

## New hope lifts Mainali household

BIKASH SANGRAULA Republica

KATHMANDU, July 23:

Seventeen years ago, Radha Mainali bade emotional farewell to her husband Govinda Prasad Mainali who flew to Japan promising to return soon after “seeing the world”.

The parting took place just three years after their mid-1991 marriage in Ilam district. The couple’s eldest daughter was little over a year old and the youngest daughter four-months-old back then.

“I personally didn’t want him to leave,” said Radha, 38, who moved from Ilam to Kathmandu with her daughters in 2003.

“We hadn’t spent enough time together to build a lot of good memories. And ours was a well-heeled family. No one needed to take up some back-breaking job in a foreign land for supporting the family,” she said.

Radha herself is from a relatively well-to-do Dahal family of Shantipur VDC, Ilam. Her husband, who is from Golakharka VDC of the district, also had holdings sufficient for a comfortable life.

But Govinda, a 27-year-old back then, was filled to the brim with curiosity about the outside world that an uneventful rural existence couldn’t settle. And his elder sister Urmila was working in Japan. Therefore for Govinda, leaving for Japan seemed the most natural thing to do.

For three years since Govinda landed in Tokyo in April 1994, things were looking just fine. Govinda worked as a waiter in Tokyo, corresponded with his family regularly, and also shared his income and experiences with his wife.

But the calm of the Mainali household was shattered in March 1997 when word arrived that Tokyo police had arrested Govinda. From that day, things turned from bad to worse in what seemed to Radha like a nightmare.

Govinda was first investigated for overstaying his visa, found guilty and served a suspended prison sentence. He was then charged for the murder of a 39-year-old Japanese woman, acquitted first, then found guilty upon appeal, and finally sentenced for life in prison.



## **Help from kind Japanese**

Radha, who couldn't study after the tenth grade as she was married at the age of 18, was hardly prepared to deal with this.

"I never doubted my husband's innocence. He was not that type of man," said Radha.

She was fortunate to get the support of kind Japanese citizens and non-resident Nepalis in Japan right since the time Govinda was charged for murder.

The kind people cobbled together a defense counsel for her husband while the case was fought in court. The Justice for Govinda-Innocence Advocacy Group set up mostly by Japanese citizens who continue to believe in Govinda's innocence piled pressure for a fair trial, and pointed at weaknesses in the investigation that led to the conviction.

The group has continued to support her even after the trial was over. It paid for Radha's so-far eight trips to Japan to see her husband who is now in a prison in Yokohama, and has continued to pay for the education of her kids.

"The advocacy group has done everything that my husband would have done for the family," she said, each of her words pregnant with gratitude.

The last time Radha saw Govinda, now 44, was in March this year when she made her eighth trip to Japan. She landed in Japan on March 11 when a devastating earthquake struck the country.

"I found him healthy and full of hope for some breakthrough in his favor. He told me not to worry and told me he would return home as he was innocent," she said.

## **Consoling daughters**

Perhaps the hardest thing for Radha was explaining things to her two daughters who don't have any memory of their father pampering them.

"They would come home from school weeping after someone in the class said something nasty about their father," said Radha. "As they grew up, I explained to them that their father was in prison, that he was innocent and a good man, and would return home."

The first time the two girls saw their father as grown-ups was in 2007 when Radha took them to Japan.

"It was only after seeing and talking to their father that they calmed down and came to believing that their father was not a monster," she said.

One of Radha's biggest regrets is that she doesn't have enough pictures of Govinda. And she has no picture of the two together.

"When the murder case was being fought at Japanese courts over a decade ago, many Japanese journalists arrived at our house in Ilam and took the photographs of the two of us promising to return them. None did. The pictures are gone," she said. "I only have

single pictures of Govinda, and they are very old pictures.”

During her meetings with Govinda in prison, Radha has never been allowed to take a camera along.

### **Hope after 14 years**

The Mainali household got a reason to cheer on Thursday when Radha received phone calls from the advocacy group in Japan and from a former chairman of Non-Resident Nepali Association Japan informing her about the emergence of new DNA evidence that suggests a third person’s involvement in the murder of the woman named Yasuko Watanabe, who was an employee of Tokyo Electric Co, and who moonlighted at night as a prostitute.

The DNA analysis showed that semen found inside the woman’s body was not Govinda’s, indicating that the woman might have had contact with another man at the time of the crime. During past investigations, Japanese authorities had conducted DNA tests of body fluid found in the apartment where the murder took place, but not of the body fluid left inside the woman’s body.

“With the emergence of this new evidence, there must be a way to set him free. I am sure he will return to Nepal in the near future,” she said, adding, “God has heard my prayers.”

Since 2005, Govinda has been appealing for a retrial.

After Thursday’s developments, Japanese media have run reports highlighting the need for a retrial.

“The question now is this: why hadn’t the DNA test been conducted during the murder investigation, and will the new discoveries affect the court’s decision on reopening the case?” said a report carried Friday by the online site of The Mainichi Daily News.

Similarly, a perspectives piece posted on the same news site said, “The results of the new DNA test point to the possibility that someone other than Mainali was at the murder scene, and have cast serious doubts over the confirmed ruling’s fact-finding. Therefore, Mainali should be retried.”

Radha is least interested in these gory details. “Things are looking up. The new evidence must have emerged for a reason,” said the theist with hope.

Republica, Published on 2011-07-23 00:00:01

クローズアップ2011（毎日新聞）

## 東電社員殺害、別人DNA 14年後の鑑定、なぜ

東京電力の女性社員殺害事件で無期懲役が確定したネパール国籍のゴビンダ・プラサド・マイナリ受刑者（44）の再審請求審は、被害女性の体内に残された精液のDNA型が別人のものと判明したことで、大きく動き出した。事件から14年が経過してから得られた鑑定結果。なぜ捜査段階ではDNA型鑑定は実施されなかったのか。鑑定結果は再審の「扉」を開く鍵となるのか。……

<http://mainichi.jp/select/jiken/news/20110722ddm003040116000c.html>

東電女性社員殺害：マイナリ受刑者が喜びの声

東電女性社員殺害：支援者ら「再審へ一歩」 検察も強気

東電女性社員殺害：遺留物に別人のDNA 再審の可能性

布川事件：再審無罪 無期確定から33年…検察主張退ける

忘れない：もう一つの足利事件、万弥ちゃん殺害

<事件の第一報>アパートの空き室に、女性の絞殺死体――渋谷（1997年3月）

<地裁判決>東電女性社員殺害 ネパール人被告が無罪に（2000年4月）

<高裁判決>被告に逆転有罪判決――東京高裁（2000年12月）

<最高裁判断>被告の無期懲役が確定（2003年11月）

<ニュースな言葉>東電女性社員殺害事件

毎日新聞 2011年7月22日 東京朝刊