

## Fair Trade Shopping, Books, Films, and Music *Her Turn – Nepal* March 2013

**Fair Trade Shopping** - *What we buy and where we buy it can make a world of difference to our global neighbors.*



This '**Chili Pepper Stripe Apron**' is hand-woven of cotton by women using looms in their homes, offering income and flexible employment. Machine wash cold; 30 in. long - \$25, now on sale for \$17.50 from <http://bit.ly/X2TypY>

Over 25 years ago, the founders of the Association for Craft Producers (ACP) had a vision of a non-profit organization which could do business as well as work for the development of low-income women artisans in Nepal. ACP has grown steadily over the years and today provides services to 1,200 artisans from 15 districts of Nepal (90% of them are women).

**One Weaver's Story:** Laxmi Meharjan excelled at weaving, even when she was a girl. Her weavings were sold, but Laxmi never saw any money. Her earnings went to her father and later to her husband. When Laxmi began working with ACP, she took her earnings into her own hands for the first time in her life. She vowed to use that money to put her daughter Sudha through school. And she did. Sudha earned a Master's degree in Social Work.



This '**Wave Print Hardbound Journal**', hand printed by Bhaktapur Craft Producers in Nepal, contains approximately 100 pages of handmade paper. 4.5x6" – \$14 from <http://bit.ly/X2XeYI>

**Bhaktapur Craft Paper Ltd (BCP)** was established in 1981 as a Community Development Project of UNICEF. The project aims to improve the quality of life of Lokta cutters and paper makers in the rural areas and to provide them employment opportunities. BCP has been incorporated with equal shareholding of all the staff and workers, more than 50% of whom are women of Bhaktapur.

**Set of 3 Terrace Stripe Dish Towels** woven in complementary colors with distinct multicolored stripes and hanging loops. Machine wash cold. 26" long x 21.5" wide - \$25 from <http://bit.ly/X30sLU>

These colorful towels are produced by the artisans of Mahaguthi, Craft with a Conscience, a nonprofit organization that plays a vital role in supporting socially and economically disadvantaged artisans of Nepal. The Tulsi Mehar Mahila Ashram, the parent organization of Mahaguthi, is a women's center that provides shelter, food, support, and vocational training in tailoring and weaving to women, with the objective of making women self-reliant. The organization was founded by a follower of Mahatma Gandhi.



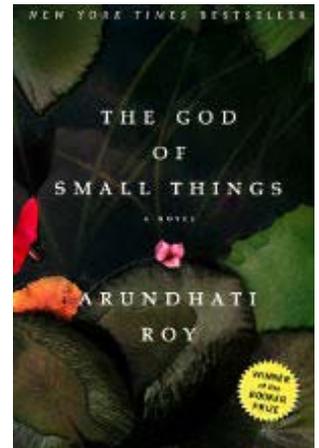
## Recommended Books – Fiction

Aleksandra Perczynska, Program Coordinator for Her Turn, says, “While there are not many fiction books in English about contemporary Nepal, there are several excellent novels which depict life in a caste-divided Indian society ruled by the forces of globalization and market.” Here is her fiction recommendation in that category:

**The God of Small Things** by Arundhati Roy <http://amzn.to/Y3ApUI> (Random House, 1997)

The God of Small Things is the debut novel of Indian writer Arundhati Roy. It is a story about the childhood experiences of fraternal twins whose lives are destroyed by the "Love Laws" that lay down "who should be loved, and how. And how much." The book, a description of how the small things in life affect people's behavior and their lives, won the Booker Prize in 1997.

The story takes place in a town named Ayemenem or Aymanam, now part of Kottayam in Kerala state of India. The temporal setting shifts back and forth from 1969, when fraternal twins Rahel and Estha are seven years old, to 1993, when the twins are reunited at age 31. Much of the story is written in a viewpoint relevant to the seven-year-old children. Malayalam words are liberally used in conjunction with English. Some facets of Kerala life which the novel captures are communism, the caste system, and the Keralite Syrian Christian way of life.



**The End of the World** by Sushma Joshi - <http://amzn.to/W0le1K> (Sansar Books, 2011)



A Sadhu predicts the end of the world. As the East and the West come together, a young boy longs to taste cheese. A monsoon thunderstorm awakens memories of a flood. A young man returns from India and encounters the new Buddha. And a hungry policeman steals some vegetable. Amidst desire, longing and the awareness of suffering, these stories ask the common question: what is the nature of existence? Why do we suffer? Can we ever fulfill the hunger of the human heart?

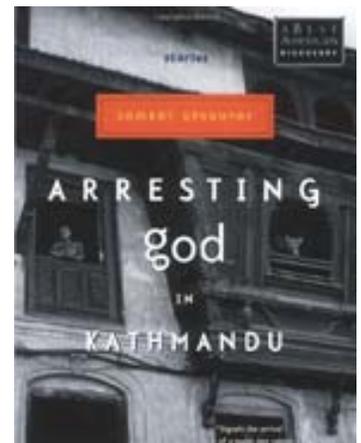
What makes *The End of the World* stand out as a collection of short stories in Joshi's masterful and elegant use of language... a confident debut collection for Joshi, in which the deceptively simple exterior of her prose peels away to reveal multiple layers of investigation into human longing and emptiness. - *The Kathmandu Post*

Sushma Joshi is a writer and filmmaker from Kathmandu, Nepal. She has a BA in international relations from Brown University, an MA in English Literature from Middlebury College in VT, and an MA in cultural anthropology from New School for Social Research in NY.

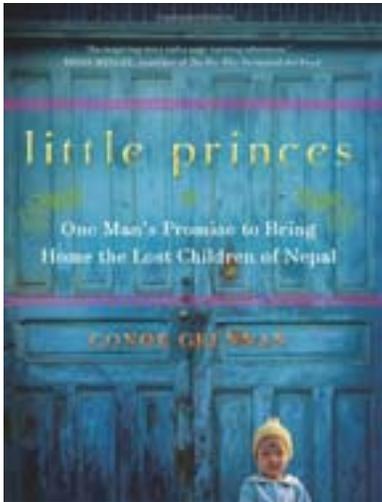
**Arresting God in Kathmandu** by Samrat Upadhyay (Mariner Books, 2001)

*Arresting God in Kathmandu* explores the nature of desire and spirituality in a changing society – a society in which both love and family are becoming modernized. Here are husbands and wives bound together by arranged marriages but sometimes driven elsewhere by an intense desire for connection and transcendence. In a city where gods are omnipresent, where privacy is elusive and family defines identity, these men and women find themselves at the mercy of their desires but at the will of their society. Psychologically rich and astonishingly acute, *Arresting God in Kathmandu* introduces a potent new voice in contemporary fiction.

“Billed as the first Nepali author writing in English to be published in the West, Upadhyay brings to readers the flavor of Nepal and its culture in this impressive collection of nine short stories. Upadhyay's stories leave the reader with much food for thought.” – *Library Journal*



## Recommended Books – Non-Fiction



**Little Princes: One Man's Promise to Bring Home the Lost Children of Nepal**  
by Conor Grennan - <http://amzn.to/W0jrAa> (William Morrow, 2011)

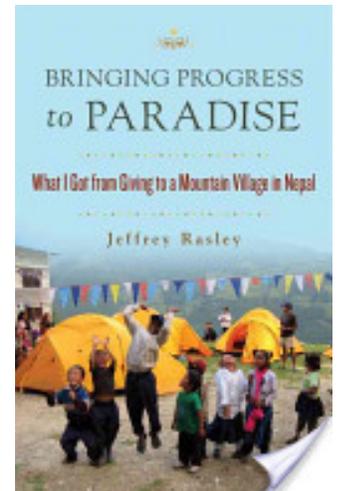
Grennan, who once worked at the East West Institute in Prague, embarked on a round-the-world trip in 2006, starting with a stint volunteering for an orphanage six miles south of Kathmandu. The orphanage, called the Little Princes Children's Home, housed 18 children from the remote province of Humla, rescued from a notorious child trafficker who had bought the children from poor villagers terrified of the Maoist insurgents eager for new recruits; the parents hoped to keep their children safe, but the children often ended up as slaves.

Grennan, stunned by the trauma endured by these children, grew to love them over two months, and after completing his world tour, returned to the orphanage and vowed not only to locate seven Humla orphans who had vanished from a foster home, but also to find the parents of the children in the orphanage. This required starting up

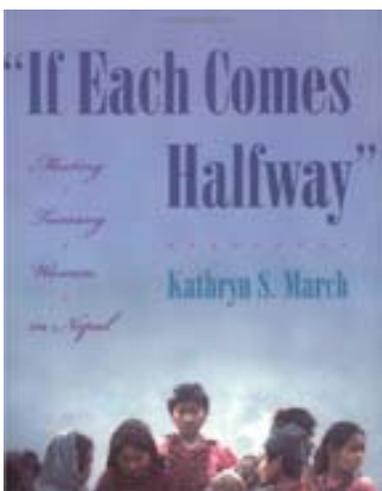
a nonprofit organization in America, Next Generation Nepal, raising funds, buying a house in Kathmandu for the children's home, and trekking into the mountains of Humla to locate the parents. Grennan's work is by turns self-pokingly humorous, exciting, and inspiring. – *Publishers Weekly*

**Bringing Progress to Paradise: What I Got from Giving to a Mountain Village in Nepal** by Jeff Rasley - <http://amzn.to/12F1H99>  
(Conari Press, 2010)

In October 2008, climbing expedition leader and attorney, Jeff Rasley, led a trek to a village named Basa on a Himalayan mountainside in the remote Solu region of Nepal. His group of three adventurers was only the third group of "white people" ever seen in this village of subsistence farmers. What they found was a people thoroughly unaffected by Western consumer-culture values. They had no running water, electricity, or anything that moves on wheels. Each family lived in a beautiful, hand-chiseled stone house with a flower garden. Beyond what they already had, it seemed all they wanted was education for the children. Rasley and his friends helped finish a school building already in progress. But then, the villagers asked for help to bring electricity to Basa. *Bringing Progress to Paradise* describes Rasley's transformation from adventurer to committed philanthropist.



"This is one of the best books I've read on what happens when East Meets West and we Westerners come to pristine, closed, and untainted foreign countries and cultures and do our "do-gooding" and "try to help." Lots to think about contained in this book, and it's one of those rare books I'm going to read again." – *Amazon reviewer*



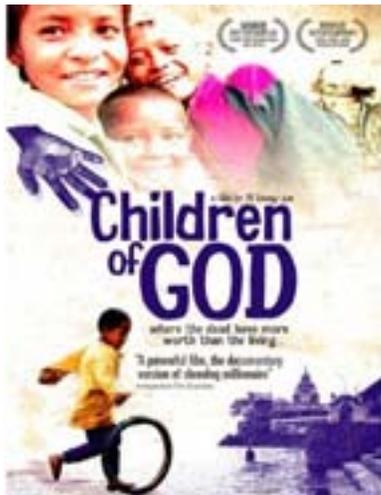
**If Each Comes Halfway** by Kathryn March - <http://amzn.to/W0mOAG>  
(Cornell University Press, 2002)

For twenty-five years, Kathryn S. March collected the life stories of the women of a Buddhist Tamang farming community in Nepal. In *If Each Comes Halfway*, she shows the process by which she and Tamang women reached across their cultural differences to find common ground. Because Tamang women frequently told their stories by singing poetic songs in the middle of their conversations with March, each book includes a CD of traditional songs not recorded elsewhere.

"Kathryn March's rich and provocative book is rooted in a strong sense of the local and shaped by a fine ear and remarkable linguistic skills. *If Each Comes Halfway* is exceptional in both its scholarly quality and the humane and insightful intelligence which informs it."- Don Brenneis, University of California, Santa Cruz

## Recommended Films

**Children of God** – (Vanguard, 90 minutes) purchase or rent from Amazon <http://amzn.to/W0snPQ> rent from Netflix <http://nflx.it/W0szOU> or watch free online <http://bit.ly/12EZISg>



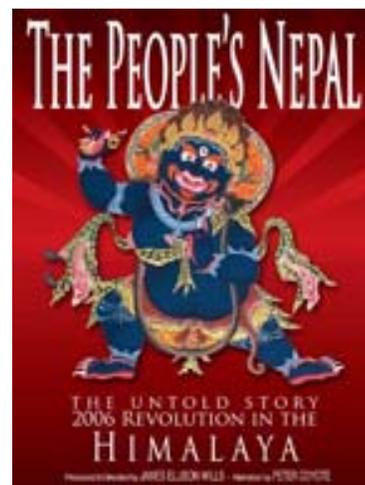
*Children of God* explores the life of the children who live beside the Bagmati River in Nepal on the sacred grounds of a Hindu temple in Kathmandu, an area forgotten and ignored by the world but considered the holiest and most sacred to the Hindu people.

The children are undeterred by the daily cries and wailing from the daily funeral ceremonies; instead they rob the corpses for food and dive into the river to grab coins used as funeral offerings by the mourners. Some risk their lives by begging while others fall prey to drugs and disease. The documentary exposes the social conditions of the Nepalese people through the plight of their children, where reverence for the old and dead far outweighs the care for the young and living. Experiencing their innocence and their hardship through songs, stories and heartbreaking living conditions, *Children of God* exposes the contradiction of the material world that rests upon perhaps the most spiritual culture on earth.

**The People's Nepal – The Untold Story – 2006 Revolution in the Himalaya** (CreateSpace 2010, 77 minutes) purchase or rent from Amazon - <http://amzn.to/W0rDtW>

*The People's Nepal* tells the story of the revolution in Nepal in 2006 that resulted in the establishment of Nepal as a Republic. Never before seen footage of the "April Uprising" in 2006 along with current interviews tell the story of political movement in the Himalaya.

The People's Nepal offers insiders views from the many diverse peoples of Nepal. The story is well written from the people's view point... no agenda, all sides told. I highly recommend this movie for anyone interested in human rights in our world today, Nepal's changing government and progression to a democracy for the people is inspiring and moving. Excellent photography and insight of Nepal and it's people that is current and informative. – *Amazon Reviewer*



**Women on the Front Line: Nepal** (2008, 21 minutes) watch free online <http://bit.ly/12F3F9v>



Deserted by her husband and with four children to support, 24-year-old Sushma from a remote village in Nepal was taken to India and sold to a brothel for \$250. Unlike most victims of sexual slavery, however, Sushma managed to escape her captors and return home. In this film they document the legal and logistical difficulties of staunching the flow of an estimated 12,000 young women who are trafficked across the open Indian border every year, and meet some of the women on the front line trying to put a stop to the trade. We follow Sushma as she sets out to find the man who lured her to Kolkata. Sushma's trafficker is cornered and admits to his role. She returns to her village and is reunited with her children.

**A Girl's Life** (2007, 15 minutes) watch free online <http://to.pbs.org/12F5TWB>

"Once upon a time there was a girl whose name was Sabina Timilsina..." So begins *A Girl's Life* in the sing-song broken English of a 9-year-old who lives in a village outside Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. Sabina's family is of the lowest caste, the Dalits, or "untouchables," who typically earn their living breaking rocks. In a country where 70 percent of the women are illiterate, Sabina is an exception, an extraordinarily lucky girl who has a scholarship that will take her through high school. Her benefactor is an American named John Wood, who started a literacy program called Room to Read.



## Recommended Music

Nepal is a country of great diversity with 36 ethnic groups, several language groups, and many religions. The music of Nepal is just as varied, ranging from folk music to music associated with religious activities, classical music, and a collection of contemporary styles.



This Newari song— Shir swaan ya heku – tells a universal story of a young couple’s attraction to each other. The music video is lovely, as they are both weavers. <http://bit.ly/X3aYmn>

Nepalese music has been largely influenced by musicians from Hindustan and Tibet. Due to its close association with Indian culture, Nepal too has various musician castes. Women only play music in certain circumstances such as for all-female wedding parties.

The Newar people are likely the best known musicians of Nepal who perform folk and classical music along with dancing. Practically all important events, feasts, ceremonies and festivals are accompanied by the music and dancing of Nepal's Newars. The masked dances of the Newar people tell intricate stories about the gods as well as great heroes. Songs and musical instruments are associated with particular aspects of the Newars' life. Newar music features strong percussion with added flutes (shawms) along with powerful, nasal singing.

Aleksandra Perczynska, Program Coordinator for **Her Turn**, recommended **Kutumba**, a very popular band from Nepal. They are a folk instrumental ensemble of six professionals from Kathmandu who distinguish themselves by staying true to Nepalese culture while simultaneously experimenting with music from all over the world.

The word ‘Kutumba’ holds a special meaning in the Nepali language. It stands for a unique bond amongst community members. As their name, Kutumba, is all about bringing together traditional folk tunes and instruments with new and improvised sounds and ideas.



Listen to Kutumba - <http://bit.ly/W0um6v>



Listen to Ani Choying Drolma sing a Compassion Mantra - <http://bit.ly/W0vJIK>

**Her Turn** also recommended **Ani Choying Drolma**, a Nepali nun. As a young girl, Ani Choying escaped her violent home for a monastery in Nepal. One day, an American jazz guitarist heard the young nun sing and was so enthralled by her voice that he recorded an album with her. The income enabled Ani Choying to open Arya Tara School, just outside Kathmandu, which now offers shelter and education to over 70 nuns aged 7 to 23 from some of the poorest regions of Nepal, Tibet, and India.

Drolma sees her music, and its profits, as a vehicle to create opportunities for women and girls. In addition to the Arya Tara School, she supports more than a dozen charities through her Nun's Welfare Foundation, and she's building Nepal's first kidney hospital.

There's a *wonderful* interview with her on NPR <http://n.pr/12EUmXf> and Amazon carries a large selection of her recordings - <http://amzn.to/W0wvPG>

Submitted by Lynn O'Connell and Marcie Christensen, DFW volunteer researchers & members