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Martin Chautari Annual Report for the Year 2005/06

Summary

This annual report covers the period between 17 July 2005 to 16 July 2006. Some works undertaken in July 2006 have also been included.

1. Chautari Discussion Series

In Chautari's discussion series, discussions on politics and research are held every Sunday, discussions on the media are held every Thursday and various issues are discussed every Tuesday. From 21 December 2005, discussions were held on every alternate Wednesday on various environmental issues. These discussions were started by Chautari in collaboration with a group of students studying environmental science.

From the mid of April 2005 to the May 2005, the discussion series could not be held due to the then various political events including strikes and curfews, and also due to the fact that Chautari's new discussion hall was being constructed. In this year, a total of 141 discussions were held. Apart from this, the youth series conducted by Youth Initiative in collaboration with Chautari continued to be held every Friday and from the end of this fiscal year, an academically focused group has begun to hold a discussion series every Saturday called 'Shastraartha'.

In our Sunday political and research series, a total of 42 discussions were held this fiscal year. 11 discussions could not be held due to strikes and other holidays.

In our Mangalbarrey (Tuesday) discussions, a total of 42 discussions were held. 9 discussions had to be cancelled due to strikes, but 4 additional discussions were held on different days.

In our Media discussion series, 19 discussions took place according to our fortnightly schedule. Our regular 'Film @ Chautari' series continued to take place in the alternate weeks and a total of 23 films were shown. In all, 42 events were held with 10 occasions in which no event took place.

In our Environmental series, a total of 11 discussions were held. Initially conceptualized by Chautari (under the leadership of Sharad Ghimire) and students of Environmental Science as taking place fortnightly and later to be made weekly, due to the inactivity of the students, this series has now stopped. 11 of the discussions to be held under this series could not take place.

In the Youth Discussion Series, a total of 39 discussions took place, with 13 cancelled due to various reasons. This series started four years ago with Chautari merely providing the discussion space. Since December 2002, Chautari now collaborates with Youth Initiative in the holding of these discussions.

2. Environmental Justice Program

The Environmental Justice Program at Chautari was started in 2001/02 with the help of the Ford Foundation. The main aim of the program is to make the concept of 'environmental justice' wider by studying and researching the obstacles in increasing the access and control of those concerned with natural resources and clean environment. Kaski district forms the study district of this program, and in collaboration with the Kaski district forest users group federation, the program undertook to improve the livelihoods of poverty line groups in various villages. Programs undertaken this year include 1) follow-ups, interactions, additional technical support and help in securing market access for products. 2) economic support to the poorest of the poor in the form of chicken, goat and bee rearing/keeping activities, briquette making and formation of committees between such groups and 3) various discussion series including a session at the 'Future Nepal: Citizens Initiative' aimed at drawing youth's interest in studying and researching environmental justice issues.

3. Media Research Program

The Media Research Program this year centered on FM radio news and discussions. This resulted in the publication of the 26th book in the Chautari Book series - 'Radio Journalism: FM Radio News and Discussions' - editors - Pratyoush Onta, Shekhar Parajulee, Devraj Humagai, Komal Bhatta and Krishna Adhikari. This was supported with the funds from Danida/HUGOU.

Also with the help of Danida/HUGOU, steps were taken to establish a media documentation centre, and much of the activities of the media team centered on accumulating books, articles, unpublished reports, journals etc for the library. Until mid September 2006, more than 1200 books, 500 articles written in Nepal and outside, around 150 media related seminar papers and various other materials were gathered. While the library has concentrated on media related material, resources related to research and programs relevant to other past and current Chautari interests has also been accumulated.

Under this program, an annual journal titled 'Media Study' is also planned. This year has seen authors requested for articles and editing and commenting on initial drafts undertaken. Two draft manuscripts to be published under this series - women and television and FM radio under the king's rule - have received comments and are undergoing editorial assistance.

Other activities undertaken include: a half day interaction on Nepali media publication; discussion on journalism outside Kathmandu led by a Butwal journalist; 5 Chatauri media fellowships given to BA students to undertaken research and the official opening of the Media Documentation centre on 20 July 2006.

4. Human Security and Politics Program

The Human Security and Politics Program at Chautari has just started. Since the last 5 months of 2003 and until the end of 2004, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) has provided funds to research poverty related issues. With this help, Chautari has published a book on poverty and a book on health. It is this initiative that Chautari has transformed into a program on human security and politics which NCA has promised to help fund from 2005 to the end of 2007.

A book on urban poverty initially targeted for publication on January 13 2006 was delayed as was an edited volume on the conflict. Reasons for the delay lay in the fact that people associated with these publications were involved full time in the movement to restore democracy and peace following the king's takeover on February 1, 2005. New publication dates for the urban poverty book is 17 October 2006 and for the conflict book November 2006.

This fiscal year has also seen work undertaken to prepare two other books for publication. One is authored by Jagannath Adhikar on livelihood issues during conflict which is being copy edited and targeted to be published by November 2006. The other book is on foreign aid and is co-edited by Tatsuro Fujikura and Shizu Upadhyaya. Initial work on this book has been started and along with Chautari's Bhaskar Gautam and Seira Tamang, new Chautari researcher, Jiwan Subedi, is also contributing to this edited volume.

Initial work has also been started on a reader on democracy to be co-edited by Bhaskar Gautam and Seira Tamang. This reader will be in Nepali and will contain translated and other articles relevant for issues for democracy in Nepal.

An 'Alternative Books Fair' was organized from 15 November 2005 to 20 November 2005 in collaboration with 5 non commercial book publishers. This event was held under the human security and politics program.

5. Book Publication Works

Under the Martin Chautari Book Series, one book - the above mentioned 'Radio Journalism: FM Radio News and Discussion' was published. Other books that could not be published but for which work has been undertaken, are forecast to be published in the current fiscal year.

Apart from this, the second issue of the journal 'Rupantaran' - co-produced with the 4 other organizations - has become published. The third issue is in the process of becoming published.

6. Future Nepal: Citizens' Initiative 2

Along with many other organizations, Martin Chautari co-organized the second of the 'Future Nepal: Citizen's Initiative' conference on the 7 and 8 November 2006. The conference was organized on the premise that citizens had to discuss such central issues as the constituent assembly, federalism and inclusiveness in the conceptualizing of a new democratic, republic Nepal. Paper presenters, discussants and participants were drawn from all over Nepal.

7. Administrative Works

Administrative works included in the past year are as follows:

The formation of a new board following the Annual General Assembly (AGM) held on 4 September 2005.

Chairperson: Jagannath Adhikari

General Secretary: Seira Tamang

Treasurer: Shizu Upadhaya

Member: Bikash Pandey, Purna Basnet, Sarad Ghimire, Shekar Parajulee

1. According to AGM passed 'Martin Chautari staff rules' rules on staff holiday, provident funds and other benefits were formed and all staff were put on contracts with clearly specified Terms of References.
2. An agreement was made between Martin Chautari and the Centre of Social Research and Development to co-produce the bi-annual journal 'Studies in Nepali History and Society'(SINHAS).
3. In order to provide space for the new Media Documentation Centre, Martin Chautari was forced to move to new and larger premises. A new meeting hall at the new site had to be constructed at Chautari's expense.
4. On 8 September 2006, applications for new members were made available. As a result, Martin Chautari has two members - Dharma Swarnakar and Madhusudan Subedi
5. A notice for a new receptionist for Chautari resulted in 52 applicants, of which 6 were short-listed for interviews. Anita Dulal was selected to be the receptionist.

8. Other works

In addition to our regular programs, Martin Chautari also undertook additional work. This includes working with the human rights organization, Advocacy Forum, to produce a documentary on citizens disappeared by the army ('Voices from the Darkness'). With financial support from Advocacy, Bhaskar Gautam took the lead from Martin Chautari.

Furthermore, a book in English on the individual experiences of people journeying through conflict affected areas - 'By the Way' - is in its final stages for publication. Supported by the Lutheran World Federation, this book's publication was delayed by the political turmoil of the last year. It will now be published in this fiscal year.

A study on the affect of modern food products on traditional food consumption and the changed nature of food eating and food chains in Nepal was also undertaken. This resulted in the publication of the book 'Changing Food Chain', with the economic assistance of ActionAid and authored by Jagannath Adhikari and Sarad Ghimire.

The list of discussions held is long and could not be appended here. It is available in Nepali at Martin Chautari upon request.