

YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) » [AUTHOR'S CORNER: I CLIMBED MT EVEREST WITH DALAI LAMA - PRAJWAL PARAJULY](#)

Author's Corner: I climbed Mt Everest with Dalai Lama - Prajwal Parajuly

UNLIMITED
WEB HOSTING

learn more >

ONLY \$3.95

bluehost

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2014 - 00:00 -- BY JAMES MURUA

He is an Indian/Nepalese writer with a collection of short stories *The Gurka's Daughter*. He will be a guest at the Storymoja Hay Festival later this month where he will be unveiling his debut novel *Land Where I Flee*. He speaks exclusively to our reporter James Murua.

Storymoja is the second African literary festival you are attending having been to the Time of the Writer in Durban, South Africa, earlier this year. Was that your first time in Africa and how was that experience? What do you expect to see in Kenya?

I had only been to the Seychelles before the Time of the Writer Festival in Durban (such a cliché, I know). It was my first time in South Africa, and it was a revelation.

South Africa is so beautiful. I was struck by how openly people talk about race. The reasons for that are obvious, of course, but it was refreshing not to experience the kind of pussyfooting and political correctness that dominates discussions of race in the US and the UK.

The Time of the Writer Festival is terrifically organised. I had the chance to meet some amazing writers—and hilarious people—from Kenya, South Africa, Botswana and elsewhere. It was good to see a very interested and excited audience. This will be my first time in Kenya. Kenyans have been very generous with their praise for my books, and I am excited about interacting with them at the Storymoja festival.

How did you get into writing? Have you done this all your career?

Not at all. I call myself an accidental writer. I was working as an advertising executive in New York and decided one fine day that I didn't want to do it anymore.

After travelling a bit and realising there wasn't anything life-changing about it, I decided to write because I needed to legitimise my life. It's as simple as that. There wasn't really a story inside me that was bursting to come out. When I wrote *The Gurkha's Daughter*, I had absolutely no clue about agents, the publishing market, who was going to read my book, etc.

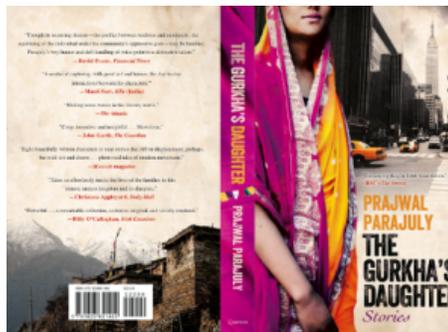
You were the youngest writer to get a two-book, multi-country deal when you signed with Quercus. How did this deal come about and how has it affected your career?

The deal came about with some luck. I had finished the first draft of six of my stories and decided to go to London to celebrate. There, my sister, serving as my parents' mouthpiece, told me that if I was hellbent on frittering my life away, I should perhaps apply to grad school at Oxford, which offered a master's in creative writing.

It seemed like a good idea—the course would give me two years to explore my writing. When I got called for an interview, I panicked. I hadn't been a literature major in college, so I started Googling and Wikiing the canon. That's when I chanced upon an ad for the London Book Fair. Hillary Mantel, who had just won her first Booker, was speaking, and I thought name-dropping her would be just the kind of thing—pretentious, pedantic—that my Oxford interviewers would live. I registered for the London Book Fair, which was a day before my Oxford interview. Finding nothing worth reading on my train journey to Earl's Court, where the fair was taking place, I picked up one of my own stories.

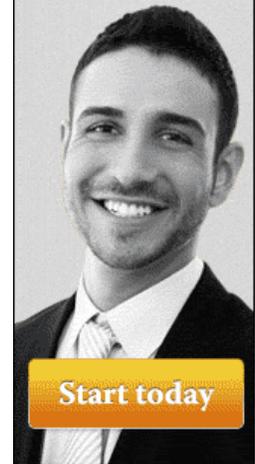


PRAJWAL PARAJULY



The Gurkha's Daughter By Prajwal Parajuly

Shape
your
Future



Start today

UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL
ONLINE
PROGRAMMES

Now this was April 2010, when the volcanic ashes in Iceland had created havoc on air travel all over Europe, so many meetings scheduled for the fair had been cancelled and what should have been a superbly attended event was a poorly attended one. I sat next to a woman who wasn't all that happy about all her cancelled meetings. When I asked her what she did, she was a literary agent, so, of course, I gave her the story I had with me.

She emailed me a few days later asking me for the rest of my stories. Susan Yearwood—that was her name—then circulated the manuscript among her publishing contacts in London, and when we realised we were in a position to choose, we settled on Quercus because Jon Riley, the editor, and I connected very well.

Who do you write for? Do you have a person in mind when writing your stories? Can I sitting in Nairobi connect with them while you are writing from India?

I don't have a person in mind when I write my books. I write for a highly international audience, so I guess I should be more mindful of not alienating someone who's not familiar with my part of the world, but I don't think too much about all that when I am writing. If the lovely messages I've received are any indication, people in Nairobi have been able to connect with this little pocket of the Himalayas very well.

Your book *The Gurkha's Daughter* is a short story collection that shows the different sections of Nepalese society. How did you get the collection together? How long did it take you from conception to publishing?

It took me about three months to come up with a very rough draft. You must remember, though, that I don't write every day. Or every week. Or every month. I only write when I feel like it. I then revisited these stories after a few months when I was signed by an agent. That's when I did the most work. After that, I oscillated between working on the first draft of my novel and the revisions of the short-story collection. From conception to publishing, the book took me three years, which I realise is not a long time at all. I have been lucky and know I should feel grateful.

Your novel *Land Where I Flee* will be launched at the Storymoja Hay Festival. What is it about?

It's a family saga in which four siblings living in various parts of the world convene in my Himalayan hometown to celebrate their grandmother's 84th birthday, and things happen. It's a fun, spicy novel.

Being Nepalese/Indian we have to ask, have you climbed Mt Everest?

Oh, yes, I did it with the Dalai Lama, who slowed me down somewhat. I also drink a gallon of Darjeeling tea a day because, you know, that's what you do when you are from the Himalayas. I also travel everywhere with my prayer flags.

Have you read any writers from Kenya and the larger African continent? Who did you enjoy the most?

Good lord, there are so many of them. It's, I realise, a very exciting time to be a writer in Africa as it is in South Asia. I discovered quite a number of exciting voices when I was in Durban—Lauri Kubuitsile, Zukiswa Wanner, Niq Mhlongo. I read Wanner's *Madams* in three hours. It was such a breezy read. I have read Kingwa Kamencu's brilliant YA novel. I think she's doing a lot of interesting work with YA African fiction. I am looking forward to familiarising myself with even more African writing when I am in Nairobi.

googleplus

Tweets Follow

 **The Star, Kenya** @TheStarKenya 1h
#CorridorsOfPower: Find Out what @MikeSonko did when he heard that #Bensouda is unable to continue with #Uhuru's case ow.ly/BdoJY
Expand

 **The Star, Kenya** @TheStarKenya 1h
#CorridorsOfPower: Just where is North Mugaringo MP Charles Geni, popularly known as 'Makuti' ow.ly/BdnVb
Expand

 **The Star, Kenya** @TheStarKenya 1h
Is a senior civil servant behind the smear campaign on social media against Homa Bay Governor Cyprian Awiti? FIND OUT ow.ly/BdnQU
Expand

Tweet to @TheStarKenya

Find us on Facebook

 **The Star, Kenya** Like

 **The Star, Kenya** with Nguthi Joseph Kagechu 1 hr

CORRIDORS OF POWER: That Mike Sonko really wants the ICC to end President Uhuru Kenyatta's case is not a secret. When he heard that Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda is unable to continue with the case, the flamboyant senator bought everybody a drink

246,181 people like The Star, Kenya.



0 Comments The Star

Login

Sort by Best

Share Favorite



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

ALSO ON THE STAR

WHAT'S THIS?

RAILA'S TEAM OF RIVALS

16 comments • 2 days ago



Qwani — Lets not beat about the bush Xuande. Cord lost and this article puts the message out clearly for all who have eyes ...

Marine boat overturns in Lamu injuring two CID officers

5 comments • 2 days ago



Obakortd — See what the criminal has caused by ordering the drug vessel to be destroyed.This police men went to collect ...

Poison brew kills three in Kiambu, others in hospital

3 comments • 2 days ago



Obakortd — This referendum call is killing our youths.Raila is killing Kikuyu youths because he knows they will defend ...

I will remain in ODM until Kingdom comes, says Ababu

57 comments • 2 days ago



james — Ababu, I thought you are a learned chap and you should know the Kingdom is always there with us.! If you are a Xstian, ...

Subscribe

Add Disqus to your site



ONLINE MASTER DEGREES

LEARN MORE NOW

- ABOUT THE STAR
- CONTACT
- STAFF
- ADVERTISING RATES
- CLASSIFIEDS
- WEBSITE COMMENT POLICY
- MOBILE VERSION

The Star Error

The website encountered an unexpected error. Please try again later.

Shape your Future



Start today

