

# **Annual Report of Martin Chautari - 2061/62 (2004/05)**

Submitted to Annual General Meeting of MC

The following are the activities undertaken by Martin Chautari in 2004/05.

## **1. Chautari Discussion Series**

Martin Chautari organizes discussions three days a week - political discussions on Sunday, general discussions on Tuesday and media discussions on Thursday. The Youth Forum, in association with Martin Chautari, organizes a discussion on youths on every Friday. Political discussion on Sundays was cancelled for three weeks following the February 1, 2005 royal take over of political power and the consequent ban on public discussion. Following this, the Sunday discussion was changed into a 'research' discussion. This year, a total of 150 discussions were organized. The Youth Forum organized 45 discussions in collaboration with Martin Chautari.

Political/research discussion series: Prior to February 1, 2005, this discussion was concentrated on political issues. Since then, it has been converted into research discussions with periodic political subjects included. There were 24 discussions on political topics and 21 discussions on research topics. Because of the Bandhas and other holidays, discussions could not be held on 6 Sundays (topics of discussions and name of the speakers are given in Appendix 1).

Mangalbaarey (Tuesday) discussion series: This is the oldest discussion series in Martin Chautari. The first Tuesday of the English Month is exclusively for topics related to 'gender'. There were 51 discussions held under this series in this year. Two discussions were cancelled because of Bandhs (closed) and other reasons. Apart from the regular discussions on Tuesdays, 8 other discussions were held in other days (topics of discussions and name of the speakers are given in Appendix 2).

Media discussion series: This series continued this year as well. Discussions on media and film screenings are held on alternate Thursdays. There were 26 'media discussions' and 20 film screenings as 'film @ chautari' program. Because of the Bandhs, 7 programs were not held (topics of discussions and name of the speakers are given in Appendix 3).

Yuva (youth) discussion series: The Youth Forum has been organizing this series for four years. Initially, Martin Chautari made available only the venue. Since 2059 (2003), the Youth Forum and Martin Chautari collaborate in organizing this discussion. This year 45 such discussions were held; 7 could not be held.

## **2. Environmental Justice Program**

With the support from the Ford Foundation, Delhi, this 'environmental justice' program was started from 2001/02. The program is co-ordinated by Dr Jagannath Adhikari. Mr Sharad Ghimire is the Research Associate. Because of some technical reasons at Ford Foundation, this support was not available last year, but has now continued from this year onwards and is available for three years. Based on the research work done in previous projects, this new support came primarily for action-related research and project work to improve the livelihood of the marginal communities of the Pokhara / Kaski region. For this, Martin Chautari collaborated with Federation of Community Forestry Users Groups (FECOFUN), Kaski. This year, emphasis was given to action-related works. This will make undertaking research and advocacy activities easier in the coming years. The programs launched there were selected with the help of target groups (community forestry users groups). Under this program, social mobilization work was done by FECOFUN in 12 Village Development Communities (VDCs). Then groups of Dalits, women, and poor people were formed. They were supported with livelihood improvement activities. Along with this work, information was collected on indigenous knowledge on biodiversity. This information will be used to write papers for inclusion on a book on 'indigenous knowledge on biodiversity in Nepal', which is to be published by Martin Chautari. But because of the new work to be done on a book on 'food security' (see below for details), not much work was done on this in this year. However, the book writing work will be continued next year, along with more research on environmental justice.

## **3. Research and publication on food security**

Martin Chautari organized research on 'corporate control on food chain and food security' with the help from ACTIONAID Nepal. This research was conducted with various NGOs working in eight districts of the country. These NGOs conducted the field work in their command areas, but the technical support for developing methodology and training was provided by Martin Chautari. The information collected was tabulated and analyzed by Martin Chautari. The book is completed and currently undergoing editing. It will soon be published as one of the Chautari book series.

#### **4. Media research and analysis**

Last year, a book 'Half a century of journalism in Morang' was prepared for publication, and was published this year. The printing cost of the book was obtained from Buddha Air Pvt. Ltd. Apart from this; there was a proposal to do research on the radio in Nepal. As a result, a book on 'the social history of Radio Nepal' (editors Pratyoush Onta, Sekhar Parajuli, Devraj Humagain, Krishna Adhikari and Komal Bhatta) was published. In this book, there are: 5 articles related to institutional aspects; 13 articles are on production of programs and 5 articles on other social issues related to Radio Nepal. The printing cost of the book was provided by DANIDA. Similarly, a book on 'Growing up with the Radio' (editors - Sekhar Parajuli and Pratyoush Onta) was published as Chautari Book Series 25. There are 64 articles related to memories of listening to the radio while growing up by different generations of Nepalis. This book covers about 70 years of radio listening tradition in Nepal.

With the support from DANIDA, research on 'FM news and dialogue' continued this year. Under this project, various issues related to news and program production in FM radio stations in Kathmandu and Pokhara were covered. A book based on this research will be published by the end of October next year. In this year, Devraj Humagain conducted a short research on 'book publication on Nepali media'. An article based on this research will be published on the first issue of a journal 'Rupantaran (Transformation): Social Studies'. This journal is published by Martin Chautari in collaboration with four other NGOs.

#### **5. Research on Poverty and Health**

Last year, Martin Chautari proposed to study social discrimination and its relation with poverty and health insecurity. Under that proposal Martin Chautari published a book 'Debates on poverty in Nepal', as Chautari Book Series 21. The book was edited by Bhaskar Gautam, Jagannath Adhikari and Purna Bansnet. This is a collection of edited versions of already published and new articles. In this book, emphasis was given to description of qualitative aspects of poverty, rather than quantitative analysis. This book made some ripples in the media and has also been in high demand. Initially, a question was raised on the copy rights issues of some of the published articles, which was reprinted in the book. But these issues were dealt in a formal manner and solved by the time the second edition of the book was reprinted. The question of copy rights was taken seriously and was also discussed in one of the Mangalbare discussions at Chautari. Similarly the book on 'health, society and politics' was also published a Chautari Book Series 24. Bhaskar Gautam and Anil Bhattarai edited the book. This is a collection of published articles. This book helps us to understand

that the analytical writing on health policy, plans, and problems has just started in Nepali society. The support from Norwegian Church Aid was utilized for the publication of these books. Under the same support, Martin Chauatri has planned to publish a book on 'urbanization in Nepal'.

## **6. The Publication of books**

This year Martin Chautari will be adding six new books to its Chautari Book Series. These new book published this year are: Half a Century of Journalism in Morang (Book Series 20), Debate on Poverty in Nepal (.. 21), Social History of Radio Nepal (23), Health, Society and Politics (24), and Growing with Poverty (25). Chautari Book Series 22 'Political Settlement through Dialogue: Experiences from Nepal, Sri Lanka and South Africa was edited by Anil Bhattarai and published in collaboration with Nepal South Asia Center and other organizations. A conference was organized in Kathmandu on that topic and the papers submitted there were published in the form of that book. Martin Chauatri has no financial investment in the book.

Apart from the above books, Martin Chautari along with other organizations (Common Campaign for Peace, Nepal South Asia Center, Advocacy Forum and Community Development Organization) has published a bi-annual journal called 'Rupantaran: Samaj Adhyayan (Transformation: Social Studies). The first issued published this year is a special issue on conflict.

The above mentioned books and journal were also reviewed in the newspapers and journals. These reviews have been helping in their advertising of these publications. This year, attention was also given to the marketing of the books. Harsha Marharjan has been given responsibility to take books up to the bookshops and collect the sales money. Similarly, for the promotion of books and its marketing, Martin Chautari has taken the initiative to organize a book fair by non-commercial publications in collaboration with other NGOs and interested parties.

## **7. Other activities**

In addition to regular works and research, Martin Chautari has also been involved in other activities. The study on cinema, proposed some time ago, has continued this year, although at a slow speed. Based on this study, Anubhav Ajit has prepared an article on 'the history of Nepali films'. Srijana

Subba has prepared a long article on 'participation of women in Nepali academia'. These articles are being written and edited with the aim of publication.

Martin Chautari also helped other organizations to implement their innovative activities. On June 30, 2004, it collaborated with Nepal South Asia Center and Common Campaign for Peace in organizing the conference: 'political negotiations: experiences from Nepal, Sri Lanka and South America'. Later Anil Bhattarai edited the papers presented here and the proceeding was published as 'Chautari Book Series 22'.

Similarly, on 06 and 07 November, 2004, Martin Chautari collaborated with 17 other organizations including Nepal South Asia Center and Common Campaign for Peace in organizing a huge 'people's rally' in which there were parallel discussions in 26 topics.

The 'index' section of the book 'social science thinking in Nepal' published by Social Science Baha was prepared by Martin Chauatri. Similarly, Martin Chautari has also conducted an evaluative study of 'conflict' component of PANOS South Asia. From these two small assignments, Martin Chautari gained some new experiences and funds.

Marttin Chautari and Advocacy Forum met several times to discuss and shape the study on human rights violations, disappearances and their legal aspects. Some concrete plans were also made and work was progressing. But the event on February 1, 2005 virtually stopped this work. Some initiatives have been started as of late.

## **8. Administrative Activities**

This year, the followings are the decisions taken by executive committee on administrative matters:

The General Assembly was held on 26 July, 2004. The Assembly gave emphasis on the fact that Martin Chautari should undertake activities by making its aims and objectives clear. Similarly, it suggested that Martin Chautari make by-laws or regulations for administrative matters.

As suggested by the General Assembly, a 'co-ordination' team was constituted on the same day, consisting of Sizu Upadhaya, Basanta Ranjitkar, Bimal Aryal, and Raju Palanchoki. The meeting of

this committee could not take place. But the executive committee met on 16 June, 2005 to give final shape to the by-laws prepared from decisions taken in various meetings. This by-laws was presented in the General Assembly for discussion and approval.

Even though the above committee could not meet, the executive committee was able to develop a framework on goals and objectives. First, the priority was placed on reviewing the activities done by the Martin Chautari. Accordingly, people outside the Martin Chautari were requested to review the activities under 'environmental justice', 'media research', and 'book publication'. The review of discussions was done, as in the past, by the members of the Chautari itself.

Once the review reports were received, these reports were given along with reports on Chautari's institutional development to external evaluators to get feedback on the work according to Chautari's stated goals and objectives. Basanta Thapa, Kedar Sharma, Raghu Mainali, Aruna Upreti, Rita Thapa, Basanta Ranjitkar, Jasmine Rajbhandari, and Rabin Sitaula were given this task. On 19 June, 2005 they gave their response and reactions. Later on two individuals also added comments on Chautari's discussion activities. Those responses are attached here for the perusal (Annex 4).

On 23 July 2005, the executive committee asked for application for new members. On the basis of evaluation by executive committee, three new members were added from among the applicants (Annex 5).

On October 2004, accountant Mrs. Bina Sharma left Chautari for a bank job. After a search for a replacement, the executive committee appointed Mr. Bivek Shah as the new accountant.

In the last General Assembly, the problem of financial support to continue research and publication was emphasized. The executive committee also thinks that it should be discussed in some details within Chautari and with other well-wishers. The executive committee feels that enough has not been on this issue.

## **9. Executive Committee**

The first General Assembly held on 27 July, 2003 had decided the executive committee, which is as

follows:

Chairperson: Jagannath Adhikari

Vice-Chairperson: Manjushree Thapa

Secretary: Seira Tamang

Treasurer: Bhaskar Gautam

Members: Bikas Pandey, Pratyoush Onta, Sekhar Parajuli

According to the constitution, in the first year, three members will leave the post except the chairperson. The latest meeting of executive committee had decided that Manjushree Thapa, Pratyoush Onta and Bhaskar Gautam will not be in the next executive committee.

## **Annexes**

### **Annex 1:**

Political/Research discussion series - list of speakers and topics.

### **Annex 2:**

Manglebare (Tuesday) discussion series - list of speakers and topics.

### **Annex 3:**

Media discussion series - list of speakers and topics.

### **Annex 4:**

A review was done on different activities of Martin Chautari - discussion, book publication, environmental justice, media research by Anubhav Ajit, Bela Mallik, Chiranjivi Bhattarai, and Mohan Mainali, respectively. The review reports given by them were again given to various experts to assess the Chautari's activities based on these review reports. A discussion was organized on 23 June 2005 at Chautari to solicit their suggestions. The suggestions given by them on Chautari's regular programs and on publications are given here. They did not give much feedback on other aspects as they were more technical in nature.

## **On Discussion**

Discussions will be more fruitful if it is linked on Chautari's 3-4 years' work experience.

There should be digital recording of the discussion.

There is no expansion in the group of people who participate in discussion.

It should be seriously thought on the expansion of discussion - i.e., who would be new speakers, participants, and how to solve low women's participation and less number of young speakers.

Take the discussion to Radio also.

Take the discussion to Internet.

It would be better to transcribe the discussion and make it available on the web.

Discourage the practice of harassing the speakers by asking several/irrelevant questions.

## **On Publications**

The topics of research and publication should be focused on contemporary and immediate issues.

Fix the area in which Chautari should publish books. What kind of book Chautari should publish should be known before hand

Publication also involves finance management. Therefore, it should be done from a separate administrative section.

Books on policy making should also be published.

Give the opportunity for internship to young people in the publication of books.

Responses of Pratyoush Onta and Seira Tamang on the suggestions given above

## **On discussion activity**

We do not have 3-5 years policy. But we have examples of discussions based on the topics of our research interest. For example, when we were doing research on FM Radio, we had many discussions on this topic. Even the institutional set-up of research institutes and their physical resources were discussed, which was also our interest. Similarly, discussions on political topics on Sundays were also organized because of our interest on contemporary political situation. Despite this, long-term plan would ensure to fix topics based on our interest. We can revive the discussion on 'development', because in the recent months we are not able to organize discussions on this topic. We can find the interest of the participants by modifying the present discussion program paper by keeping a section where they can write the topic and speaker name. They can return back the paper in full or the part of it which has that information. We can also keep a box in the discussion room where they can put in these request forms.



From past studies, it is seen that there is expansion in the participants. But we must continue to attract new audience. We also have to work hard to attract new speakers. We can do this by developing a list of speakers and invite speakers from this list. The other method is to advertise in higher secondary and BA colleges. We can also invite speakers from these places. We now depend on emails. We can also try out old method of inviting people by distributing the program sheet.

I (Pratyoush) am not in favor for taking the discussion on radio. But we can develop relationships with Radio persons and request them to study Chautari's discussions. If members of the Chautari are interested, they can organize discussions on radio like 'books in radio program'.

I am not convinced with taking the discussion on web. Like in the discussions in academia, discussions at Chautari are for comments and suggestions. More over, discussions at Chautari will become public in any way. Sometimes, journalists ask on what was the discussion and what was discussed through phone for making news. We are not going to serve them by writing what is discussed here.

It is appropriate to have digital recording, which has already been done. We record through MD recording. But it is debatable as to how this recording should be utilized. We can discuss about how to manage this recording.

Sometimes we have asked the speakers some hard questions, which is not bad. In Nepal, we do not have public discussions, and people are not accustomed to this type of questioning. Accordingly they see it as a bit extra questioning. This would help in developing a discussion culture. But we have to be careful that irrelevant questions.

The work of organizing the discussion has to be co-ordinated by all members through cooperation. For this executive committee can assign a person as co-ordinator and he/she fix the discussions through co-ordination with other members. This responsibility can be rotated.

### **On Publication**

Suggestions are good. There should a separate mechanism to look after publication. If this is institutionalized, we can ask persons of new generation to have internship on publication. This will help us to manage funds and develop human resources.

Books related policy making should be published if it is related to the Chautari's activities. Books from outside the Chautari's activity should be published if there is market.

Chautari's areas of publication are:

- 1) research books
- 2) reference books
- 3) output of Chautari's research
- 4) single author book on the topic of interest to Chautari.

At the initial stage, these areas are enough. On the question of how books should be published, Chautari should publish books that are the products of its member's activities. It would be better if the writer can arrange the funds. But Chautari can also look for it. There is also a need to bring diversity in item 2, 3 and 4 listed above. In the coming two years, books related to 3 and 4 should be given priority. In future, reference books will also be important.

Improvement in the quality of subject matter and publication is required. For this persons with skills and capacity for this work needs to be added in Chautari.

Now Chautari should develop written and clear policy and strategy on the above two tasks.

#### **Annex 5:**

New Members of Chautari:

Nisan Rai  
Hotraj Lamsal  
Devraj Humagain