs. I am merely recollecting my feelings for him, which was the outcome of the moments shared with him during our collaborative endeavors. My prayers are always with Mr. Bel Prasad Shrestha. May he be able to live as a source of inspiration for all. May he live a long and active life and enjoy the best health and be an idol in the hearts of the inhabitants of Dhulikhel.



Bel Prasad Shrestha's tireless effort: Development of Dhulikhel - Khem Raj Nepal

Consider this an irony of our country; an individual who in a local scale does a good work and wins the heart of public is never appreciated or honored. Bel Prasad Shrestha is also among those, who work hard for the development of his place. I believe that he is the person who resides in the hearts of people of Dhulikhel as a developer of Dhulikhel cum engineer.

We were introduced to each other when we both were in public post. He was the elected Dhulikhel mayor and I municipality's government staff. This introduction goes back to two decades ago.

Dhulikhel is situated in the strategic point where it can affect the overall development of Nepal. Dhulikhel is famous for its business checkpoint with China (Tibet), the historical and tourist center after crossing Kathmandu valley, representing multi religious culture. One who enters Kathmandu valley can only feel the beauty, diversity and the feeling of being in Nepal only if he/she visits Dhulikhel or Nagarkot. Always worried about the development of Dhulikhel, soft-spoken and honest he won my heart on our very first meeting.

The government was also at that time looking for an individual trusted by everyone, capable of taking money from the public, capable of handling disputes and performing his job with honesty. After agreement of both parties, probability of the help increased. But, at that time, there were no local level long-term or short-term plans being made. It was also not so

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easy to conduct a program having long wide impact as an annual program.

The first proposal of Bel Prasad Shrestha was bringing drinking water into Dhulikhel from the source owned by others that was fifteen kilometers away from Dhulikhel. External help was necessary especially when constructing a grand project with limited money source. One needs skill to convince people around water source, technical knowledge and funding. Bel Prasad Shrestha accepted this challenge, united the community, won the hearts of people around the water source, convinced the consumers, arranged resources and was ultimately successful to gain assistance from the German government. Eventually, the model drinking water project of the whole nation was completed.

This is the first plan where water was distributed by local purification method. This project changed the face of Dhulikhel. This good deed done by him and his supporters has made history.

He planned to create excellent developmental projects every year. Every year, construction work of school, hospital, playground happened and I also used to receive invitations to attend inauguration by country chief or government chief. How Bel Prasad Shrestha could have performed such projects in a small place and with limited investment? The modern building of municipality and office facilities, educational development inside the municipality, assistance and inter-relation with Kathmandu University, development of Dhulikhel as a tourist destination – these are some results of efforts of Bel Prasad Shrestha. He also was able to introduce Dhulikhel internationally by maintaining a sister relation with some European countries.

With his gentle, positive thinking, logical thoughts and friendly behavior, he has always impressed me. No one ever had any complaints about Bel Prasad Shrestha's weakness and

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mean behavior or unnecessary workload provided by him. No one was able to raise their finger regarding unnecessary works and corruption when he was in post. What could be a better feeling for a government officer than this? Bel Prasad Shrestha's victory as a mayor for three times the prime example of his popularity. Nepal needs more individuals like Bel Prasad Shrestha. Let's learn from him and teach others.



Dhulikhel, German Assistance and Bel Prasad Shrestha

- Laxman Rajbhandari

In the development process of Nepal, a German organization has played a key role. The organization has also played a key role in turning small place like Dhulikhel into a beautiful urban space. GTZ (UDLE) was the organization that got the chance.

During the renovation of Bhaktapur, GTZ's programs were called 'German Project'. To observe the project's work and technique, Bel Prasad Shrestha reached from Dhulikhel to Bhaktapur. The initial step towards giving Dhulikhel a modern redesign was this Bhaktapur visit.

The sad state of Dhulikhel at that time is hard to imagine now. People today would be shocked if they are shown the pictures of old Dhulikhel. To turn that squalor into today's beautiful, cultured and facilitated place with modern facilities, many people are responsible- Bel Prasad Shrestha being one. Following his steps, GTZ also reached Dhulikhel. There was scarcity of drinking water, lack of toilets and many other similar facilities. There were infinite number of problems that needed to be solved. But, the first priority went to drinking water. Dhulikhel had to climb the ladder of success by taking its first step.

After much hard work and failures, GTZ was able to solve the problem of drinking water. The team of Bel Prasad Shrestha put a tremendous effort in this.

Donors do not only give; they also want to be assured that the donation has been used properly. GTZ also monitored

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the people of Dhulikhel, how hard they worked and how they consumed the resources they were given. GTZ saw that people of Dhulikhel were really energized, heartily welcomed all the challenges, never misused anything and always thought of society rather than their own personal benefit. So, GTZ was convinced with people of Dhulikhel. Bel Prasad Shrestha acted as mediator between people of Dhulikhel and GTZ. GTZ also accepted his request and his people also supported him. So, Dhulikhel municipality and GTZ were able to co-operate and Dhulikhel was gradually headed toward urban development.

I feel so glad to say that GTZ played a very important role in providing Dhulikhel with what it needed most. I hope that Dhulikhel would always get Bel Prasad Shrestha's leadership and may GTZ continue to be Dhulikhel's partner in progress.



Shangri-La

- Meg Noble Peterson

The small kingdom of Nepal is sandwiched between the two giants, India and China, and dominated by the highest mountain range on earth. No wonder it's called 'The Roof of the World.' But like Varanasi, Nepal is in no danger of joining the 21st century. It hasn't reached the 20th yet.

I stepped off the plane and breathed the clean mountain air. It was heaven. But I never expected it to be so warm. I'd forgotten that Kathmandu, despite its mile high altitude, was also in the heart of the Terai, a lowland jungle, an extension of the great Ganges valley of India. Before long I'd be yearning for a little of that warmth against the snow and wind of the Himalayas.

A cab driver delivered me to Thamel, the busy student section of the Old City, where cheap guesthouses abounded and a carnival atmosphere prevailed.

"This is where the action is," he said to my surprise, adding a wink.

Nepal - isolated from the west until 1950 - had become a notorious 'hippie' hangout in the 1960's and 70's. Its reputation flourished among the disenchanting of every nationality as one of the few places where smoking hashish and dropping acid were legal. You could get stoned and live comfortably for a pittance.

In 1975, after the coronation of King Mahendra, drugs were officially prohibited. The days of wild abandon were over, although you could still see a few flower children floating

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about. Thamel had now become the 'trippie' center, full of eager trekkers poking around the crowded shops and preparing for extended expeditions into the mountains. And tourists who wanted to experience a living medieval town full of authentic architecture, religious festivals, wooden temples and tons of trash.

"Triger balm, Madam ... cigarettes ... T-shirts ...?"

Already I was being besieged by pitchmen.

"American Express?" I asked. To my amazement, I was given good directions in English.

The American Express office was a short walk from Thamel, through a tangle of narrow alleys and decorative squares. The streets were not made for vehicles. Even the bicycle rickshaws, tooting impatiently with their bulbous rubber horns, had trouble getting through the throng of shoppers. People clustered on ornately carved balconies that jut out from the second stories of the crooked Newari houses. These ancient dwellings, closing in on either side of the cramped walk-ways, lean against one another, stacked so tightly that one roof can sweep, like a graceful drape, over several houses. A woman thrust her head out of an overhanging window and called to her friend across the street. This must have been what England was like in Elizabethan times. I fully expected a pail of water to be thrown on me as I walked under the eaves.

American Express operated from a dingy office not far from Durbar Marg and New Street, where trekking and tourist agencies flourished. I presented my card and passport, and a friendly clerk handed me a packet of mail.

"Good thing you came today," he said, tilting his head to one side. "I've held these letters for two months. That's our limit."

How far behind schedule I'd gotten.

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I flipped through the pile, grateful to hear from my family, but hoping for news of Faith, James, and Leszek. There was a hurried note from Faith saying that she and James had decided to stay in Kashmir instead of going to Nepal, but hoped I wouldn't lose touch. And nothing from Leszek. He'd probably been to Everest and back while I was floating on the Ganges.

Disappointed, I went outside and joined the choking mass of people threading their way through town. In one of the small squares, I collapsed like a rag doll onto a dirty stone plinth, resting my pack on the attached *stupa*. I knew I had to get away from the confusion - the traffic, the squawking vendors. I took a hand-written map from my camera bag. A big red arrow pointed to the bus station with the notation: "Here is where you get the bus for Dhulikhel. If you're looking for Shangri-la, this is it!"

The map had been written by AmyNoel Wyman, the daughter of my old friend and mountain climbing buddy, Sylvia, who had died the previous year, and whose memory had helped sustain me on the terrifying climb up Table Mountain in January. AmyNoel's enthusiasm about the time she'd spent working with the Newars, the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, had heightened my resolve to visit Nepal. She'd given me \$500.00 to deliver to her friend, B.P. Shrestha, toward the building of elementary schools in remote hill communities. This was a godsend for parents who were too poor to send their children to town schools. B.P., as he was affectionately called, owned a guesthouse and a fancy new resort hotel in Dhulikhel, a tiny farming village a few miles outside of Kathmandu, with one of the best views of the Himalayas.

At the station I boarded a dilapidated bus. Not even its Egyptian counterpart in the Sinai could compete. Seat covers were torn, a large metal box covered the motor - located up front next to the driver - and the windows were cracked and stuck open. The fringed windshield was plastered with pictures

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of *Shiva* and ropes of tinsel. There was only a small patch of unadorned glass through which the driver could see. In half-an-hour he arrived, lifted the box off the engine, and thumped it several times to get it started.

I was squeezed between two men, my pack on my lap. The overflow passengers sat on the box over the engine, until it became too hot. Then they moved to the door well. But despite the discomfort everyone seemed to be in a jovial mood, especially those who rode outside, hanging onto the bus. One man appeared to be the driver's helper. He banged on the back door and whistled, intermittently - the shrill, insistent warble of a frightened bird - which signaled just about everything. When to start, when to stop, and when to hurry up. I never did figure out the system.

The driver couldn't seem to control the bus, which careened wildly over the winding roads, narrowly missing oncoming vehicles. The passengers erupted in laughter, adding a chorus of 'oh's' and 'ah's' each time there was a close call. We labored this way for an hour. Sometimes the lights went out as the driver turned the wheel madly left and right to keep the old crate going straight. And with each turn came a high-pitched, tooth-shattering screech.

Shaken, I stepped off the bus in the town square in front of B.P.'s guesthouse, Dhulikhel Lodge. A flowery photograph of the king and queen perched above its modest sign. I entered through a brick hallway, which led into a stone courtyard. A young man, Mahendra, greeted me. He looked uneasy as he showed me the communal wash area and the elemental pit toilets, and offered an arm as we started up the three flights of stairs to my room.

At the top of the stairs was a hallway strewn with thick straw mats. We walked into the front room. Coarsely woven tan blankets covered the floor, colorful hangings lined the walls, and thin, filmy material drooped from the ceiling like

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clouds. A double bed, smothered under heavy comforters, stood beside a bank of small-paned windows that overlooked the main square. One bare bulb hung over the bed.

"Are you sure you don't want to go to the new hotel?" Mahandra asked. He looked worried. "I could take you there. It has a magnificent view of the mountains...."

"Are you telling me I can't stay here?" I interrupted.

"Oh, no, Madam. I'm thinking of your comfort."

"You're thinking of my age. You're thinking I'm too old."

His face turned scarlet. He lowered his head.

"Well, I'm staying," I announced. "The room is perfect."

We went back downstairs and I lingered in the garden, enjoying the aroma of flowers. Square brick planters choked with blossoms lined the walkways and two rustic benches nestled under a thick canopy of trees. At the far edge, where the hill dropped away, a ribbon of rice fields spiraled down to the river, dimly illuminated by a silver of moon. Night birds and insects were tuning up. I inhaled the sweet mountain air. Again, and again.

B.P. Shrestha was sitting cross-legged behind a low table when I entered the dining room. He looked in his mid-forties. Slender, muscular, with penetrating eyes and graying hair. I introduced myself. His dark face crinkled into a full smile.

Ah, AmyNoel's friend. I've been expecting you. Sit down." I moved across the blanketed floor in my bare feet and sat on a mattress opposite him. Small tables and cushions framed the room. Decorative bamboo lattice work partially covered the roughhewn windows. Straw lamps hung from the ceiling.

"I have a surprise for you," I said and handed him AmyNoel's crisp hundred-dollar bills. He slowly ran them

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through his fingers as if caressing priceless silk. His look was one of absolute joy.

"Do you know what this means, Meg?" he asked.

"I have some idea, since AmyNoel told me how much you did with her first donation of twenty-five dollars."

"She is a lovely woman. An angel. With this money we can buy a new floor for one of our schools. And books. And paper and pens for writing. I can now go to the parents and tell them to start clearing land for another school. We can buy struts and cement. Of course, the labor they do themselves" B.P.' s eyes were moist, but his face was glowing with excitement. This would be the sixth school he had started for elementary age children.

"Meg," he said, "tomorrow we'll go to the hills and I'll show you. These are simple farmers struggling to make a living. They can't afford to have their children gone all day. They need their help. But the government doesn't provide schools in the hills."

He paused, rubbing his hands together, leaning towards me as he spoke. "Most of the adults are illiterate, or have learned a bit of scripture by rote. Stories are passed down by word of mouth from one generation to the next. But they want something better for their children."

While we talked, we ate. Mahandra was one of several young men who served us a choice of simple western or Nepali food. Dinner never cost more than \$2.00. And every evening there was a Nepalese dish for 75 cents.

I sat in the comfortable dining room conversing with B.P.'s friends from around the world-students, teachers, and backpackers like me. In the next five days I would meet dozens of people eager to share their experiences. Full of advice on where to go, what to avoid, which routes to take.

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It was difficult to get to sleep after so much stimulating conversation. And nobody had warned me about Friday night band practice in the town square. I love bands, but not when the clarinets and trumpets seem to be playing different compositions simultaneously. And the drummer hesitates just long enough to miss the beat. I sank deeper under the covers, but it was no use. Not even my earplugs could drown out the cacophony. I was marching to a different drummer, when I didn't want to be marching at all.

After finally dozing off, my sleep was shattered by the sound of pounding feet on the stairs. And shouts. Suddenly, Mahendra burst into my room.

"Madam, are you all right?" he asked, breathless.

I shot bolt upright, shaking from the intrusion. "What... what are you doing here at this hour?" I asked.

"Someone fell down the stairs, and I thought....."

"You thought it was me. Right? Because you think I'm too old to be here. Now confess, or I won't forgive you for waking me up."

"Then who was it?" he said, looking crestfallen.

"Probably some twenty-years-old student, drunk," I said.

That was the last time Mahendra patronized me.

I slept until the roosters and barking dogs made it impossible. When I walked down to breakfast, I found B.P. sitting with some of his cronies, smoking unfiltered cigarettes and drinking coffee. It was a diverse group, some wearing work clothes, some draped in the traditional *galluka* with the cone-shaped, brimless *fez*, and others in western shirts and slacks.

"We're planning my campaign for mayor of the village," B.P. announced when I arrived. "I'm not sure I want to run, but my friends here are very persuasive."

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"I'll vote for you," I said, "but only after a cup of coffee. Or don't you let the ladies vote?"

"We have a lot of reforming to do," he answered wryly.

A long pause. "I have a good life, Meg. I love people and I work hard. But I worry about all the details of being a mayor. I hate administration. And I don't want to lose my freedom."

"Let Kirin do it," said one of the men. Kiran was B.P.'s eldest son, who had just returned from two years in Salzburg, where he received a degree in hotel management.

"Yeah. A young man who is thinking about girls is going to run my office and manage the new resort at the same time?" He laughed, and we joined him. "Then I'll really have to spend all my free time being a trouble shooter."

Politics was the same the world over.

That afternoon B.P. took me to visit one of his schools. The walk along the hilly road was leisurely, the sun warm and soothing. Two little boys played, naked, in a mountain stream. Friends passed by. A few stopped to talk. A little girl about eight years old, with deep black eyes and lustrous hair, joined us as we walked. She was carrying a heavy milk can on her back.

After she left, B.P. said, "I asked her why she wasn't in school. She said that her mother needs her to sell the milk in the village." His tone was full of sadness.

Suddenly, we ducked up a steep path and waded through brambles and tall grass until we come to a neat white L-shaped building. You could hear the steady hum of children's voices in recitation. B.P.'s mood changed. He beamed with pride.

"We've been able to hire three teachers-a man for the 5th and 6th grade and two women for the other combined grades."

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I stood outside the window and recorded an English lesson. It made me think of the dialogues I'd to learn in German class in college. Rote repetition. Over and over. When they were finished the children giggled and clapped. One of them caught sight of me and a torrent of eager, squealing children poured into the yard.

They clustered around and ushered me into the school, showing me rows of simple desks and a blackboard with numbers. One of the children took my hand and pulled me to her desk. She thrust a note pad in front of me. On it were several English sentences.

"Please, Madam, read to us," she said haltingly.

I read the sentences, then a small book. The children watched in awe, some sidling up and touching me. I shall never forget the rapture on their faces. Had I been a performer on the grandest stage in the world, I could not have found greater satisfaction.

On the way home B.P. showed me a partially constructed building. "Here's how it's done," he said. "First they put up wooden struts and fill the spaces with straw. Then they plaster it with cow dung, smooth it out, & paint it white."

But doesn't it stink?" I asked, feeling immediately foolish.

"I know this will surprise you," he said, "but once it's dry and painted there's no odor at all. Don't forget, we're a poor country and have to use our ingenuity. Cow and yak dung are very useful products here in Nepal."

We walked along in silence.

"You know, dear Meg," said B.P. at last. "There's therapy in doing everything yourself, even the simplest task. These people take great pride in their homes and their farms. They're building a future stone by stone, brick by brick, row by row."

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At breakfast the next morning I met Terri, a young woman from Yosemite, who was staying at the guesthouse on a self-imposed six-month retreat.

"I had to get away from my frantic life," she said, skillfully twirling thin noodles around enamel chopsticks. "My parents thought I was crazy to go to Nepal, but that's how far I had to go before my motor stopped racing."

I sympathized. I was still plagued with self-inflicted pressures that refused to go away. The *shoulds* and *oughts* of everyday life.

"But I wonder how long a peaceful place like Dhulikhel will survive," she added. "The influence of the West is disturbing."

This didn't surprise me. I'd already seen the effect of creeping westernization in Africa. Window dressing with little or no respect for the indigenous culture.

"For example, the Nepalese smoke American cigarettes for their prestige value. And don't think the good old U.S. tobacco companies aren't pushing that. In fact, there's a terrific demand for both cigarettes and liquor. Most of it comes from the airport duty free shops, and is sold by Westerners for a huge profit. Now this may sound superficial, but it goes a lot deeper....."

I'd heard this discussion so many times, and it always made me feel powerless-the hapless observer of an inevitable, depressing trend. The next thing she'd mention was arms sales. I changed the subject. "What do you say we take a walk in the countryside? Get a glimpse of Shangri-la before McDonald's discovers it."

"You're right," Terri agreed. "I came here to let go and I'm still wound up like a bedspring."

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We found a path leading away from town and winding through heavily terraced fields. The symmetrical bands followed the contour of the land—vivid green where the new wheat was growing and rice brown where the corn would soon be planted. Yellow mustard was everywhere in bloom.

In the distance women in flowing dresses and *saris* carried towering bundles of laundry down to a rock ledge at the bank of the river and placed them in large metal pans heaped with suds. Later, the women skipped along the banks, rinsing the clothes in the bubbling water. We inched closer and watched. It was definitely a social occasion. Talking and laughing accompanied the scrubbing. Soon, a patchwork of dazzling color began to emerge as more and more squares of cloth were draped over the supple branches near the river's edge to dry.

When we returned, a noisy market was in full swing in the town square. Swarms of school children in neat blue and white uniforms were heading home. With my camera hanging from my neck, I was a sitting duck, a chance for the bravest to practice English. The children grabbed both of my hands and escorted me to their school. After I'd taken several group pictures in front of the building, I asked them to show me where the post office was.

No answer. Only puzzled expressions. I drew a letter from my bag and slowly repeated, "Air mail stamps." Then I put out my arms and swooped like a plane, making loud motor sounds. That did it! Off we went in a flurry of excitement. After I'd bought my stamps and mailed the letter, one little boy put out his hand for money.

I shook my head and said, "Oh, no, we're friends."

To my surprise and chagrin, he was several chided by the other children.

In early evening Terri and I climbed up to B.P.'s luxurious mountain resort two miles from the center of the

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town on the road leading to the Chinese/Tibetan border. This was no ordinary hotel. It had been put together lovingly, with authentic touches from the past incorporated into the clean lines of a modern Buddhist retreat. Carved wooden windows salvaged from ancient buildings looked out on a spacious stone patio. From the patio we watched the sun set behind the Himalayas. When the last bits of color had receded, we treated ourselves to dinner, sitting behind those splendid windows and watching the valley fill with mist.

Two hours later we walked back down the hill to the lodge. How clear the sky was, drenched with stars, the only light a crescent moon lying on its back. It was like those heavenly summer evenings when I was a teenager walking down the camp road to my parents' cottage, breathing the clear air and hearing only the night sounds. I needed no flashlights. I had the moon.

"Look, Meg," exclaimed Terri. "That's a *Shiva* moon. There must be a festival going on right now. I've never seen it like that."

The night before I left, a group of us were sitting in the dining room after dinner room and B.P. was telling stories about his experiences twenty years ago as an exchange teacher at the University of California in Davis. I got the impression that the most difficult part of adjusting to American society was the toilets. He's never used a seat before—a rather ironic twist.

"I hate to interrupt this fascinating discussion, B.P., but I wonder if you could put through a call to my son, Chris, in New Jersey. I haven't talked to him in weeks." I gave him the number and sat, nervously tapping my foot, giving suggestions as he talked to the operator.

He put down the phone and patted my knee. "Please, Meg, I've done this before. Slow down. Don't talk so fast."

No sooner had B.P. put the call through than the phone rang and he began to chat with one of his friends. I tried to

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relax, to be patient. I breathed deeply. Stared out the window. Why didn't he get off the phone so my call could come through? He saw my annoyance and cupped his hand over the receiver.

"Stop worrying. The operator will interrupt me for an overseas trunk call."

I waited an hour, but there was no call. B.P. looked at me and smiled sympathetically. "Meg, you're in Nepal now, There's no hurry. There's tomorrow."

Early the next morning B.P. walked me to the bus. I looked at this modest man as we stood together in front of the old brick dwellings in the village square. He was a genuinely good person, a doer, not a talker. His life embraced the highest values of this little country. He and his village would always mean Nepal to me.

As the bus was pulling up I moved to hug him. He stepped back. "Meg, it isn't the custom in Nepal to show affection between a man and a woman in public. It would be misunderstood. Please don't be offended."

I realized that I'd seldom seen men and women together in public and, if I did, they were never holding hands or hugging. Men, however, were allowed to be affectionate toward one another.

"May be things will have changed before I return," I said as we shook hands. "After all, B.P. there's *always* tomorrow! "

Source : Madam, Have You Ever Really Been Happy?, pp 294 - 303



Dhulikhel has flourished due to Bel - Mohan Duwal

Dhulikhel is busy and lively these days. It is popular for the majestic view of *Jugal* mountain as it gets bright with the rays of the sun. Loaded with ideal climatic condition, green environment and a typical traditional Newari community, Dhulikhel has been a destination for tourists for their holiday fun and recreation. Tourists flock here to enjoy the sunrise and sunset from the hill-top and quench their never satisfying thirst of viewing the majestic snow-clad mountains.

Banepa and Dhulikhel lie a mere four kilometers apart. The need of unifying them into one larger municipality unit has been shadowed by the political leaders seeking their own interests. The Newari people seem to have blood of the Mallas who were defeated in the history for their division. Panauti is another town dominated by Newars. And it beats its own different tune of drum. The political leaders are bent on fragmenting these three important cities. The three small towns exist independently instead of having one big sub metropolitan city. Never ever did the architects of the society think about it. Dhulikhel enjoys its ability able to be a tourist destination, and the people are content with the level of development activities they have achieved. On the other hand, Banepa bloats with pride of earning from trade and commerce. Being in close proximity to the capital city and on the Araniko highway, it enjoys the advantages of more dimensions of commerce like financial institutions, banks and cooperatives and transportation enterprises. Panauti, on the other hand, is proud of being a historical city and to have been listed in the UNESCO Heritage list.

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'Mr. Bel' of Dhulikhel is limited within Dhulikhel while inhabitants of Banepa and Panauti are dancing in their own tune. I often wonder and question 'Brother Bel, why haven't we been able to raise ourselves to be called as Kavrelis? Should we be limited to Dhulikhel, Banepa and Panauti in the cloak of narrow communal identity?'

No doubt, Dhulikhel is beautiful, and it can be made even more beautiful. It has opened the entrance for development and the pace of the development can be accelerated. The health, education and drinking water facilities have privileged the city and made the city adorable and admirable. For these, the role of Bel Prasad Shrestha is commendable.

People of Dhulikhel know to get united for development activities. Regardless of their political alignments to different political parties, they unite when it comes to the interests of Dhulikhel. Bel Prasad got elected as the Chief of the Dhulikhel Panchayat. He dedicated himself for the development of Dhulikhel as the mayor of the municipality. 'Bel' is like a fruit that a Newari virgin (kumari) is married to. This ritual is still prevalent. And Bel Prasad has been married to the development and the prosperity of the town.

Placing him on the grounds of Dhulikhel, I have been gauging Bel Prasad Shrestha and attempting to draw out his significant deeds. What were the interests that he propagated in his actions? What fruits did he harvest from his social service? There might be various answers to these numerous questions. And it is my conviction that Bel Prasad grew up in the soil of Dhulikhel as a true Bel Fruit and got married to the betterment of Dhulikhel and validated his life. Social dynamism is the testament of the vices or virtues of a person. In this perspective, Bel Prasad was a patron of the contemporary society of Dhulikhel.

Dhulikhel for Bel Prasad, Bel Prasad for Dhulikhel. Bel Prasad is such an efficient social worker. He has toiled hard for

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what Dhulikhel is today. I constantly say – “Bel brother, you have to be someone memorable for Kavre, too. What we need is a little of your heart and generosity. I pray for that.”

Our relation grew since the establishment of Kavre Multiple Campus. He spares his time to come to attend the meeting of management committee of the campus as a goodwill gesture to involve in the social welfare of Banepa. Very highly courteous and diplomat Bel Prasad, has given me no clue about his political affiliation. His inexhaustible effort for the betterment of Dhulikhel led him to the hearts of the people of Dhulikhel. However, the political power and the state power and the desires and whims of the people are never constant. The history indicates that it is an inevitable process. After the political upheaval and the downfall of monarchy in the country, people were skeptical about the diehard followers of the king. Everyone who was in favor of the king's autocracy was in the bunch. Some people even tried to present Beldai in the same line. But my conviction is that it is unfair to judge a person by his faith or political ideology alone. They have their own color and side. His contribution to the society can never be shadowed just on the ground of these parameters. Individuals with the ideal political doctrines are worthless if they do nothing for the society. To the contrary, those individuals who have been instrumental for the welfare of the society deserve respect and honor. So, from that perspective Bel Prasad Shrestha has justified himself to be a shining guiding star of Dhulikhel.

Those who work for the upliftment of the society are more eminent than the ones who do nothing. Critical people with their actions are more significant and honorable than those who confine themselves in words. People who attempt to engage in actions in order to transform the society to any extent are exemplary people than those who merely spit the revolutionary ideas but do not try to translate their ideas in actions. The practice of recognizing such dignitaries in the society will help in modeling the new generation and it will

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ultimately build the stronger foundation of the society. In the same regard, Dhulikhel should acknowledge Bel Prasad Shrestha and his deeds. He is such an honorable figure.

In the same light, I am pouring out my feelings from my heart.

With an evil in the heart
Aiming to peril the society
In the body, living with the treacherous faith
Ones, wanting to mislead others
Seemingly eminent
Down fall he has, like the emperor
But
In the society, vicinity and the nation
Who wants to sow beauty?
Any soul, regardless
Are worth worshipping.

Bel Prasad, I'm speaking,
The beautiful flowers you have sowed in Dhulikhel
Are in bloom, spreading their fragrance
Hence, I like to repeat it
The gay blooms out of your heart and body
In the soil of Dhulikhel
Are filling with the fragrance
Congratulation, meaningful has been your devotion.



The Three Dimensions of Bel Prasad Shrestha - Mukunda Prasad Upadhayaya

A person takes birth and dies ultimately. If his descendants are well-cultured, they may remember him on two occasions of the year, one on the death anniversary and another on his birthday for offering him oblations (*Pinda*) or otherwise. But a person's persona has its distinct identity. Even after death, his identity lives for some time and he is remembered and followed by the new generations.

Among all my acquaintances, Bel Prasad Makaju Shrestha, the father of Dhulikhel Municipality, is not merely a person but a distinct personality in my view. In his native land, Bel Prasad Makaju Shrestha, is referred as 'Beldai' (Brother Bel). The reason why he is entitled as the father of Dhulikhel is not only the credit of developing Dhulikhel from village to city, but also for being elected as the mayor of the municipality for successive tenures with distinct majority votes without any political alignment. Irony but the fact, Dhulikhel has not got any legitimate successor mayor since. When some political speculation is made about the prospective future mayor for Dhulikhel, they can't see the best substitute for him. And they profess that the one whom Beldai favors or supports will win. After the second peoples' revolution, many individuals tried to discredit him and spoil his image guided by their politically vested interests. It is a general tendency of Nepalese society that they are drawn by the power and forget people and things after their needs are met. But truth prevails. A genius doesn't require any political color nor does it require any publicity or the advertisement. Beldai is a genius who requires no brand; no trademark for being sold or recognized.

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It is a general trend in the society that people are awarded, felicitated posthumously, so is a book of memoir published in commemoration of him/her, in which the person is praised heedlessly in words. And the general tendency is that the weaker side of the person is merely cited, even if somebody dares to do it, maybe the publisher removes it. Unlike it, Hari Manjushree has attempted to publish the book when the person is alive. Hari, a friend of mine, likes to maintain his unique way. Perhaps, that is why, he has added 'shree' to his name to the end unlike adding it as a title to the front of the person's name. Writing about a person when he is alive is but a risky job. If his good sides are only pointed out, the readers might criticize it accusing that the person might have bribed the publisher; if the shortcomings of the person are pointed out, the person may be defamed. Or as the person is living, the writer may have to face the serious defense from him. However, for the people who have guts to speak the truth, call spade a spade, it doesn't matter at all.

Another nickname of Beldai is Mayor Saab. Perhaps he is called so because he was the first, powerful mayor without potential best substitute. Everyone who knows him in the district call him Mayor Saab. People from other municipalities and the leaderships in high command of the political parties should learn from him on what a mayor should be like and who should be nominated for the mayorship. Mayorship is something that can't be decided by political interests or can be elected among political parties. I think 'Father of Municipality' means someone who is good natured, dignified and revered by everyone. What do we call the defeated candidates in the election that is contested by different candidates from different political parties? 'Near Father'? 'Step Father'? 'Can Father be decided by minority or majority votes? 'How can we call someone father when he can't father someone?' I think these questions deserve some delving into.

Beldai as a personality has three dimensions: Beldai as an entrepreneur, Beldai as a guardian of Makaju Family and

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Beldai as a person who believes in simple living and high thinking. Attempting to elaborate all these dimensions in detail can form a completely factual novel. So, in brief, he has optimized the way of running a resort. Anyone who wishes to have any idea of managing a joint family, ought to learn from him. It is believed that sometimes there would be about a hundred members eating from the same kitchen. Even though he dresses up modestly in shirt, pants, coat and simple shoes either at home or to the offices and formal occasions, he is a man with brilliant thoughts and ideas. He wishes to develop Dhulikhel as one of the developed towns in Switzerland. He is living with a dream to create a heaven with peace, harmony and prosperity.

I would like to recall an incidence of meeting with Beldai. One early morning I received a call from him. He said, 'I want to meet you, Mukunda Ji. Could you spare some time to come to my hotel and have a cup of tea together?' It was his typical invitation. 'Shall we have lunch together? Let's have today's breakfast here today. Or shall I come to you for a cup of tea?' It is his courtesy. I felt it was urgent. So, I made my way to Dhulikhel Horizon Hotel keeping everything aside. He introduced the topic while having tea. It was about starting a private bank or a financial institution. I was then talking to an entrepreneur not a mayor alone! He explained that some retired governors of Central Bank had been planning to run a private bank in Dhulikhel involving some influential figures like Bel Prasad Shrestha and Dr. Suresh Raj Sharma. And he had preferred discussing with me to Dr. Suresh Raj Sharma as it was connected to management of a financial institution. I was much impressed and inspired despite his age and retirement from mayor-ship. I commented, 'Mayor Saab, it is not a development work of Dhulikhel but a profit-making enterprise.'

I thought to myself: Why did he have to go into the business? Two sons were in America. He had such a magnificent hotel. Wealth is never enough. The more one

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hoards, the poorer he gets. Humorously I said, 'Mayor Saab, after all, it's a money-making business, why do you need big money? After all, it has no use after death, there is no bank in the heaven. The only difference maybe at your death, your sons might arrange expensive woods for your funeral if you leave behind more money, and if you leave behind little, they might buy common wood. But ultimately any wood would burn your body to ashes. And what's the difference then?'

'Ha ha ha!', he laughed heartily, delighted by my comments. He has never talked about trade and business since then. We are still very good friends. Indeed, our intimacy is getting even stronger.

The description of Beldai as a social worker can include the establishment of icons of Dhulikhel today, like Kathmandu University, Dhulikhel Hospital, Germany funded drinking water project. Had he not been there, the Kathmandu University, which had been found in Changunarayan, would not have been established in Dhulikhel. Dr. Ram Kantha Makaju who had been educated, employed, married and settled in Austria wouldn't have agreed to return Nepal. He had persuaded a tourist who came to stay at his hotel to see Dr. Suresh Raj Sharma and Dr. Ram Kantha Makaju and stay back in Dhulikhel. As a consequence, with the collaboration with Municipality, Hospital and Kathmandu University, Kathmandu University Preparatory School was established. This is widely known as the High School of Kathmandu University. The tourist was not an ordinary person, he was Eden Warlo, who was a Master Degree graduate and had 30 years of rich experience in school education. In addition, he supported to run the Quality Education Project in order to improve the quality of education in the secondary schools of Dhulikhel. When Kathmandu University started its I.Sc., an intermediate program, in 1992, there were only three eligible students to get enrolled from Kavre district. The number increased gradually up to 160 in 2007. That is a concrete instance of the improvement of the quality of education in the private and government funded

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schools in Kavre. Kavre is now developing as a hub of education, health and tourist destination.

Beldai has a lot of vigor. He seems desperate to do more for his home town. Some maintain that the old should devote their time to religious activities. They may wonder whether it not the time for his retirement. But social work itself is a religion for Beldai. Hence, I wish him that his remaining life would be bound to selfless altruistic service to mankind.



Bel Prasad Shrestha Introduces Banking in Dhulikhel - Narayan Kapur Pathak

It has been four years since I left my job at Nepal Rastra Bank (the reserve bank of Nepal) after 32 years of service. Even after I left, I continued to get some money but I had no idea what to do with it. I had no further plans. I had a thought of opening a small resort in my village after leaving my job. With the ongoing situation of country and lack of safety, that felt extremely challenging however. I was just confused and was not doing anything.

When I left the job at Nepal Rastra bank, my close friends Chandraman Maleku and Pramod Nepal who also had resigned from their jobs, were making some future plans. We even thought of buying a piece of land. We dealt with brokers but did not find land as wished. Almost one and a half month passed and we felt that it was not worth it and we decided to move into the banking, a field we were involved for long time. We discussed our plans with our friends from concerned department of Nepal Rastra Bank. Some other friends who had resigned also agreed to invest their money on shares and finally we moved on to our plan of opening a development bank.

The idea was fixed but we had no idea where, how and with whom to do it. Being my birthplace, Kavre district has a very special place in my heart. From my birthplace Patalekhet VDC's Dadagaon to Bhaktapur's Siddhapokhari, Dhulikhel, Banepa, Sanga, Nalinchok - are all very much familiar to me. There used to be a belief that washing feet at a pond near Sanga's Nasikasthan heals cracks and relieves us from

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tiredness. I still remember washing my feet there. When coming from Kathmandu to Dadagaun and returning back, we used to rest at Sanga Bhanjyang and have *Dahi -chiura* (yoghurt with beaten rice) and potato. All these small events are still fresh in my memory. I was so surprised to see someone's dead body being brought playing *baja* (musical instrument) for cremation when I reached Hanumante river of Bhaktapur. My innocent mind at that time thought that those instruments were played only in good occasions like *upanayana* and marriages. The pages of those memories are uncountable. I think that all these trees, places, mud of the way still recognize me. I have been raised in a small village as a shepherd. So, when I travel to Kathmandu through Dhulikhel, it gives me a different feeling. Dhulikhel was going to be our banking place and friends agreed on it.

During the travel between Dhulikhel and Dadagaon, I came to know many people of Dhulikhel. After my job at Rastra Bank in 1969, these contacts increased even more. Saraswati Book Shop, Dhulikhel Lodge, Sun Prasad Shrestha and his family and Bel Prasad Shrestha, I was familiar with everyone. I used to call Bel Prasad Shrestha - Beldai, but met him rarely because he was a very busy man. But whenever I met him, my respect for him increased always. Simple, gentle and development-loving person. I saw revolutionary changes in Dhulikhel in front of me. In discussions between my friends and relatives, I used to hear - Beldai has a big role in Sanjeevani School's development; Beldai has an active role in the establishment of Kathmandu University, in converting Dhulikhel into a municipality, in road management and cleanliness, in the establishment of Dhulikhel Hospital. My respect for him grew a lot. He used to be always the same simple, gentle and respectable gentlemen. My idea of opening a bank tied me to these thoughts and the thoughts guided me to Dhulikhel municipality - Beldai's office.

I met Beldai at the municipality. I presented my thoughts about opening a bank. He liked my proposal. He expressed his

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positive thoughts- "Mr. Pathak, development is impossible without money. Without development, poverty will never be eliminated. See the condition of people around us. People are not able to fulfill their basic needs of clothing and food. Many people would be empowered by opening some kind of industry. And also, this will go to develop the condition of our municipality. Everything demands money. If we are able to open a bank, the lack of money would be fulfilled, isn't that right?"

We discussed more about development, money and bank. Among friends, we also discussed about some probable local promoters. Eventually, the decision of opening a bank with help of some local people was made. That's how Beldai was linked with 'Araniko Development Bank' and became its founding chairman.

Beldai had close relations with development-loving late King Birendra. And why wouldn't they? Both were development lovers. Beldai clearly understands the concept of development. He says he knew little about banking. But, during our conversations, I always felt that he knew the business well.

Speaking in simple terms, bank is a mediator. Bank takes money from people who have money (deposit) and provides it (loan) to those who need them. Bank creates an environment between these two for money exchange. The mediation is the foundation for trust for both bank and customers. People invest their money on bank so that it could help them in their hard days. Bank provides loan for purposes like industry, business, house construction, agriculture etc. and help increase their income from the field. The standard of living of people would be high and thus bank is necessary. Beldai understands all this and still says he knows less about bank. Because that's him. If he had not understood all these facts, we would neither have availed of his leadership nor would the Araniko Development Bank be established in Dhulikhel.

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The people of Dhulikhel clearly know about the role Beldai has played in the overall development of Dhulikhel. Kathmandu University, which introduced Dhulikhel in international arena, Dhulikhel Hospital, the schools and colleges of Dhulikhel, tourist spots, from 'Dhulikhel Lodge' to many hotels today that introduce Dhulikhel as a tourist center.

Dhulikhel's first private bank 'Araniko Development Bank' started on 6th July 2006 (22nd Asad 2063 B.S.), thanks to his leadership. This is a new dimension for Dhulikhel. I believe that the bank that has continuously been climbing the ladder of success from its initial days under leadership of Beldai will continue to serve not only people of Dhulikhel, but whole Kavre district and soon would be able to serve people of the whole country! Coming days, I hope Araniko Development Bank will provide modern banking services for betterment of people and for all the institutions and organizations of Dhulikhel under the leadership of Bel Prasad Shrestha. Let us too join Beldai in the development Dhulikhel.



What Dhulikhel can teach Kathmandu

- Naresh Newar

At a time when parts of Kathmandu haven't had water flowing out of the pipes for years, the people of Dhulikhel have what the capital's citizens can only dream of: 24-hour water supply from the mains.

Sixty-year-old Nanu Maya Shrestha is relaxed, she no longer has to wake up at the crack of dawn to wait with her pitcher at the public tap. "We are Lucky," says Nanu Maya recalling the days when Dhulikhel had no water and dysentery and typhoid were common. The water shortage drove many out of Dhulikhel, and some settled in nearby Banepa.

When Dhulikhel was made the district headquarters of Kavre in 1962, the population soared and the water situation got worse. As the Panchayat government was not taking any initiative to improve the water supply system, Dhulikhelis took the matter into their own hands. In 1983, a group of volunteer engineers decided that diverting water from *Khar* river was the best option, but it was 14 km away and there was no money.

Things became much easier after Dhulikhel was declared a municipality and Bel Prasad Shrestha was elected mayor in 1987. The German aid group, GTZ stepped in with part of the money, and local businessmen put up the rest. A water user's committee was set up, and at the headwork villagers provided land for free.

After the project was completed in 1991, more than 230 households had private taps at their doorsteps. Within a year,

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the user's committee raised Rs. 400,000 from each household paying Rs. 35 per month for up to 10,000 litres of water. This was more expensive than Kathmandu, where people paid only Rs. 15 per month in 1992, but in Dhulikhel the water was reliable and clean.

"This was our dream project, and because it was initiated and run by the townspeople there was no chance it would fail," ex-mayor Bel Prasad Shrestha told us in an interview.

Last year, the user's committee generated revenue worth Rs. 3.6 million from 1,000 consumers, hospitals, schools, police stations and government offices. Dhulikhel's water supply project has become a model of community water supply. Experts from Nepal and abroad come here to see how it is done.

The water project had become such an inspiration for the local community that they are thinking of investing in a larger network. "If the rest of the country was infected with this can-do attitude there would be a bright future for Nepal," says Deen Dayal Soju Shrestha, member of the water users' committee.

"I had heard about Dhulikhel and was so amazed that I had to come and see myself. It's amazing," says Nancy English from Oregon who was visiting while we were there.

Once Dhulikhel had regular and clean water, Shrestha says, it was easier to go ahead with the plan to turn the town into an education and health care center. The internationally acclaimed Dhulikhel Hospital and Kathmandu University located themselves in Dhulikhel, and one big reason was reliable water supply.

"Without water, these two big institutions wouldn't have come here," says Rameshwor Parajuli, engineer at the town's water user's committee. The project has made such an impact that the Maoists want Dhulikhel to help locals in *Bhumidada* set up a similar project there.

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"What we have shown is that the people don't always have to rely on the government to bring development into their home towns," says Shiva Bhattarai, administrator at the Dhulikhel Municipality, "Kathmandu can learn a lot from Dhulikhel."

But for now, visitors from Kathmandu can only marvel at the abundant water that Dhulikhelis have, and there is no need to pump it to roof tanks. Says local resident Nil Kantha Makaju, with visible pride: "No matter how big your house, there is enough water for everyone all the time."

The people of Dhulikhel elected Bel Prasad Shrestha mayor three times and they have never regretted it. Though no longer in office, the Dhulikhelis still call him Mayor Sa'b in appreciation of his honesty and openness.

The mayor's popularity has nothing to do with his diplomatic charm or close affinity with the local community. He is modest and soft-spoken and least interested in party politics. But when he plans something, he gets it done - efficiently, honestly and quickly. That is why even though he is no longer mayor, he is still that de-facto town chief.

"I dream of making Dhulikhel a perfect town", says Bel Prasad as he waves at the scenic panorama of town and the mountains beyond from the roof of his municipality. Most people go to Dhulikhel to look at the mountain vistas. Few notice that the lush forest comes right to the town's edge, the vegetation not just giving the town a pleasing ambience but also protecting its water supply.

It is largely during Bel Prasad's tenure that the Dhulikhel municipality earned a reputation for being Nepal's most dynamic municipality. And it is a proof of just what one accountable and dedicated person can achieve in Nepal. Dhulikhel has the best university, an international- standard hospital and an efficient water supply system built and managed by the local community.

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"When you have a clear vision and share it with your community, you don't have to depend on government and foreign aid," says Bel Prasad who played a major role in persuading the people to donate their land for Dhulikhel Hospital and Kathmandu University.

With less than Rs. 15 million as budget, the Dhulikhel Municipality Office relies on the local community for public service projects. Bel Prasad is confident that once the office comes up with good ideas, the people will support it. He is now involved in his 'dreamland' project: to promote Dhulikhel as a tourism, education and health care hub.

The plan includes building a lake, a scenic cable car, restoring old Newari houses and creating an amusement park with a golf club. A large football stadium was built with funds from the local community and seed money from the Japanese government. "Most projects were thought up by the citizens, that is why they succeeded", explains Bel Prasad. This combination of public participation with accountability of the leader is the winning formula for Dhulikhel.

Bel Prasad doesn't take credit for any of this, saying he is just the catalyst that allowed Dhulikhelis to realize what they were capable of. Modest as ever, he adds, "All we had to do was find the courage to do something practical, the rest is easy."



A Self-Made Man

- Nilima Sharma

Bel Prasad Shrestha, the managing director of Dhulikhel's famous Himalayan Horizon Resort, doesn't believe in boundaries. Reflecting on his early days and says, "In my time, working in the hotel industry was considered taboo. Besides, running a hotel seemed nearly impossible because Dhulikhel had no roads or proper mode of transportation". Today he believes that it was patience and hard work that drove him to turn the impossible into possible.

"I could see mountain ranges, and breathe fresh air everyday but never realized its value until I went to live in California in 1967", he says. To earn a living, he taught Nepali language to Peace Corps volunteers in California. He was impressed with the tall buildings and the smooth roads there. On his return to Nepal in 1968 he went to Japan and during a brief stay in Tokyo, he realized that in the hospitality industry, he not only could he earn a decent living, he could also bring about some measure of development in his home town.

In May 1969, he built his first hotel and called it the 'Dhulikhel Lodge'. "I started my career with a one-room hotel which had four beds with hay mattresses. All I had was one stove, six glasses, six spoons, six plates and a bucket," says Shrestha. Relieving his past with a sudden smile, he adds: "My father thought that I had gone out of my mind to start a new hotel leaving our well-established ancestral business."

The Dhulikhel Lodge was the first of its kind in Dhulikhel, and immediately gained attention amongst international visitors, trekkers and backpackers. In the beginning it was

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difficult for him to cater to the needs of the tourists because he was the only person running the hotel. "When I started, I did not have a helping hand. I was the owner, the cook and the cleaner."

Later, in the 70's, when the hippies started flowing into Nepal things got more difficult. Shrestha knew the potential of his venture; and approached his father for help. "By then my father had realized that my craze to work in the hotel line would not change. He agreed to give me our 14-room ancestral house to run as a hotel".

Shrestha has not looked back since then. "My zeal for my work in addition to family support broadened my horizons", says Shrestha. The same Peace Crops that he worked for in California started a training center in his lodge. This was followed by a similar training camp set up by Swiss volunteers. His business grew and he started developing more facilities in his hotel. "As I started making good money, the same people who used to look down on my business began to trust me. My hotel that not only brought business for me but also contributed towards the development of Dhulikhel."

Human wants can be unlimited, but it is the crave to create new things that makes an achiever. "I was a little crazy and quite different from others so I was still not satisfied with what I was doing. I still felt that I could do something more creative, so I started with the Himalayan Horizon in 1981." By then the profile of visitors to Dhulikhel had begun changing. Earlier it was just the hippies and young backpackers. but with the development of transport facilities, more sophisticated people started visiting Dhulikhel; and Himalayan Horizon Resort aimed to cater to this type of guest.

The resort's exterior showcases the beauty of traditional Newari architecture and became famous not only among the tourists; it was also one of the Late King Birendra's favorite hangouts.

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Along with his achievements in the tourism industry, Shrestha has also played a vital role in fighting for a local municipality in Dhulikhel, building the Dhulikhel Hospital and working for the overall development of the place. Today, Shrestha doesn't have any regrets in life. "I have achieved what I wanted to, but that doesn't mean this is the end. I can never stop, I have to keep on creating more, that's the catalyst that keeps me alive".

The boss, 15 Oct - 14 Nov, 2006



A source of Inspiration

- Dr. Ram Kantha Makaju Shrestha

He is retired now, but from the time Dhulikhel was just a village council to when it became a municipality, Bel Prasad Shrestha was mayor for 16 years. While working with the American Peace Corps in the 1960s and 70s, he became familiar with many foreigners. After a year in America, he started work on the development of tourism and other sectors. He started 'Dhulikhel Lodge' to introduce Dhulikhel to many tourists staying in his lodge. The establishment of 'Dhulikhel Lodge' was itself a new step for him, a challenge to provide service to tourists in a clean and neat environment, but in our own culture and traditions. Once he accepted this challenge and seized it as an opportunity, it led to the development of Dhulikhel.

Most people know that during his period as mayor, drinking water, road management, toilets and sewer drainage were the main development works. Just twenty years back, there were no basic prerequisites in Dhulikhel for the development of any community. His role in providing necessary drinking water to Dhulikhel from *Mahabharat Parbat* and distributing it to the houses here 24/7 was a huge accomplishment.

Besides physical infrastructure, Bel Prasad's education role has been equally important; he has played a very important role in bringing Kathmandu University to Dhulikhel. He believed that people should not need to go far for quality education, so he was active in arranging land and other support for the university. Today, the university is in Dhulikhel and the people are able to receive quality education here. In

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fact, students from all over the country are coming to Dhulikhel to gain degrees.

As a doctor trained abroad, it had always been my dream to provide quality health services and education and Dhulikhel using what I had learned. When Bel Prasad Shrestha was the mayor of Dhulikhel, his dreams and mine matched and as a result Dhulikhel Hospital was established with the help of many senior forward-looking people in 1996. The land donors and contributors of financial and other help that was provided by Dhulikhel municipality gave me courage to move forward. Today this hospital not only provides quality medical services but also prepares skilled manpower through medical education.

It would not be hyperbole to say that continuously involving himself in all these development activities, Bel Prasad Shrestha is a model mayor and a source of inspiration for all of us.



Environment conservation in Dhulikhel and Bel Prasad Shrestha - Dr. Sanjaya Nath Khanal

Although from Kavre district's Sanga to east Dolalghat and south Panauti municipality are different politically, united management seems more scientific and justifiable when it comes to environment conservation. From the geographical point of view, all of this fall under same watershed and sub watershed. The human pressure being developed is also the same in these states. So, seeing this as area thing would be practical.

Some important initiative in the field of environment conservation and management are done in this area. Example:

- 1) Inside Dhulikhel Municipality Area, fully filtered drinking water management and distribution has been done.
- 2) In the terms of green management in urban area and management of highway, different institutions (university, hospital, schools etc.) have shown interests in sewer drainage and management by using suitable technologies. Dhulikhel municipality has started working on sewage treatment and gas production in some areas.
- 3) In this area, different organization and institutions have been working and helping on environmental conservation. E.g., Urban Environment Improvement Project, UN Habitat, Kathmandu University, Rotary Club and other local institutions.

The contribution of Dhulikhel municipality on the field of environmental conservation and management has been

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important. The involvement shown by the ex-mayor of this municipality Bel Prasad Shrestha is laudable.

In current scenario, the environmental quality and pressure in the area can be seen as follows:

- 1) Even if the management of greenery or forest is comparatively better, good control and care of illegal activities is not happening. The condition of forests is not completely improved. New skills for community forest management seem suitable.
- 2) The act of removing stones and rocks from small-big rivers is seen enough from here. River control, management of river and balance of source-consumption in a good manner should be done.
- 3) The nearby ponds and rivers of urban areas have been polluted even more by household, urban or industrial wastes. So, the pollution management of these ponds and rivers needs immediate attention.
- 4) The condition of waste and sewer drainage and management is also too weak.
- 5) Due to excessive use of chemicals and fertilizers, land, water and air pollution have increased whereas people's health have been seriously affected but the simple bookkeeping has not been done on this.

Analyzing the present trend, more population pressure and environmental effect can be assumed in the coming days. For example-

- 1) This area being closest to Kathmandu valley and easy and suitable for living, the population of people wanting to live in this area will definitely increase in coming days. This will definitely affect land utilization system and sensitive areas related to environment and fertile land. The pressure will also increase on different natural sources.

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- 2) As this is a tourist center and additional infrastructures development plans (Ex. Dhulikhel Dreamland Project, Tourist Trek etc.) are arising in the coming days, the additional pressure of tourists can lead to various environmental effects.
- 3) Due to initialization of B. P. Highway and increasing Araniko Highway buzz in the future, this area will have load of transport. This will eventually lead to air pollution and noise pollution.
- 4) Increasing population, increasing human pressure and excessive use of natural resources will lead to 'complex pressure' in the environmental conditions.
- 5) Due to increasing population and expansion of city areas, urban infrastructure development would not happen.

In the given condition, for environmental management of this place, united management procedure enforcement seems more logical. For this, the following points should also be remembered in the coming days-

- 1) Implementing United Environmental Management Policy including every watershed.
- 2) Implementing area wise development concept according to managed geo-consumption policy.
- 3) Reasonable development of local infrastructures.
- 4) Control of increasing population pressure using necessary means.
- 5) Regulation of increasing vehicle use and pollution caused by them.
- 6) Scientific management of overgrowing pollution using suitable measures.
- 7) Suitable facility of waste collection and management.
- 8) Necessary source implementation for the improvement of current environmental condition and providing necessary news and information to public.

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- 9) Due to the need of combined effort from this area's related municipality, VDC and other local corporations and institutions, development of a combined unit.
- 10) Implementation of additional assistance from interested institutions about environmental conservation in this area.
- 11) Management of more greenery and forests.
- 12) Application of proper policy and scientific process for management of pollution and waste.
- 13) Regular inspection of environmental condition and effects.

One can be assured that as Bel Prasad Shrestha's social activeness is still maintained, this place can get more in the upcoming days.



Present Day Dhulikhel is the Result of One Man's Foresight - Shiva Ram Pokhrel

Leadership is the ability to forming a team and provide guidelines to reach a certain aim. Generally, organizations fail because of weak leadership.

Dhulikhel municipality has been lucky to have some special characteristics compared to other municipalities. The municipality has seen plenty of ups and downs, barriers and difficult situations, but it has also overcome different these obstacles at every stage, largely due to the leadership of one individual, Mr. Bel Prasad Shrestha who has given his hometown his maximum efforts.

Dhulikhel municipality has taken over management from Nepal government of all the community schools inside its jurisdiction. This has increased the quality of education in these schools. The municipality has also taken control of expanding of all the physical features (building, toilet, drinking water, library, playground etc.) to ensure that the quality of community schools is no less than that in private schools. As a result, the SLC examination results of these community schools have doubled from the past.

Bel Prasad Shrestha believes that there is a solution to every problem faced by each local citizen. Before the establishment of the municipality, Dhulikhel had a big drinking water problem. Bel Prasad Shrestha was the person who arrived with drinking water management policies by consulting different donor agencies.

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We can say that the development of Dhulikhel is due to the continuous efforts of current mayor Bel Prasad Shrestha. His leadership is beyond his family needs, relatives and personal benefits. He is the only one who continuously thinks of how he can make his city a model municipality of Nepal.

For the process of keeping his municipality clean, beautiful and with quality service, Bel Prasad Shrestha focused his efforts on development of municipality not bound just to national level but extend to international level. For this, he was able to develop sister relation with some municipalities of Germany and Denmark.

Due to his visionary leadership skills Bel Prasad Shrestha, Kathmandu University, which was supposed to be established in different place of the country, is now in Dhulikhel. It was none other than Bel Prasad Shrestha who was able to get necessary land for the university. At that time, he was even criticized to have misused source of the municipality.

But today, same people who criticized him then admit that it was a good decision that the university was established inside municipality as the latter has been providing scholarship to the students of the municipality.

Similarly, being inspired from the thought of having a quality hospital inside Dhulikhel municipality, he managed to establish a hospital using three years budget of the municipality. This was the first hospital in Nepal to be established as a community hospital and has been providing international level quality services. It has opened its branches in places like Kavre, Sindhupalchok and Dhading districts. This hospital is being run as a model hospital.

Similarly, Bel Prasad Shrestha is the individual who had been continuously trying to establish Dhulikhel Medical

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Institute so that all those who passed entrance examination but were unable to study here can be developed as a mid-level manpower. Now, it is the dream of every parent to send their children in this institution. This institution is affiliated to Kathmandu University.

It was Bel Prasad Shrestha's vision to establish these important and nationally recognized institutions like Technical School, University, Dhulikhel Medical Institute so that those students who passed high school but could not enter university would get quality education. During the implementation phase of his vision, different obstructions came from the local citizens. Even so, he was able to make them realize that these things would be of much important in the coming days. That is the reason he could take responsibility of mayor for three consecutive periods. The ability of presenting his thoughts and ideas continuously in front of everyone and carrying his idea to implementation phase despite all the obstacles is his virtue. "It's not a big deal to establish a company, but making it run continuously to achieve its goal is a big deal.", says Bel Prasad Shrestha. As a result, Dhulikhel municipality is ahead in the field of education, health, tourism and other physical infrastructures compared to other municipalities of Nepal.

The development of physical infrastructures like road, bridge, transport is not the only goal of development. Bel Prasad Shrestha believes that development should bring a positive change in people. It has already been five years since he left the municipality. But, for the long term and sustainable development of the municipality, the objectives under his leadership are still applicable. We can proudly tell that the present Dhulikhel is the result of the visionary leadership of Bel Prasad Shrestha.



Dhulikhel Lover

- Dr. Suresh Raj Sharma

It is rare to enter Dhulikhel and not hear about Bel Prasad Shrestha. Even those donor agencies and non-governmental organizations who believe that the real capacity to start development and its operation is in people's hands consider him a shining example. The citizens selected him as the mayor for four terms. Why is Bel Prasad Shrestha everyone's favorite? Everyone should know.

Among all the municipalities of Nepal, Dhulikhel is the only municipality to provide pure and safely managed drinking water. Similarly, Dhulikhel Hospital is very clean, organized and modern. Gone are the days when people had to go to Kathmandu or foreign countries for quality education. Now, since the establishment of Kathmandu University students from all over Nepal are drawn to Dhulikhel, as are tourists from all over the world who come to Dhulikhel to observe its natural and beautiful scenery.

Only a few people know how Bel Prasad Shrestha established 'Dhulikhel Lodge'. Dhulikhel, where there was much scarcity of water, had an old Newari-style house reflecting Nepali architecture and culture. His parents did not like it when their America-returned son was involved on waste management; but he persisted in what he believed.

When due to the extreme scarcity of drinking water the people of Dhulikhel were thirsty, he met with Peter Spanier of German Help Association, to provide water in every household. Discussing with people living in Pulchoki base, he won the hearts of people living 14 kms away from Dhulikhel and

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constructed a modern water tank in Dhulikhel jungle and arrived with pure drinking water. How happy, pleased and proud he must have felt?

It also is a great experience to reflect on how he tried to bring Kathmandu Valley Campus that had gained a pretty good reputation in Kathmandu to Dhulikhel, especially during the situation when people used to send children to Kathmandu for quality education and when there were no colleges here to go after schools. Bel Prasad was confident that the campus could be brought to Dhulikhel only if Dhulikhel municipality took the responsibility of finding a suitable place of at least 200 ropanis of land, drinking water and electricity. He understood the importance of this and discussed it with his co-workers. The municipality had recently been established with an annual budget of 2-2.5 million rupees. When it accepted the offer Durga Prasad Shastri said, 'We accept this condition. We will make everything happen in three years. Let's establish a campus here'. Bel Prasad and his team accepted the idea. The energy, simplicity, commitment and trust he shows towards his friends are praiseworthy.

Surrounded by the local people when trying to keep his promise and expand the road, convincing people to provide land to campus even as late as at 10 pm on a rainy night, the struggle to provide money to the municipality as per the agreement; and there are many other similar examples! And yes, at that place, Kathmandu University is established now.

The saga behind the establishment of Dhulikhel Hospital is equally interesting. He convinced his cousin-brother, Dr. Ram Kantha Makaju, who had been working in Vienna (Capital of Austria) to return to Dhulikhel. He also provided 27 ropanis of land from Dhulikhel's local citizen free of cost. In a place where there were no doctors, nurses, how could he even think of establishing a hospital? Thinking about this still gives me goose bumps. I feel so happy now when I see a hospital with 40 doctors and 112 nurses. Where government hospitals

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established from forty years have only 15 to 30 beds available and cannot have even the allocated number of doctors, how can anyone believe the progress made by Dhulikhel Hospital? How pleased Bel Prasad Shrestha would have been when he saw all this happening?

There are numerous such examples. He was the one to take first step in bringing 'Quality Education Project', on the base of which today 'Dhulikhel Medical Institute' and 'Dhulikhel Technical Institute' are established. The active leadership shown by him for the construction of an attractive picnic spot, establishment of 'Dhulikhel Sanjeevani Campus' and for the establishment of Kathmandu University High school is all very impressive. Building an attractive playground in Dhulikhel is another example.

All social workers should be like Bel Prasad Shrestha. All local representative should be like him. A true Dhulikhel lover should be like him. Always speaking in a sweet and gentle manner with no greed for money – that is Bel Prasad Shrestha. Every second of his time is devoted to development. He currently may not be a mayor, but is always respected by people of Dhulikhel.



A Hard-working man **- Surya Bahadur Thapa**

I am really very pleased to know that Mr. Hari Manjushree is editing a book about Bel Prasad Shrestha's contributions to the society and I would like to congratulate Bel Prasad Shrestha on this occasion.

Bel Prasad Shrestha has played a memorable role in the overall development of Dhulikhel. To convert a village into municipality, create a drinking water system, expand roads, manage sewers and latrines, establish schools and campuses, make playgrounds and convert Dhulikhel into an attractive tourist place, his contributions are unmatched.

Bel Prasad made land available for the establishment of Kathmandu University and Dhulikhel Hospital, made many contributions for local development and construction, involving the local community. This has established him as an example not only for Dhulikhel, but also for the whole country. I call people like him: 'A Man of Action'. Most people only talk and never act.

Dhulikhel is renowned nationally because of people like Bel Prasad Shrestha. He has both ideas and energy. Nepal needs more hardworking people like him. I am very pleased to help people like him.

At last, I hope that the leadership of Bel Prasad Shrestha will always be revered by Dhulikhel and I hope that this book will encourage every reader of this book to be like him. I wish him good health and long life.

Notes on the Writers

1. Aidan Warlow: British educationist
2. Bhagirath Yogi: Journalist (BBC)
3. Bharat Jangam: Leader of anti-corruption movement
4. Bihari Krishna Shrestha: Former administrator, Nepal Government
5. Bishnudatta Gautam: Administrator, Nepal Government
6. Cheryl Colopy: American writer
7. Don Messerschmidt: American writer
8. Hari Manjushree: Writer and book editor
9. Kamal Rupakheti: Social worker
10. Karna Shakya: Businessman (Hotel and Tourism)
11. Kedar Bhakta Mathema: Former Vice Chancellor, Tribhuwan University; Former Ambassador to Japan.
12. Keshav Kunwar: Engineer
13. Khem Raj Nepal: Former Secretary, Nepal Government
14. Laxman Rajbhandari: Former administrator, UDLE
15. Meg Noble Peterson: American Writer
16. Mohan Duwal: Literary journalist
17. Mukunda Prasad Upadhyaya: Spiritual writer
18. Narayan Kapur Pathak: Banker
19. Naresh Newar: Journalist
20. Nilima Sharma: Journalist
21. Dr. Ram Kantha Makaju Shrestha: Former Vice Chancellor, Kathmandu University
22. Dr. Sanjaya Nath Khanal: Environmental scientist
23. Shiva Ram Pokhrel: Administrator, Nepal Government
24. Dr. Suresh Raj Sharma: Founder Vice Chancellor, Kathmandu University
25. Surya Bahadur Thapa: Former Prime Minister of Nepal

For the modern development and construction of own's birth place 'Dhulikhel', devoting himself from an early stage of life for making Dhulikhel a better place - almost five and a half decade of Bel Prasad Shrestha's lifetime has been devoted to Dhulikhel and the people here. Education and culture, health and cleanliness, tourism and transportation, drinking water and sports and other social services and society guidance - he has attended leadership in different sectors of Dhulikhel. Despite having difference in political opinions, not letting this feeling enter the development works is a praiseworthy characteristic of people of Dhulikhel. As he also has this background and is not biased towards any particular opinion, he has been able to take strong leadership of community having difference in opinions. Without an individual like him, the previous Dhulikhel should have waited decades to reach this state of modern and developed Dhulikhel.

Having the ability to steer community for the betterment of community without seeking any assistance from the government with own's sincere actions and even convincing the donors by showing them a tangible output is a very rare quality that should be adopted by every social worker which would help for significant and positive transformation of the country, especially in present political, social and financial conditions of Nepal. The effort made during the publication of this book would be meaningful if it makes everyone awake for their personal contribution and responsibility that is asked by the new era for the construction of the new society.

We truly believe that Bel Prasad Shrestha will imply his positive attitude and experiences for the development of new Nepal. We wish for his long life, good health and social activeness throughout his lifetime.

The Man Behind Dhulikhel

Dear reader,
How do you like this book?
Don't forget to express your views.

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