

# Nepal Today

## Remarkable Activities in Nepal



### **Anthroposophy in Nepal**

*Interview with Krishna Gurung*

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# Anthroposophy in Nepal

«It makes a lot of sense to live and let live»

*An Interview with Krishna Gurung*

TM: Well, Mr. Gurung, you have developed an initiative to produce biodynamic food, and a clinic – earlier, I believe, it was a leper clinic – and schools based on Anthroposophy. How did this all start? And when did this all start?

KG: Actually, my previous work was established not only by me, but with some other seven friends like Dr. R.M. Singh et al in Nepal. There were seven local people in Kathmandu and a German sister organization started together in 1992. Then I met Dr. Michaela Glöckler in India in 2004. That made a lot of sense in my life ... It made a lot more sense to go biodynamic, and to know Anthroposophy, so that I really wanted to implement that direction in this country – team wise – not just personally, but also to convince friends and family. So this gave me a lot of hope – and energy, too.

TM: So your meeting with Dr. Glöckler in 2004 was the beginning of all these activities that you're doing now – clinic, biodynamics?

KG: No, I was working in another organization and I was already practicing organic and biodynamic in my own private place ...

TM: Before 2004?

KG: Yes. And in 2008 my son Kevin had an accident, in December 2008. So at that time my wife and I, together with family members, decided to dedicate this foundation to his name, where we could practice biodynamic agriculture, and also to expand in other parts of the city, other parts of the country. And there was a club house that was just standing empty without being used, so we transformed it into a normal clinic. And we had this vision of a community school – not a private school, not a government school, but now there is a community school called Suvakamana and a local school. And there are local people who cannot afford to send their children to Kathmandu school by bus, so these children go there. So we had the feeling that we should transform it into a Waldorf inspired school, by requesting help from friends from abroad – like America, Europe – who had been to a Waldorf school and who had been teaching in a Waldorf school. So this is now happening. So far we had few students and teachers as volunteers.

KG: Luckily we have Dr. Singh, who has been working with me for seventeen years. Now he's working in the new clinic. And he comes every week on Thursdays. And that clinic was not kept very well, so we renovated it, and we got money for medicine from a Nepali friend – that was 100,000 Nepali rupees. And there's an organization called MSMT – it's Medical Service Management Trust – so they kindly provided us with medicine worth 700,000 rupees ... seven times more than we invested. So at this clinic we are giving people half the consulting fee free, and those who can afford it pay half

the cost of the medicine. Those who can't pay, they get everything free. And this is the junction of six village development committees where our clinic is. And there we also have meetings for water resources, and for gathering people and giving them talks about biodynamic and organic vegetables. This is also a gathering place. And the same hall we use in the evening from six to eight for a women's literacy class, which we found very important ... to gather all the women of the village to teach them Nepali, and also so they can at least expand their views. So it is a social gathering, we call it.

TM: And your biodynamic activities are going to be expanded in the region of Pokhara (East Nepal) and Itahari (East Nepal).

KG: Yes. We have already done three Biodynamic seminars in those areas and remained very affective. People are very enthusiastic to learn furthermore. Hans Mulder and his wife Ineke were there to facilitate the lectures and hope it will go very far with the aims and objectives to save people, plant and the planet.

TM: And there you want to transform an organic farm – which already exists – into a biodynamic one?

KG: Yes.

TM: By working with this farmer who has lived there for thirty years or more and has been practicing organic farming for twenty years already.

KG: Yes. But people are unaware of what organic means and we are trying to teach them by drawing the attention first to the health of the soil and it's relation to human health in general.

TM: And you will regularly hold seminars there, to gain acceptance and understanding of the idea of biodynamic farming.

KG: We had run a biodynamic seminar at the end of May and had been at our foundation in Kathmandu in April [2010]. The seminar was facilitated by Sir Hans Mulder – Hans van Florenstein-Mulder – so that was the beginning, and that was very effective, when we had this 2-day seminar, plus 1-day Waldorf teachers seminar. So many people got very interested and it was very effective. So that was at the Kevin Rohan Memorial Eco Foundation <http://krmecofoundation.org>. Then after the Pokhara seminar was over, Hans Mulder also concluded that there should be some seminars. So we designed a course for November 2010. One seminar was presented in Itahari, in the eastern part of Nepal – on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of November, another one in Kathmandu on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2010, one in Pokhara on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> November. So through this foundation we want to let people to know what biodynamic agriculture is, the benefits of practicing biodynamic, and how to improve biodynamic agriculture in our region here.

TM: And you will cooperate with people who already work on an organic basis, like the daughter of the manager of the Kantipur Temple House Hotel, in order to slowly estab-

lish a market for these products in Nepal?

KG: Yes, exactly.

TM: Really, there is not yet a big market, I suppose. That has to be striven for.

KG: Yes.

TM: All right. Well, we have been talking a little bit about life in Hindu surroundings, and this is of course especially interesting when it comes to the preparation and use of the cow horn. How are you going to make this acceptable to the Hindus, that the cow is integrated into the production of bio-dynamic products?

KG: As for cow horn, it is not easy to get in Nepal, but we can import it from India. And we also get some from America. So although Hindus regard the cow as a goddess, Lakshmi, we just show how useful our goddess is – for the soil, plants, and for the planet.

TM: And no religious leaders or fanatics will object to this?

KG: No, they will respect it more, because even the horn, without the cow, is so useful for our soil, for the plants, for the planet we live on – for the planet, ultimately. So we are telling people in that way that the horn of our cow is so useful for our lives, and for us to live and to let others to live. So this is quite effective with the people, and we will introduce it in such a way.

TM: You could even lead the way for the cult of the holy cow to become one with a practical basis, and for cow holiness to be appreciated in an even deeper way through bio-dynamics.

KG: Yes.

TM: That would be a wonderful thing to do.

KG: Yeah. And cow dung has already been used for centuries here for washing the floors, and washing the oven after cooking food. This makes the kitchen holy again – with cow dung. So this dung is being used in a cow horn making BD500, and the cow dung and the cow horn is so important for preparing our fields.

TM: The question is also, how are you financing all these things? And what is the relationship of the Nepalese government to your activities?

KG: Friends in the USA and my family, my sisters, they financed my stay – our stay – in the States, and Bill Hutchin helped me to get enrolled in the Washington, DC Green Festival 2009, where I met many earth-loving people, many green-loving people. And among those people there were some good friends whom I met after that, after the Green Festival. Kenneth Dabkowski and some other friends have been helping us promoting our brochure, promoting our Web site – I didn't have to pay anything for that – and so this gave us a lot of publicity, through our Web site. As for Nepal, we came back here and I had collected some money through the friends and families, like Dr. Ruth Gonseth and Dr. Ioana Razi, and those that have been running this thing, with this



*Krishna Gurung*

money. And also some fellow students of Kevin. I used it for initially for his foundation.

TM: And can people become a member of that foundation and pay a yearly contribution, or what is the procedure?

KG: So far we are just getting donations, and also I have been appointed as a representative of one organization, so I am using this to pay my staff here. And since this is a quite young organization, we are thinking of taking PayPal, and also establishing a yearly membership, or life membership, and plus, making our own products, like all eco-friendly products: organic jewelry, organic washing, and vegetables... this is what we want to do.

TM: Right. And you have been appointed representative of which organization?

KG: This is called Govinda Development Aid Association... This is a German/Swiss service working in Nepal. It's for my living. I have to contribute a few days for that.

TM: And you're being paid for your work there?

KG: Yes.

TM: The government in Nepal is friendly to your activities and school activities?

KG: The government is very friendly towards us; we are now tax-exempt in Nepal, and our organization has been very well received. Well registered in the tax office, in the permanent account office and the chief district office. So now we are entitled to import anything tax-free. That means we are well recognized by the government. But they are not

giving us any money as a support. We ourselves have work for that. But I am very happy to work independently for the nature without being bothered from them and other elements.

TM: I have also seen that you have received some good support in the press from time to time over the last five years. So your work here is appreciated, if not financed officially. It is appreciated, also in the press. That is a good working environment.

KG: Yes.

TM: Well, very shortly, how do you see the political future in this country, where all this is going to happen? Is stability a utopian fantasy, or do you think you can achieve a more stable political situation in the future?

KG: See, I am not so pessimistic. I always used to be very optimistic. But now our parliament has voted twelve times in a short period, and still no prime minister has been chosen yet. So though the country is not in a chaotic... I mean, it is still running. But without a prime minister, without an authentic prime minister. But if we can go on, this country has a lot of possibilities. We have a big potential for producing food, and there's a lot of development that can be done. So I can see the potential, and I can see the practical prospects for this country if everybody thinks positively. So this is why we want to involve people who are very positive-minded – we are like-minded – so that we form a group of people, so we can promulgate this thing in a certain part of Nepal, so that this can be planted as a seed to influence other negative people and impart a positive mindset.

TM: Very good. That could also help to solve the problem of pollution, which is quite evident in Kathmandu, for example.

KG: This is a very good question. Our main aim is that we are an eco-foundation – Kevin Rohan Memorial Eco-Foundation – so we are trying to be a model set-up... a little model set-up using a solar cooker. We collect papers from embassies and the street, and then those papers are soaked overnight and mixed with cow dung and sawdust, and we compress it into bricks called biobriquettes.

TM: Ah, yes, I've seen it.

KG: And this is to clean up the cities and also the embassies around us without burning the papers and wasting energy.

So this we are already doing. And also the bottles, which we collect. In Nepal we don't have any facilities to recycle bottles by melting them. So these bottles are dumped into dumping areas, being a big, big pain to the earth. So we have already integrated those bottles into a wall, and we will soon build a little guest house with the bottles and mud. Our main intention is to use them in one wall of our ecoclinic right down near the road, where people can pass through and see the model house, and this model house is to be replicated in different cities, in different parts, for example in Pokhara, in

Dharan etc. This is to bring people and show them what can be made with the empty bottles.

TM: That is a very good perspective. You have been involved for a while in a leper clinic, I think. Is leprosy still very uncontrolled, or could you say the leper problem in Nepal is more or less under control?

KG: Yeah, there is an allopathic treatment. medicine that can cure leprosy from 6 months to 2 years – There are two types of leprosy – but that is no problem. Medicines are easily available. The problem is the social stigma of leprosy. Leprosy damages the nerve and then after that they get deformed limbs – extremities – and that is considered as active leprosy in Nepal. So the social stigma is the most important.

TM: I see. So you need to reintegrate these people who are basically cured?

KG: Yes.

TM: But they have the stigma, so they don't find recognition and work and whatever?

KG: Exactly. – And we trying to work using 3 different categories. One is those who are physically fine, but even they are not working. So we also call them disabled people, because they are not doing anything. They are not able to do anything. So we try to create jobs for them by introducing them to eco-friendly jewelry, like making soapnut jewelry. And those who are physically disabled, we also try to create jobs for them and get them reintegrated into the normal society.

TM: So in that sense, you still work with people who have been through leprosy, but you're not engaged with people who are still suffering from leprosy itself? It's just rehabilitation work?

KG: Yes.

TM: OK. Well, coming back to what you said in the beginning. Your meeting with Anthroposophy was decisive, with Dr. Michaela from the Medical Section in the Goetheanum. Can you remember what was for you the most inspiring revelation in your meeting with Anthroposophy? Why was it so fundamentally important to your life?

KG: I heard Dr. Michaela Glöckler, a lecturer on anthroposophical medicine, and she touched on all the subjects – not just one particular subject, but all of the environment, and astronomy, and – the real meaning of how we are living. That was the main thing. And later, I was involved in my work and coming biodevelopment, which directly affects physical health, and community health, and environmental health. So that was very touching to me. And the scenario of how the country was that way, and also being in Hyderabad, and listening to all these lectures, affected me so much. That was the most striking point for me. The more you read the books about it, the more it makes a lot of sense to live and let live.

## «This can be a jewel for the world »

### *Interview with Bharat Basnet*

TM: Well, Mr. Basnet, when did you found this, your own hotel?

BB: It was founded in 1998.

TM: Was this entirely your own idea, your initiative?

BB: Yes.

TM: It was a building that would have been torn down?

BB: No, it is a new building. Absolutely new.

TM: And you used special materials, and ensured a high standard of hygiene...

BB: Yes.

TM: And you produce and use organic food. How did that impulse come to you, organic food?

BB: Well, my background is from farming.

TM: Oh, it's from farming?

BB: Yes, agriculture. And I was in Germany in 1986.

Before I have involved myself in tourism, I finished my studies. In 1979, I joined a tour company, and in 1986 I spent three months in Germany – and I wanted to see one of the most developed nations in the world, which is the United States of America. So I went there in 1987 and I spent three more months.

TM: Whereabouts?

BB: I was in California, and I spent most of my time in Santa Cruz. But also other states. So from this experience of mine as a visitor to both countries what I saw there was overwhelming – a lot of huge development, mankind living very differently than here. But when I was there I remarked that while people in Nepal do not have the same standard of living, they all had what they required. Like the culture, their families intact. – They have a little, but it's enough for them. So I said theirs is a richer life than that of the people in the western world. Whatever the physical development that is achieved there, here there is a richer social life.... The social life is much stronger and much healthier here. That was my opinion.

TM: I understand.

BB: At that time – when I was a young man – a lot of people wanted to go to Europe, or to America, but I decided to return back to Nepal. I just said to myself, if I stay in this part of the world, and do the amount of work and put in the time to work there, what would I achieve? Nothing much, alright? But if I come back and do something here, having experienced what is there, maybe I could contribute something to my own country.

TM: Yes, I see.

BB: So this is how I started my own company in 1988, a tourism company – travel, and also trekking and adventure holidays. And once I had started and I found out that this country is so rich in culture and heritage, I said, this can be

a jewel for the world. But if we do not preserve the jewel, and if it gets eroded, then we can get nothing. So my idea, my endeavor was to make people – our own people – aware of what they have.

TM: Appreciate more their own values ...

BB: Appreciate more. So I was against that environmental pollution, air pollution. And degrading environmental rules. I was against that. So I have put a lot of effort into these issues. And in the year 1997 the country decided to open for more tourism. And I said, I have to support this – this country, the national program – because it's up to me. So then I started a campaign to reduce the air pollution in the Kathmandu valley, and to stop the distribution of plastic bags. And then to work on the traffic situation.

So I said, this hotel was going to be built with an understanding that here in the city there are more temples – in Kathmandu, Patan, Bhaktapur. And all the houses – original houses – for the people who were living there, they were like a temple. So I wanted to bring back the same feeling, same architectural values. Where my guests can also ...

TM: ... feel like they are in a temple ...

BB: Yes. No person has to live in a Western-style hotel. They are here, in our culture, in our country; they must experience our style. So this is why I started to build this hotel. And later I extended it. This is the reason. And first of all, this allows a lot of local workers to enhance their skills; I'm importing almost nothing. There are certain things I have to import – essentials like toiletries, and flushing toilets, for the shower. Otherwise everything is handmade, hand woven, handcrafted. So this has created a lot of opportunity for the local people. The money that people are spending here will stay on the ground, rather than going outside.

TM: Good, thank you for this background. – As for the air pollution; I was wandering around yesterday, and it was quite strange to see people with masks. For tourists, that's like «Where am I? Are they sick? Is it dangerous?» Who started that, and is it necessary?

BB: To be honest, it is a protection for the residents here. If you look at the road construction, the potholes in the roads, and the dust – all the dust particles travel at high speed, yeah? And those particles have a lot of poison in them. And the gas that is coming from the vehicles. So it is very polluted here.

TM: Too many vehicles.

BB: It's very hard for the people – especially for the young people and elderly people.

TM: So what is the solution?

BB: So I decided to stop using vehicles, or at least reducing the number of vehicles, and the vehicles that are coming have to be improved, with new standards. And similarly the fuel – pure fuel has to be used, and we like electric vehicles more and more. But right now we have big cars, which is very bad.

TM: And who is responsible, the government?

BB: Yes, solely the government.

TM: They don't care?

BB: The government doesn't care.

TM: Now, before my arrival there were, of course, a lot of rumors about the political unrest, and especially how bad the Maoists are here. Can you just briefly summarize what you told me earlier about the actual Maoist story, the reality?

BB: I mean, it is very difficult. It's a difficult question. There have been political changes going on since 1950/1951. In 1947, when India got its freedom from the colonial power, and after the Indians left the country, the new regime was introduced. And ever since then there has been political tension in this country. Because I think the force for change has come from outside, not from inside.

TM: India was still interested in playing part here?

BB: Yes.

TM: I understand. And what is the future of democracy here? What are its chances?

BB: What is democracy, first of all? I cannot understand, because democracy right now is like being put on hold every 4 or 5 years. And that's getting a mandate from the voters. So I don't think there's a real democracy in the world.

TM: Anywhere?

BB: I mean, the existing democracy is just a scam. It's ruled by a minority, where the majority is not included, right? It's exclusive. So this is why I think the world is facing bigger problems. Whatever so-called democracy we have in the world – having free elections is very important. But how fair are the elections in the third-world countries? This is the key! I can understand that even in the first-world countries, even there, only about 60 percent are voting. So 40 percent are not giving their opinion. If 60 percent are voting, then maybe there can be a coalition government, or a single party will be in control. But they have to have about 31%, or a little more than 30% of the vote so they can run the country... That means you have around 70 percent of the people in opposition. That is how it is in the «real democracies» in the world.

TM: That means democracy does not really function yet as it should.

BB: Exactly.

TM: And maybe is even a device for entertaining or manipulating people.

BB: Exactly, dividing people, dividing them from the grassroots.

TM: You mentioned, that the Maoists were actually an instrument of the Indian interests in getting rid of the monarchy here. Is that's true? In the Western Press

People were made to believe that the Maoists are an instrument of the Chinese.

BB: First of all, this is a wrong belief. Communism was never introduced from the North, from China. But in India, especially in Bengal, West Bengal, you know, there has been

a movement of nationalists, Maoists, with a hard-core Communist philosophy, yeah? This was in Indi, in West Bengal and I think it is also in south India. Right now there is a big movement of Maoists in India – a big Maoist movement.

TM: That's interesting.

BB: If you look at the development of Maoists, especially their leaders, they are themselves exilants. They were in exile in India throughout the time of the insurgency.

TM: I see.

BB: So how, in a democratic country, could insurgents have a safe haven? So it's a question.

TM: You also explained in a conversation that you are an adherent and an admirer of the first man ever to be king in Nepal. What was his name?

BB: Prithvi Narayan Shah (1723–1775) – the king of the region called Gorkha. He signed the unification agreement for the country. Nepal was several times under attack, you know, it was one big country and got divided. And this was also a process of reunification that he undertook.

TM: A little like Poland in Europe.

BB: Yes, yes.

TM: And you seem to admire him because he had high ethical standards, and he wasn't interested in power, but interested in the well-being of the whole united people.

BB: Well, we read a lot about western philosophy, the western world – because it is written it is widely available? But there are only a few things written about our region, alright? And I know that people know only a little bit about Shah who was Nepali, who was born in Nepal. But the rest of the history and the rest of the people involved in the story are not well known. I think politically this man who started this movement, I think he was one of the most ethical, and very highly intelligent, and very modern, kings of the time.

TM: A Visionary – but also with practical ability, it seems.

BB: So when in the world they were fighting about ethnic supremacy, like the Whites and Blacks, they were fighting here, and he was only talking about carrying out all the plans to bring this country together. So he was working in harmony. And he also said that everybody has to have equal rights. He was anticorruption. He believed in sustainable development and transparency. And he was the founder of the non-aligned movement at that time, because he knew India, and at that time India and China were very powerful... So they had to make sure they could maintain this country by having a fair and very good relationship with both the big powers.

TM: I mentioned to you that later King Bahadur Rana (1816–1877) is part of the Oliphant story. Would you say he had a similar mentality as Shah?

BB: The first king, Shah, was in the process of reunifying the country, but he did not complete it. His youngest son, Pratap Singh Shah, (1751–1777) continued this, but then he was penalized, unfortunately, by the people, by the power

there, through a conspiracy. He was penalized, though he was the one who was making the dream of the first king come true.

TM: Why was he penalized?

BB: Because there was a conspiracy. Because as per law – you know the eldest son always gets the throne. And he was the youngest son. And he was taking care of his nephew. But they thought maybe he would seize power himself, because he was too powerful. So there was a conspiracy to get rid of him. And there was a vacuum at that time, for a long time. And that's when General Bahadur stepped in. After some 30 years.

TM: Do you think Bahadur was a similar visionary?

BB: I think he was very different at the time, but he also knew that the country was about to, you know, experience too much trouble ... and might lose its stability.

TM: Its identity.

BB: Its identity. So he stepped in and he was also able to keep the country intact.

TM: How did he die? Naturally?

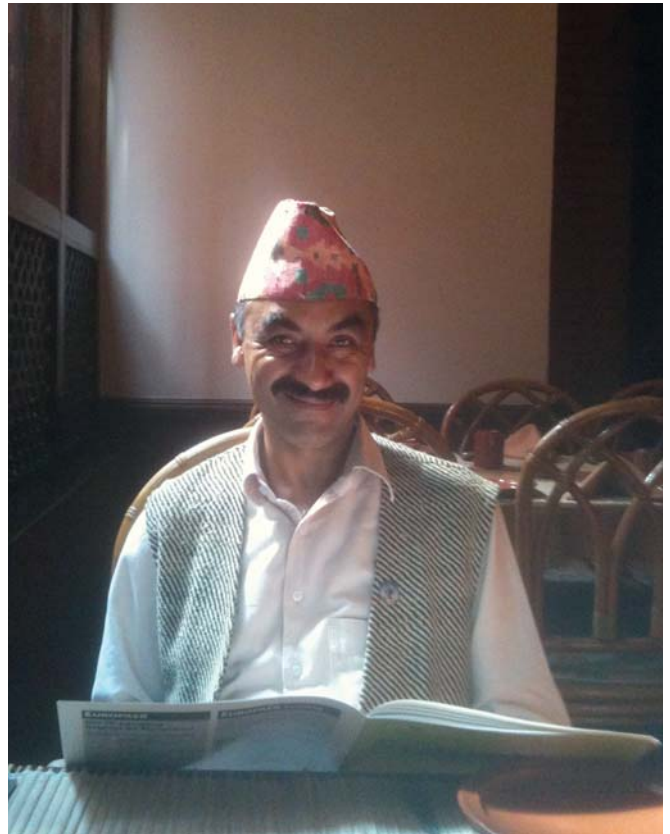
BB: He died naturally.

TM: OK. Well, you mentioned conspiracy theories. We were also talking a little bit about international politics because national politics today is not separable from international politics. And, may I say, there is of course this big event of 9/11 in America; we talked about that. And there is one conspiracy theory – the official one, the first one – and the whole world believes it. And you don't seem to believe that.

BB: Well, it's very difficult. It's very hard to tell people what is what, because there is no evidence. I mean, people like us, what we're seeing, we have to look the consequences after the event.

TM: Sure. It was fruits for America, nothing else. Well, we talked about the Iranian president and we agreed that he seems to have a clear vision of the events of 9/11, and that's to be taken seriously. – I thank you very much.

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