

# The great Himalayan earthquake and its aftermath

H.K. SHRESTHA

A devastating earthquake struck in central and western parts of Nepal on April 25, 2015. By now, the death toll from the tremor measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale has crossed more than seven thousand people, with many more wounded. More than six million people in the 25 districts -- one person in every three households -- have been directly affected from the quake. The damages of physical properties have been colossal. More than one hundred thousand houses have been completely destroyed, and many more have been damaged beyond repair. Many historical and cultural heritages in Kathmandu valley have been rendered to the rubble. The earthquake has come to Nepal as a Himalayan tragedy.

The April earthquake was a generational natural disaster in Nepal after the great earthquake in 1934. While the level of awareness on the various forms of natural disasters in Nepal-- including the possible damages from the earthquake -- have significantly increased since then, the country was not yet ready to cope with the disaster of such a huge magnitude that caused catastrophic damages within a few seconds. The country was simply not prepared for such a huge natural catastrophe nor did it have much experience or resources to cope with in the aftermath.

The intensity of damages from this earthquake has been strongly felt particularly in the densely populated capital city of Kathmandu valley and

in the inaccessible and remote villages in central and western Nepal. The geographical terrain and the weather conditions have also hampered immediate rescue of victims. Despite the hazards, rescue works started instantaneously and immediately after the quake. Volunteers and the general public spontaneously came to the scene to ferry the victims to nearby hospitals. All security apparatuses, the government bureaucracy, medical professionals, health workers and the service providing agencies of the Government of Nepal have been at work round the clock for the rescue and relief of the quake victims. They have done a tremendous job to rescue many people safely from the rubble by putting their own lives in danger and by providing relief supplies to the victims.

There has been huge support and solidarity from all our friendly countries and the international community in the rescue and relief works of the quake victims. Within a short time after the quake, significant logistical and material support, and specialised rescue and relief teams and emergency medical units arrived in Nepal, which have done exemplary work to save the lives from the earthquake. There have been miracles even after six or seven days of the disaster to find survivors from the rubble.

We have been overwhelmed by the massive outpouring of support and solidarity from Bangladesh for the quake victims in Nepal, both at the government and the people's levels. Bangladesh was one of the first countries to promptly respond by sending a medical team and

relief materials for the quake victims. Relief materials to the earthquake victims have instantaneously been flowing from various organisations, social groups, industries, businesses, educational institutions, NGOs -- from various such quarters in Bangladesh. The relief materials consist of medicines, blankets, dried food, readymade garments, tents and tarpaulins, bottled water etc. This reflects the deep bonds between our two peoples and the genuine wish of the Bangladeshi people to help the people of Nepal in this difficult hour. The Embassy has also opened a special bank account for the relief of the quake victims in which we have been receiving a good pledge of relief assistance.

Meanwhile, the government faces a huge challenge for the relief and rehabilitation of the quake victims, particularly for people living in remote and inaccessible areas. People in those areas urgently need shelter, food, and emergency health and sanitation facilities. The basic provisions, such as light tents, tarpaulins, blankets, mattresses, food, and essential medicines need to be reached to the affected people urgently and before the onset of the monsoon, which would make transportation of relief supplies still more difficult. The government alone is not in a position to meet this unforeseen and pressing demand of relief supplies to the quake victims; hence the need for greater international help and assistance.

The disastrous earthquake has caused irreparable losses and damages to Nepal's precious historical and cultural heritage sites. But the coun-

try is united, and will rise from the present natural disaster to restore and rebuild our iconic historical monuments. It is going to be a Herculean task demanding significant resources -- both financial and material. There has already been a great deal of support coming in from our friendly countries and international organisations in the quest of restoring the centuries-old cultural heritage.

We are aware that the road to recovery will be long. It would take many years but we are resolute that we will rebuild those priceless monuments, and the cities and villages that have turned to rubble. No doubt, the cost of recovery and rebuilding would be staggering. The conservative estimate alone puts the figure at \$ 10 billion. Hence the support of the international community becomes crucial in garnering the financial and technical assistance to Nepal for recovery, reconstruction, and rebuilding.

The recent earthquake has, no doubt, posed a great challenge to Nepal but it is also an opportunity to demonstrate resilience and the determination of the Nepali people to rebuild the nation. It is also time for us to resolve ourselves to redouble our efforts for political and economic transformation of the country and make Nepal a vibrant, democratic and prosperous country in South Asia. In this quest, we require goodwill, cooperation, understanding and support from all our friends.

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The writer is Ambassador of Nepal to Bangladesh. The article is an exclusive to *The Daily Star*.

# Entitlement Syndrome

NAHELA NOWSHIN

EVERY time there is an incident of sexual assault against women, there's a camp of men (and women) who feel "outraged" at the whole lot of attention these stories get. Their thought process goes something like this: Why the fuss over such a minor incident? Weren't those men simply fulfilling their masculine duty by putting those "promiscuous" women in their rightful place? How dare she resist? The people asking these questions suffer from what I like to call 'Entitlement Syndrome'. Their mindsets work in such a way that they feel entitled to tell women of the world how to lead their lives and why they deserve to be violated.

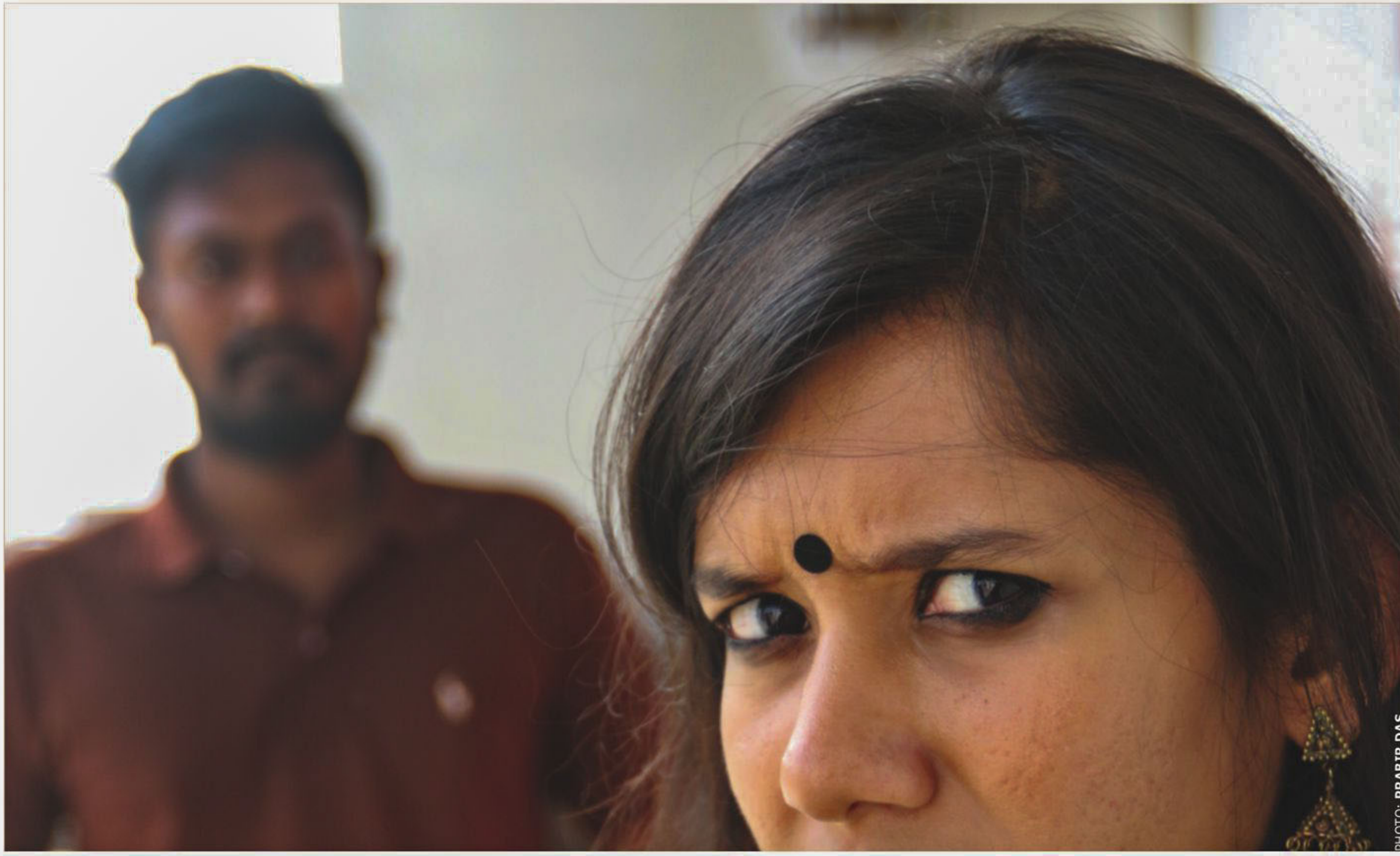
After the molestation of around 20 women by some 30 to 40 rowdy men at the Suhrawardy Udyan gate near the TSC area during Pahela Baishakh celebrations, social injustice warriors began to spread hate all over social media.

These ridiculous myths that attempt to justify sickening acts of sexual violence against women need to be addressed.

**Myth #1: If only these uncultured women refrained from wearing "provocative" clothes, saris and blouses, and Western clothes, they would not have been targeted.**

Overlooking the blatant sexism in that mentality and the severe entitlement issue that most men (and some women) have in telling other women how to dress, what to eat and how to live their lives, these pernicious myths perpetuate the victim blaming mentality and provide a way for sex offenders to evade responsibility because they couldn't keep it in their pants.

No, the women at Dhaka University weren't "asking" for those vile men's sexual advances. Not that victims of sexual violence ever "ask" for it. A simple way to figure out if a woman gives consent to her body is when she actually gives consent, you know like, communicate the word *yes* using her vocal chords.



**Myth #2: If only those women stayed at home (like good mothers and daughters do), this would never have happened.**

I am not going to ask those who honestly believe this to come out of their cave or the rock they have been living under.

A country which has been ruled for the last 23 years by female Prime Ministers, whose Speaker of Parliament is a woman, and whose garment sector runs on the hard labour of women, it takes a whole lot of nerve to make misogynistic comments such as these which, once again, highlight the entitlement syndrome of most of our men and a lot of women who take it upon themselves to delineate the spaces where women can or cannot be.

The illegal, lucrative market of pornography continues to thrive in Bangladesh thanks to the overwhelming number of men who regularly indulge in the consumption of pornographic content. In a report com-

plied by the Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), porn addiction is a growing problem among our young men. Are these men not seeking it out for themselves? Are they being aroused and provoked by our women in saris and *shalwar kameez* to look up pornographic videos online? Hypocrisy.

**Myth #3: Women should scream and shout for help in the face of sexual assault. It's tough to harm a woman who resists physical assault.**

So both the cause and the solution of sexual assault lie with the woman herself? She's both her own provocateur and her own saviour? When is it ever the perpetrator's fault?

Women don't need sex offenders to "teach them a lesson" because they're somehow "guilty" of arousing the latter's sexual urges that can apparently be triggered with the glimpse of a woman's fully bare arm. These men need to set aside their entitlement issues which delude them into believing that the act of forcefully

fulfilling their temptations by violating women's bodies is completely "normal" or "natural".

**Myth #4: All this talk for women's rights is "feminazi propaganda" carried out by man-haters.**

Feminazi is a filthy, filthy word. I don't see how wanting equal economic, political, personal and social rights for women is the same as a racist nationalism-based fascist ideology that led to a genocide.

Feminists don't hate men. They just don't like men who are sexist, who are okay with using their social and political power to discriminate against women, and who are okay with hurting and abusing women physically and sexually.

**Myth #5: She is someone's mother, daughter, sister or wife.**

Actually... she's just a human being.

It's sad that we still live in a world in which the signifi-

cance of women's lives is made to be understood in relation to another human being, especially a male. In the aftermath of incidents like these, we always hear/read about why women's bodies should be hands off in comments like: "She could have been your mother or your sister. Wouldn't you have protected her?"

Why, why must men either be our abuser or protector? Why can't we be allies? Or friends? The mother-sister-wife approach maintains and reinforces the dangerous hierarchical positioning of societal relations in which the woman is always "beneath" the man. All women want is a level-playing field where they feel safe enough to walk home late at night, where they're not subjected to the violence of the male gaze, and where they're not victim-blamed by being painted as walking temptresses out to trap men through the art of seduction.

The writer is a journalist at *The Daily Star*.

**QUOTABLE Quote**

Thank God men cannot fly, and lay waste the sky as well as the earth.

Henry David Thoreau

**CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph**

**ACROSS**

- Gown material
- Surgery tool
- Hackneyed
- Singly
- Subway patron
- Third letter
- "Foundation" author
- Auction action
- Lawyer's charge
- Billfolds
- Purpose
- Famed cow owner
- Large amounts
- Secessionist state of 1967
- Gift topper
- Member of the Grateful Dead
- Memorable time
- Had something
- Sweet treat
- Wander off
- Make passes at
- "Sophie's Choice" co-star
- Hirsch of "Milk"
- Bus units

**DOWN**

- Sized up
- Rake with gunfire
- Out of bed
- Cleaned up
- Article
- Fictional detective
- Fall behind
- Following
- Grave
- Hatred
- Goes through
- Obama adviser Jarrett
- Fictional detective
- Palmas
- Shop tool
- Soda buy
- Spain setting
- "Scram!"
- Baltimore player
- Cautioned
- Soaks up the sun
- City founded by Pizarro
- Kitchen pest
- "Sure thing!"

**CRYPTOQUOTE** 3-26

YBAYCB TIX JB NVTG K UA KL NKLGBP NVBL GVBPI LA DTIBDTCC. ... K IGTBP AEG GVB NKLUN TLU NTKG HAP IYPKLE --PAFBPI VAPLIDZ

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: ABSORB WHAT IS USEFUL, DISCARD WHAT IS USELESS AND ADD WHAT IS SPECIFICALLY YOUR OWN. --BRUCE LEE

**Yesterday's answer**

CAJUN PEEPS  
UHURA UNDUE  
DALAI PADRE  
ILLS BIRD  
ALAS HALE  
WON DESERVE  
LINDA IDEAL  
SNEEZES DNA  
MEET AMEN  
COOP ANNA  
AROSE EGYPT  
MAREX XENTIA  
PLEAS TREND

**BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker**

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?  
SOME REAL PROS!

**HENRY by Don Trachte**

A XYDLBAXR is LONGFELLOW  
One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.