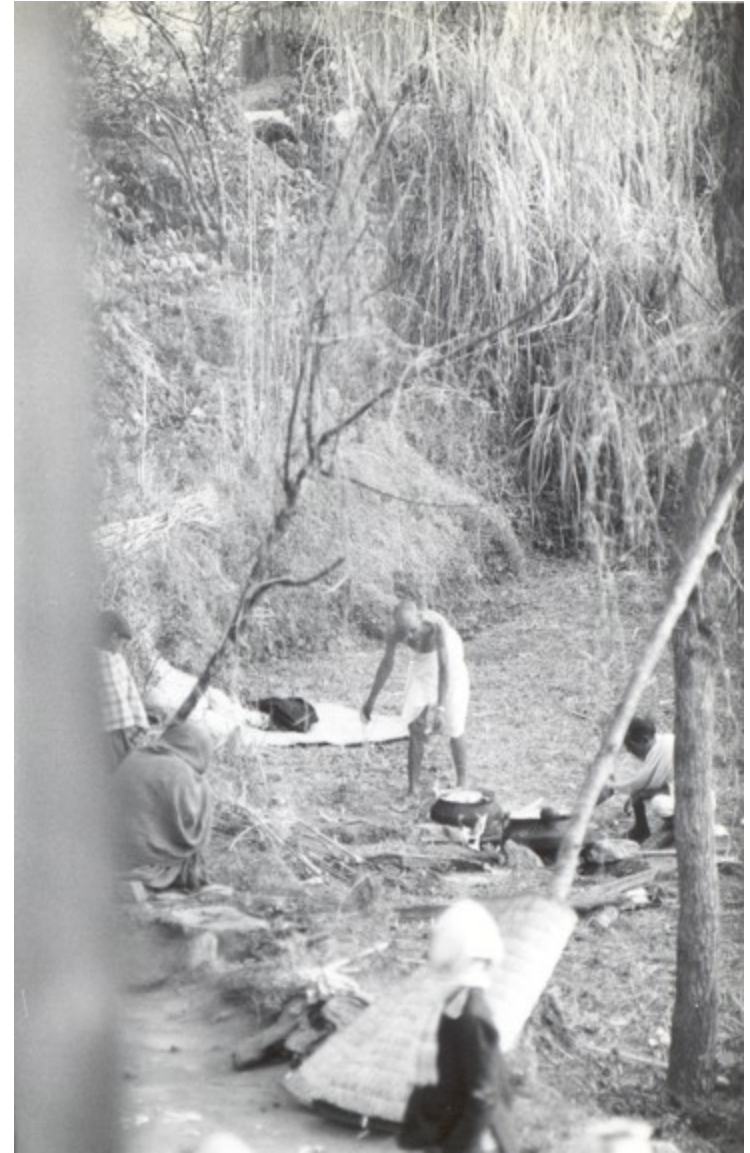


As I mentioned in my sixth set of photos, we had the misfortune to experience the passing of Netra Narayan Subedi's mother in 1982. (You may recall that he was the village mayor, attired in white in some of the earlier photos.) The entire village (myself included) walked from Thuli Pokhari to the confluence of the two rivers at the base of the mountain, bearing her body and a load of wood. There, in conformance with timeless Hindu custom, her body was cremated. I stopped along the way to take this photo.

Hindu custom requires that the deceased person's family host a meal to thank those who participated in the mourning. Tradition prescribes a certain time period after the cremation when the meal must be held. I can't remember how long this time period is, but it is a matter of weeks, as I recall. The meal consists of rice cooked in the clarified butter of water buffaloes, lentils and vegetables. This photo shows Brahmin priests preparing rice for the meal that Netra Narayan's family held to thank fellow villagers. A large pot of rice can be seen adjacent to the left foot of the stooping priest. You can also just barely make out the priest's *janai*, or sacred thread, which is a band of several strings worn like a sash over the left shoulder. The thread is worn by Brahmin and Kshatriya males after the *bratabandha* ceremony, held during adolescence, and which was depicted in the first and third set of photos that I sent you.



The Nepali calendar is filled with many more holidays than the one we follow in the US. The most festive of such occasions is the great holiday of Dashain, which lasts for about a fortnight. The festival occurs in the fall. It's traditional throughout Nepal to make swings, called *ping* in Nepali, in the early days of this festival. This photo shows Bal Chandra Subedi on such a swing in or near the village of Arjeekot, which is about a 15 to 20 minute walk downhill from Thuli Pokhari.





Here we see Bal Chandra from the same vantage point, but through a telescopic lens. He is obviously having a grand time!

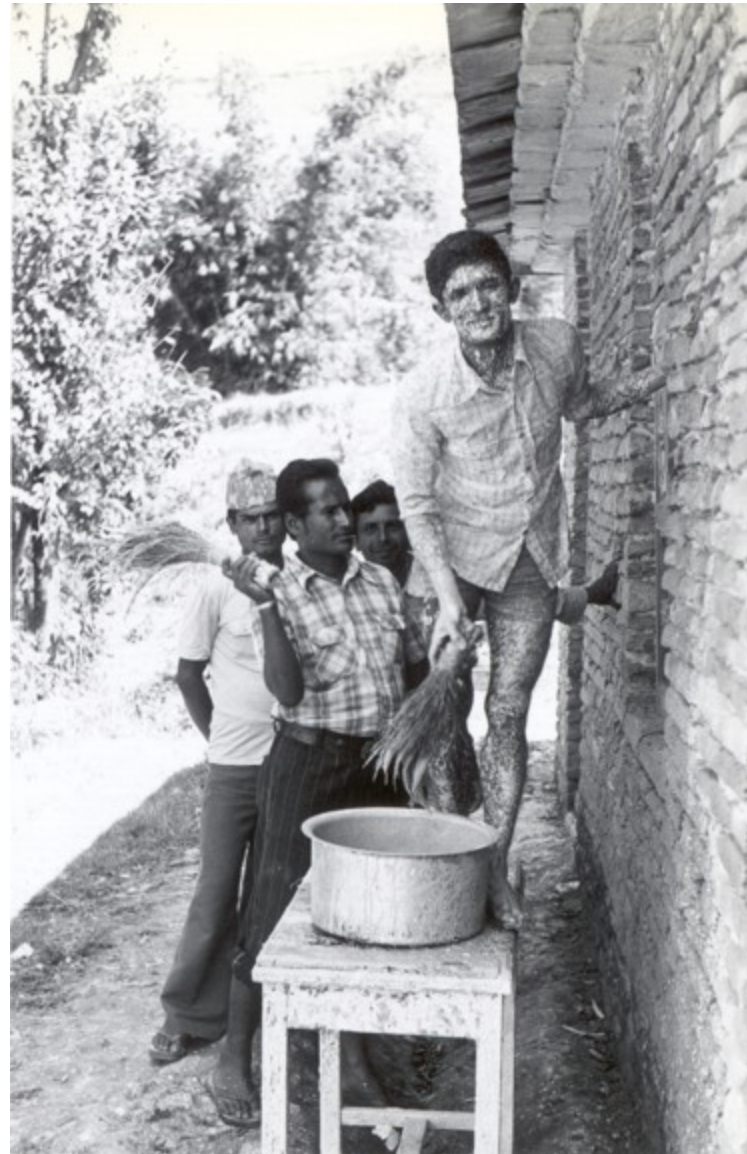
Everyone tries to come home during Dashain to be with family. Here we see Bhawani Shankar Sapkota (on the left) newly returned to Thuli Pokhari from his studies in distant regions. He is greeting a close friend and relation. Bhawani was one of the top students of his class in JS Secondary School (Class of 1980). He studied and worked hard, eventually getting hired by Cisco Systems in the United States. Cisco Systems was among the most successful technological firms of the United States in the 1990s.





No teaching is held during Dashain, but during the early days of the festival, students and teachers join together to make their schools look beautiful for the holidays. Here we see students at JS Secondary School preparing to whitewash the exterior of the main building.

The whitewash is applied by dipping a broom in the whitewash solution, and slapping it on the face of the building. It's a very messy process. Here we see the teachers of JS Secondary School at work outside the school office. Teacher Netra Narayan Subedi (standing on the table) shows obvious signs of having been hard at work. Note, for example, the whitewash on his face, clothes and legs. The headmaster, Gopal Panta, poses for the camera with a broom in his hand, but does not show any sign of having worked! (Does this say anything about management?) Behind him is Chhabi Lal Sapkota (wearing the *topi* hat) and Muralidhar Paudel.





The 9th day of Dashain is called *Mahanavami*, “The Great Ninth.” During this day, animal sacrifices are held throughout Nepal in honor of the Goddess Durga, whose victory over the forces of evil is commemorated by Dashain. The animal sacrifice is disturbing and repugnant to some non-Hindus, but it is really not much different in spirit and practice from the American festival of Thanksgiving. In this photo, we see a parade heralding the arrival of buffalo calves at a temple for sacrifice. The parade and animals are making ritual perambulations about the temple, which is on top of the hill where Thuli Pokhari is located, to the east of Devasthan.





At the head of the parade is a band. We see that it is followed by women.



The priests tie each calf to a stake in front of the temple. A great crowd has gathered to watch.



A kshatriya male beheads the calf with the *kukhri*, a traditional Nepali sword used by Gurkhas.

The climactic day of Dashain is the tenth day, known as *Vijaya Dashami*. During this day, people in the village visit friends and other members of their extended families, and receive blessings. The blessings are given with *tika* (the ritual marking on the forehead) and *mallas* (wreaths of flowers). This photo shows me in front of Tribhuvan Primary School near Arjeekot, having just received a *malla* and *tika* from the family of Chhabi Lal Sapkota, a teacher at JS Secondary School who eventually became headmaster after I left. *Vijaya Dashami* means “the tenth day of Great Victory.” Tradition holds that it was on this day that the Goddess Durga slew *Mahishasura*, “the Water Buffalo Demon” who led the forces of evil.

