From a handful of students, today the Nepali-Yale community has transformed into a vibrant community of more than 20 students, post-docs, staff, faculty, and their family. Nepali Association of Yale Affiliates (NAYA) was successfully registered as a student-run organization at Yale on October 21, 2011. NAYA aims to bring Nepal to the forefront at Yale by increasing awareness about Nepali culture, politics, and society. NAYA will also strive to serve as a support system and a networking platform among prospective, present, and past Yalies with affiliation to Nepal. The association also welcomes anyone with broad or specific interest in Nepal.

Please join our LinkedIn Group (Nepali Association of Yale Affiliates (NAYA)) and visit our website http://www.naya.commons.yale.edu. You can contact us at nepaliyale@gmail.com. We look forward to your comments, suggestions, questions, and contribution to the future NAYA newsletters. Welcome to the NAYA family!

Events

Dashain Potluck at East Rock Summit
By Kanchan Shrestha

On October 2, 2011, Nepali students and faculty, their friends and family gathered at the East Rock Summit to celebrate Dashain. The delicious food and amazing weather brought back fond memories of Nepal. The afternoon was spent playing football, ultimate frisbee, chungi, card games and attempting to fly a kite.
Dr. Pratyoush Onta at Yale

By Daulat Jha

On November 2, 2011, NAYA organized its first event, a talk by a noted Nepali academic Dr. Pratyoush Onta. Dr. Onta, the research director of Martin Chautari, one of Nepal’s leading research institutions, spoke on ‘The Making of a Newly Inclusive Public Sphere in Nepal in the 1990s’. Dr. Onta focused his talk on the role of ethnic indigenous nationalities (janajatis) in Nepali media, concentrating on print and long-format journalism. He divided the history of Nepali media, and concurrently its politics, in three broad categories – the Rana era (pre 1951), the Panchayat era (1959-1990) and the Democratic era (post 1990). Media was virtually absent in the Rana era and literacy was at about 2%. During the Panchayat era, the media was entirely controlled by the state in all forms – print, radio and television. It was only after the First People’s Movement (1990) that Nepali media found its freedom. Since then there has been a proliferation of media – print and radio – that has transformed the landscape. Most notable among these developments was the introduction of ‘ethnic’ print publications. There were more than 350 of them, the author said based on his research. Many of them were short-lived; some have survived until now. The retail culture in Nepal played a significant role in many of these media being unprofitable, and ultimately died out. However, their significance cannot be undermined, as they functioned as an intermediary to Nepal’s great media movement, the exemplar of media freedom in South Asia. The author and editor explained that Nepali media was going through a crucial phase as it now negotiated territory with private/commercial media with non-profit media. He voiced hope that the radio revolution in Nepal would be crucial in media’s development in Nepal. Having himself been one of the first hosts on Nepali community radio, where he ran one of the first talk-radio shows, he shared his thoughts on how Nepal’s non-profit media could reach out to the public. In the end, he sent a strong message that opens media is essential for a burgeoning democracy – so relevant today with the Arab Spring.

Nepali Students Perform at Roshni – an Event by South Asian Society

By Sumana Serchan

The South Asian Society at Yale held their annual cultural event “Roshni” on November 3, 2011 at Woolsey Hall. The event included performances by students who danced to the lively beat of Bollywood music and to the rhythms of Indian classical music. Beautiful voices of students filled the halls when they sang songs in different dialects from India. This year’s “Roshni” featured Nepali dance for the first time to the
tune of a famous Nepali folk rock song, “Taalko Paani Maachile Khane” by popular Nepali music band “Nepathya”. Adorned with beautiful Nepalese folk dress and ornaments, the dancers performed gracefully and the hall filled with applause at the end of the dance.

(Left to Right: Priyata Thapa, Sampada KC, Kerri Lu, Julia Simeng Huang, Sneha Moktan, Ambika Khadka, Jaime Sunwoo, Bibhusha Dangol) (Photo: Bibhusha Dangol)

First Annual General Meeting
By Ambika Khadka

The first annual general meeting of NAYA was held on November 27, 2011 with 10 attendees and chaired by the president of NAYA. After the discussion on Constitution of the organization, the vision, the mission and the objectives of the organization were unanimously approved. The roles and responsibilities of the executive members were discussed and the members suggested several amendments to the Constitution. It was agreed that new executive members would be selected based on the consensus of the active members and four executive members including the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary.

The majority of the meeting was spent on brainstorming of NAYA events and activities. It was decided that at least two social gathering would be held annually: one in Fall to welcome incoming students and to celebrate Dashain and the other in Spring to bid farewell to graduating students. There were two events proposed for the Spring 2012: screening of the documentary ‘Sari Soldiers’ and an event focusing on issues of Genetically Modified Crops in Nepal. It was also decided that NAYA newsletter would be released biannually to update and inform about NAYA activities.
From Our Alum

Bringing Health to Rural Nepal

By Bibhav Acharya, MD, YSM’2011, is the Executive Vice President of Nyaya Health. He is currently a resident in Psychiatry at University of California, San Francisco. To learn more about Nyaya Health, visit www.nyayahealth.org

Over 30 years ago, the Nepali Government built a hospital complex in Achham, a remote district in Nepal. Unfortunately, succumbing to political pressure, the government moved the hospital to another location. The army was sent to take away the equipment and move it to a town about 7 hours away. The locals protested and the army shot and killed 6 civilians. Since that day, the Bayalpata Hospital was ignored and allowed to fall apart.

All of this was before Nyaya Health, a non-profit organization that was started at Yale, began working in Achham. Nyaya was approached by the local community and the Government of Nepal to renovate Bayalpata Hospital and start treating patients. The hospital saw its first patient in June 2009 and has so far seen over 70,000 patients. It supports over 40 staff members, including three doctors. Nyaya Health also works with the Nepali Government to manage over 120 Female Community Health Volunteers, women who improve healthcare in the communities that they live in.

One of the most remarkable features of Nyaya Health has been its commitment to transparency. All of its financial statements, including line-by-line items such as the cost of a chair, are available online. So are the programmatic documents and clinical protocols. Given its commitment to “be transparent until it hurts” and its commitment to serving in a region where the average person makes less than $0.50 a day, Nyaya Health was recently picked as one of the top 1% of all charities reviewed by GiveWell.org.

Given the challenges of providing health services in a mountainous, rural region, Nyaya Health will continue to expand its network of Community Health Workers. Nyaya is also building an operating room and expanding solar power in Bayalpata Hospital.
From Our Faculty

The Yale Himalaya Initiative

By Sara Shneiderman

The Yale Himalaya Initiative was founded in 2011. It is a new initiative at Yale to bring together faculty, students, and professionals across the University whose work focuses on the Himalayan region. This includes parts of Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, and Pakistan, as well as Tibetan cultural zones and adjacent areas. We engage with the Himalaya as a significant transnational space for research and practice. Its location at the edges of the traditional area studies units of South, East, and Southeast Asia demands creative academic approaches. We therefore aim to create the first comprehensive, interdisciplinary University-led initiative in North America that explores the Himalaya as a transregional whole, while recognizing its ecological, social, and political diversity.

Focusing broadly on the themes of environment, livelihoods, and culture, we support the development of teaching and scholarship on topics related to the Himalayan region by drawing upon the combined intellectual resources of members across the Yale community. We encourage the widest possible interdisciplinary participation, in collaboration with scholars, practitioners, and communities in the Himalayan region itself. The Yale Himalaya Initiative will develop innovative research agendas and methodologies that address historical and contemporary issues of local, regional, and global relevance.

The Initiative’s scope spans the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and professional disciplines. It draws upon the expertise of faculty members in departments of the Arts and Sciences (Anthropology, Geology & Geophysics, History, History of Art, Religious Studies), Yale’s professional schools (Forestry and Environmental Science, Medicine, and Public Health), and other University centers including the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, and the Global Health Leadership Initiative of the Jackson Institute for Global Affairs. The Initiative builds upon existing research projects and strong disciplinary networks to promote broader collaborative efforts at Yale, while also developing lasting partnerships with research institutions, government agencies, and NGOs throughout the region.

Students and alumni interested in participating are invited to contact us at himalaya@yale.edu
From Our Current Students

Joining us in Fall 2011

Undergraduate Students
Sampada KC, Morse College 2015

Graduate Students
Ambika Khadka, MEM 2013
Sneha Moktan, IR 2013
Sumana Serchan, MF 2013

Executive Board 2011-12
Kanchan Shrestha, MESc’12 (President); Anobha Gurung, PhD Student FES’15 (Vice-President); Ambika Khadka, MEM’13 (Secretary); Ravi Pokhrel, PhD Candidate Chem’13 (Treasurer); Sneha Moktan, IR’13 (Outreach Coordinator); Sumana Serchan, MF’13 (Graduate Student Liaison); Bibhusha Dangol, Ezra Stiles College’14 (Undergraduate Student Liaison); Roshan Karki, Pathology PhD’11 (Alumni Outreach); Pragyajan Yalamber Rai, MEM’11 (WebGuru)

Faculty Advisor 2011-12
Sarah Shneiderman, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Ph.D. Cornell University’09

Newsletter editor for this issue: Anobha Gurung