



CHAUTARI QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

No. 12 | January–March 2026

DISCUSSIONS AND OTHER EVENTS

Martin Chautari seminar series are held on Sundays and Tuesdays at its own premises. Altogether 22 discussions were held from January 1 to March 31, 2026. On January 11, under the Research Seminar Series, Pratyoush Onta presented a research paper titled “Transitioning to a Research-also University: Tribhuvan University During Its First Three Decades.” This presentation was a preliminary attempt to think about the state of academic freedom at Tribhuvan University during the Panchayat Era (1960–1990).

Similarly, Devendra Uprety, presented a paper entitled “When the School Turned into a Public Forum: The Trajectory of the Short-lived Mahabir Institute (1936–1941)” on January 18, 2026. This paper is a part of MC’s ongoing school history research project. Both Onta and Uprety are MC researchers. On February 1, Bindu Sharma gave her presentation about women’s presence in Nepali literature. The other papers presented under the Research Seminar Series in the month of February were: “The Governance and Justice in Athar Magarat: Customary Taluk/Amal Practices” by Bam Kumari Budha Magar on February 15, and “Belonging, Memory and Migration: An Anthropological Study of the Burmeli Nepalis in Kathmandu and Rupandehi, Nepal” by Anurag Lamsal on February 22.



Bindu Sharma speaking at MC on February 1, 2026

As in the previous years, Chautari celebrated March as women’s month. During the month of March, altogether





Kailash Rai speaking at MC on March 22, 2026



Rita Sah and Yajaswi Rai speaking at MC on March 17, 2026

seven discussions were held. Women researchers and practitioners were the main speakers. On March 1, Sanjila Moktan, researcher at Martin Chautari, presented her paper on “Kanya Mandir School: Education, Patriarchal Society and Struggle for the Equality.” A panel discussion on the title “Teacher and Student Boundaries: Accountability and Reform” was held on March 10. The panel was moderated by Amina Singh, and the key speakers were Mira Mishra, Sandhya Gautam and Aastha Dahal. Similarly, on March 22, Kailash Rai, a member of MC, presented her research entitled, “Mukkumlung is Our Chotlung’: Protection of Indigenous Land and ‘No Cable Car’ Movement.”

Due to Nepal’s national election which was held on March 5, two discussions could not be held during this quarter.

PUBLICATIONS

Studies in Nepali History and Society (SINHAS), Volume 30, No. 2 (December 2025)

This issue of *SINHAS* includes two articles: “Gendered Statelessness and Prospects for Reform: Analyzing Barriers to Obtaining Nepali Citizenship Certificates” by Chihiro Kawaguchi and “When Men Fail: Emasculation, Vulnerability, and the Biomedical Gaze in Nepali Fertility Clinics” by Gaurav Lamichhane. It contains two commentaries: “Justice for Victims of ‘Revenge Porn’: Legal Gaps and Procedural Failures in Nepal” by Shishir Lamichhane and Aastha Dahal and “Nepal’s Economic Transformation Using Its Surplus Electricity” by Bikash Pandey. Pandey is an energy expert and one of the founders of Martin Chautari.

This *SINHAS* issue also contains the lecture text “Reframing Global Asias: Marginalities, Mobilities and Modernities – The Nepal Perspective” by Pitamber Sharma.

An earlier version of it was delivered as the keynote address in the AAS-in-Asia Conference in Kathmandu on May 31, 2025. Under the “Notes from the Archive” category, “What Lies Behind the Scenes: A Survey of Frederick Gaige’s Tarai Fieldwork Materials” written by Arjun Guneratne has been published. Gaige’s archival materials have arrived at the library of Social Science Baha in Kathmandu. The issue also contains a review essay by Uma Pradhan with the title “The Making of School Education in Nepal: From Nation-Building to Development, Inequalities, and Aspirations.” Finally, this issue of *SINHAS* contains four book reviews,

the first of which is a review of the book *Kathmandu: A Reader* by Rachana Upadhyaya. This volume was edited by Benjamin Linder and published by Chautari in 2025.

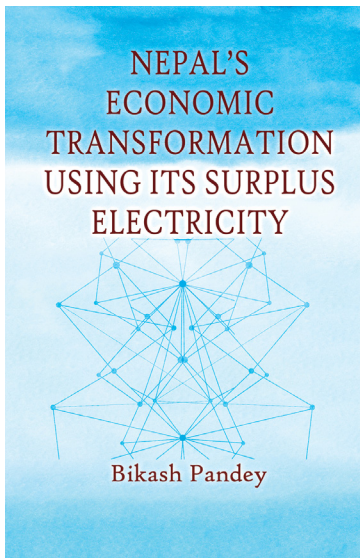
Further details about this issue of *SINHAS* are available at: <https://martinchautari.org.np/mc-publications/sinhas-volume-30-number-2>



Nepal’s Economic Transformation Using Its Surplus Electricity

Chautari has published a book *Nepal’s Economic Transformation Using Its Surplus Electricity*, authored Bikash Pandey, a MC Founder and the Director of Clean Energy and Circular Economy at Winrock International. Nepal has a surplus of electricity generation that is slated to grow each year for the coming decades. The Ministry of Energy Water Resources and Irrigation (MoEWRI) has developed an





ambitious 10-year roadmap showing a quadrupling of per capita domestic consumption of electricity while at the same time increasing exports to neighboring countries to five times the country's current total generation capacity. The Ministry of Forest and Environment (MoFE) has developed an alternative "long-term strategy" that calls for using the green

electricity, which is generated with renewable hydropower and solar energy, to reduce the country's net greenhouse gas emissions to zero over the next 20 years.

This book reviews these strategies and attempts to answer the questions: 1) which sectors of the economy are best placed to utilize the projected surplus power? And 2) how intensive electrification of these sectors can generate new livelihoods for Nepali youth to find jobs in their own country and increase per capita incomes so their families can afford to use the generated electricity to improve their quality of life?

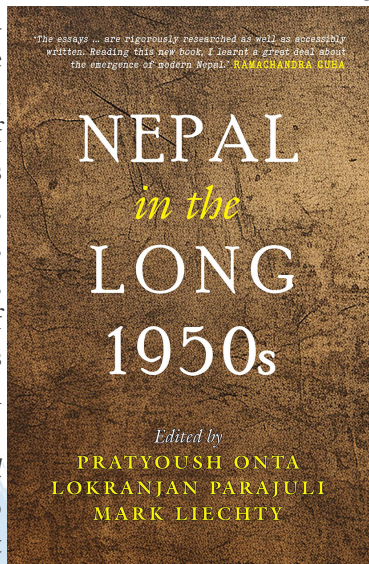
More information about the book can be found here: <https://martinchautari.org.np/public/mc-publications/nepal-s-economic-transformation-using-its-surplus-electricity>

Nepal in the Long 1950s

Martin Chautari had published the book *Nepal in the Long 1950s*, edited by Pratyoush Onta, Lokranjan Parajuli and Mark Liechty, in October 2024. Recently, the book has been reprinted.

The events that took place in Nepal in the 1950s are part of a tectonic transition that had been set in motion long before, and which continued to reverberate long after the actual decade. Foreshadowed in the rise of anti-colonial movements and new forms of capitalism, the post-World War II era, from the 1940s to 1960s, saw the restructuring of global inter-state relations and new forms of global capitalism.

The ten chapters in *Nepal in the Long 1950s* aim to situate the events of that



turbulent decade within larger frames both in terms of time—the complex historical processes that led to the transitions of the 1950s and continued thereafter—and space—the complex regional and global contexts in which events in Nepal took place. Together they offer new perspectives on mid-twentieth century Nepal and broaden the scope of historical study into more social and cultural dimensions.

The book has been widely reviewed and discussed by various scholars and intellectuals in several platforms. Further details about the book along with those reviews and discussions are available at: <https://martinchautari.org.np/public/mc-publications/nepal-in-the-long-1950s-1>

SOME EXCERPTS FROM THE REVIEWS OF THE BOOK

"Considering the pivotal nature of the 1950s in Nepal's modern history, it is surprising that nothing like this edited volume previously existed. It is a readable, lively, and academically engaging book that explores the democratic experiment from its own perspective, rather than simply as a fruitless interlude preceding the Panchayat era. ... The volume serves to revitalize discussions on twentieth-century Nepali history and its global connections, and it is likely—and indeed hoped—that some of the authors and editors, as well as emerging scholars in the field, will continue to push this work forward."

- Catherine Warner, *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*

"The essays use a wide range of primary sources: newspapers, archives, and government documents, as well as interviews. They are rigorously researched as well as accessibly written. Reading this new book, I learnt a great deal about the emergence of modern Nepal."

- Ramachandra Guha, *The Telegraph*

CAPACITY BUILDING

Energy Policy Dialogue Series

Martin Chautari has been jointly organizing energy discussions in collaboration with Urja Khabar for the past two years. Three discussions were held under this series between January and March 2026.

On January 27, Arjun Kumar Gautam, former Chief Officer, Hydroelectricity Investment and Development Company Limited gave a presentation on "Construction of Large-scale Projects: Internal Financial Capacity and





Arjun Kumar Gautam speaking at the Energy Policy Discussion on January 27, 2026.

Possible Financial Frameworks.” Saroj Koirala, Consultant related to energy market and regulation, spoke about “Open Access to the Electricity System and the Opportunity for Nepal’s Private Sector” on February 24.

Similarly, on March 31, Puja Sharma, National Director of Practical Action Nepal, gave a presentation on “Clean Energy for All in Nepal Initiative.” Each of the above discussions was well attended by participants interested and involved in Nepal’s energy sector.

TESTIMONIES ABOUT THE IMPACT OF CHAUTARI’S WORK

Making Academia Accessible to Young People

When I first learnt of Martin Chautari, it had felt like an intimidating institution, a space for people who were older and decidedly much smarter than me. It existed in my peripheral vision, conducting talks, publishing articles and books, holding events I wasn’t brave enough to express interest in yet. It wasn’t until I was an undergraduate at KU studying media that I began actively looking for well-stocked libraries I could spend hours in without being disturbed. The Chautari library was everything I needed it to be: reliable, helpful, and accessible, with an extensive archive of Nepali newspapers dating back to the 1980s which I needed for my university project. The librarian was patient with me as I stumbled through my research, and I found myself looking forward to going to the library. Eventually, I started seeking out the



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library even when I didn’t have an assignment due. I started looking up books on the Chautari library online database just to browse the shelf and find interesting material. Not even my university library had an online database, so the fact that I could access the Chautari catalogue (which also is a lot more diverse than my university shelves were) from my laptop at home was quite revolutionary for me.

That it was welcoming of me and my friends as we were stumbling into research was a huge factor for us, given how inaccessible Nepali academia felt with its demographic of older, skeptical men. Given how intimidating our classrooms were, how un-encouraging, it was incredible for us to attend a Chautari talk and see that a crowd of researchers could look as diverse as an evening market. That asking questions would not result in a scolding about our stupidity, but a spirited discussion. The more curious I became, the more Martin Chautari opened itself up with engaging talks on topics I hadn’t thought of, friendly mentors making their expertise accessible, and a welcoming space with the resources to teach me what questions I needed to ask and what hypotheses were worth pursuing.

When my friends and I had ideas and observations of our own, Chautari gave us the space to expand on them. I remember sitting with my friends and some new people we met after the release of the book *Kathmandu: A Reader* (2025) on the grass talking for hours. That conversation was where the Kathmandu branch of *Women Walk at Midnight* was born, which has now been featured on eShe and *The Kathmandu Post*.

From a formal institution for “important” people, Martin Chautari quickly became Marty C for my friends and I, a testament of its access and our comfort there. From panels on school education to the health of legacy media houses in the digital era, an established institution like Chautari investing in my ideas meant I had access to people from various industries doing notable work in their fields, and to people who would want to further the conversations started during the panels. On a more personal note, my first seminar on the brief history of history education in Nepali secondary schools was born of a journalism assignment that I was encouraged to expand on. Had it not been for that session and the discussion that followed, I would not have had the courage to pursue a history masters.

Even now, in my current MA program with LSE and NUS, I find myself relying on Martin Chautari for resources on Nepali research, for sources on Nepal, from Nepal. I rely heavily on the experts I’ve managed to connect with through Chautari, and double back on the instincts I’ve sharpened from the discussions I’ve hosted and participated in. I couldn’t imagine getting more of a leg up in my journey to be a history student, and I can’t emphasize just how

important research institutes like Martin Chautari are to the growth of Nepali academia. I know it will continue being a reliable and instrumental part of my studies and subsequent academic career, and I can't wait to see Chautari grow further.

A Place to Think



Sanjay Sharma
Post-doctoral Researcher
Aarhus University, Denmark

As I begin writing this, I realize that Martin Chautari has been an important institution in my academic growth since my undergraduate days. I first attended one of MC's discussions in 2008 as an undergraduate student. I vaguely remember that someone was speaking about Marx and Maoism in Nepal.

Since then, I have attended dozens of MC's weekly discussions and conferences on research, history, politics, and society. These discussions have been immensely helpful in shaping my understanding of Nepali society.

Over the years, I have also participated in several reading and writing seminars at Martin Chautari that have significantly shaped my thinking and writing. One reading seminar on Visual Anthropology in particular helped me write my first single-authored academic article, which was later published in a journal of the same name. That experience opened up new avenues for me to read more widely and engage in serious academic writing.

Beyond the conferences, seminars, and discussions, Martin Chautari's resources have also been invaluable. I frequently browse through its online library catalogue, often discovering hidden gems. From using the physical library as a workspace during my student years to later being hosted as a guest researcher, Martin Chautari and its staff have always been welcoming and supportive.

During my PhD journey as well, conversations with researchers and staff at Martin Chautari helped me think through many aspects of my work, often through thought-provoking questions and insightful, research-based inputs. My doctoral research was deeply shaped by the writings of scholars affiliated with Martin Chautari, many of whom have contributed to and beyond *Studies in Nepali History and Society (SINHAS)*. Writing and publishing for *SINHAS* and *Samaj Adhyan* has also been a valuable learning experience that helped me grow as a researcher.

After completing my PhD, I had the privilege of facilitating two reading seminars at Martin Chautari, one on Research Methodology and another on Decolonial Thought. Both seminars saw an overwhelming and diverse participation from individuals across Nepali academic and

non-academic circles. These experiences further reinforced for me the important role that Martin Chautari plays in fostering intellectual exchange and critical debate.

Through these many pathways, Martin Chautari has not only supported individual scholars like me but has also helped cultivate an academic culture in Nepal. This is particularly important in a context where platforms for the social sciences are limited and often vulnerable due to resource constraints. Martin Chautari continues to provide scholars with a much-needed space to think, discuss, and engage with ideas that connect Nepal to broader intellectual conversations.

Now, as a post-doctoral researcher at Aarhus University in Denmark, I remain deeply grateful for the individual and institutional support I received from Martin Chautari throughout my academic journey.

MC Shares Knowledge as Public Good

When I first heard about Martin Chautari (MC), I was impressed by the name. I learned that the name was chosen to honor the memory of Martin Hoftun, founder member of the informal discussion group (that later became MC) who tragically lost his life in an airplane accident in 1992.

"Chautari" in Nepali means a resting stop, a platform built around big trees (such as a *pipal* tree) intended to provide shade to travelers. It also serves as a place for sitting and chatting after a day of work, mostly in rural areas of Nepal. In essence, it is an informal space for social discussions and dialogues. The aptness of its name is evident in the work done by MC over the years, and what it represents to people who access its multidimensional space. It has provided a democratic space and platform for students, researchers, scholars, development practitioners and those interested in Nepali polity and society.

The cultural resources that MC has provided through its thematic discussion series, seminars, research, research training, publications and a library open to the public may be viewed as a form of cultural capital which has benefited many. MC has played a vital role in encouraging young scholars through its fellowship program and mentorship. It has provided opportunities for those who come to MC to connect, exchange ideas and forge important ties. Such support has enabled scholars and researchers to further their research and academic careers.

My research journey relating to social inequalities as a sociologist led me to the MC library. The access to the



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Sociologist and Independent
Researcher, Nepal



material available, especially Nepali publications, was instrumental to my own research on topics such as the gendered nature of poverty, Dalit identity, resistance and social movement in Nepal. Since there was very little written in English on the topic by Nepali authors, and those who worked in the area, I accessed Nepali writings which was very critical for my analysis.

Although access to books, journal articles and other materials are available online, it is still difficult to find Nepali publications online. MC's publication program is noteworthy in that 70 percent of its publications are in the Nepali language contributing to wider outreach in Nepal and for Nepali speaking population abroad. Research publications on Nepal in the English language are easily available through many theses and dissertations and edited volumes that come out of research of Nepali and international scholars. However, finding good quality research publications in the Nepali language is not easy. MC has attempted to fill this gap and in the process is making significant contribution to the Nepali social science scene.

My experience of publishing with the journal *Studies in Nepali History and Society (SINHAS)* has been a positive one. The rigorous peer review process, and a highly skilled and meticulous editorial board allow for a peer reviewed journal that meets rigorous standards. *SINHAS* has provided a space for those working on Nepal to publish their work.

I particularly enjoyed reviewing a book published by MC. The book is *Samantako Relay Daud* (2021; translated title *Relay Race for Equality*). This book is edited by Savitri Gautam, Kailash Rai and Pratyoush Onta. The fact that it is published in Nepali makes it even more valuable since there are not many books on the women's movement(s) in the Nepali language. This book is a must read for social scientists, gender activists and journalists. It documents the experience of women intellectuals, activists, and leaders and their contribution to the women's movement through their areas of work-related advocacy in the past 45 years. It also gives an overview of the women's movements in Nepal through an intersectional lens. Broadly, this book tries to counter androcentric knowledge production by documenting "her history" and "her stories" through firsthand interviews, which are refreshing to read.

Last but not the least, my best wishes for MC to continue its significant work of knowledge production and dissemination. MC has shown how a "public good" such as knowledge can be shared freely. In an era when traditional learning centers with physical space and in-person contact are shrinking in lieu of virtual classrooms and Artificial Intelligence, organizations like Martin Chautari hold more relevance than ever.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Applications Requested for a Reading Seminar on a Global History of Mountaineering and the Himalaya with Dr. Gaurav C. Garg

Organized by Martin Chautari

Application deadline: May 5, 2026

Seminar dates: From May 18 to June 4, 2026
(Mondays and Thursdays)

Time: 5:00–6:30 pm

Venue: Martin Chautari Seminar Hall,
Thapathali, Kathmandu.

Course Fee: NRs. 4,000

For further details: <https://martinchautari.org.np/events/applications-requested-for-a-reading-seminar-on-a-global-history-of-mountaineering-and-the-himalaya-with-dr-gaurav-c-garg>

Call for Papers/Panels:

Chautari Annual Conference – 2026

Martin Chautari has announced a call for abstracts of research papers/panels for its "Chautari Annual Conference, 2026." This in-person conference will be held in Kathmandu on November 25–27, 2026. The abstracts can be in English or Nepali and should be between 400 and 500 words in length. The important dates of the call are:

Abstract submission deadline: May 31, 2026

Announcement of accepted abstracts: June 30, 2026

Deadline for the submission of full papers (length 4000-5000 words): September 30, 2026

Announcement of accepted papers: October 15, 2026

Conference dates: November 25-27, 2026

For further details: <https://martinchautari.org.np/events/chautari-annual-conference-2026>



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