

A wide-angle photograph of the Chautari building and its courtyard. The building is a two-story structure with a light-colored facade and a covered entrance. The courtyard is paved and surrounded by lush green trees, including several tall, thin trees and a large palm tree in the center. The sky is clear and blue.

CHAUTARI QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

No. 2. July-September 2023

Martin Chautari (MC) is dedicated to elevating the standard of public discourse and enriching the public sphere in Nepal. The primary focus of our work encompasses critical themes such as democracy, development, pluralism/diversity, civil liberties, social justice and academic research. Organizational activities include research, research mentoring, publications, operating a public library, hosting of discussions, seminars, public interactions and academic workshops. This newsletter provides a concise overview of MC's activities for the period of July-September 2023.

REGULAR EVENTS

MC regularly hosted pre-scheduled discussions and seminars on Sundays and Tuesdays, featuring speakers and topics that spanned a diverse range of social issues. Chautari's discussion and seminar series is the longest-running initiative of its kind related to Nepal, organized by any institution globally. In late October 2023, this discussion series will complete 32 years of continuous operation.

From July to September 2023, MC organized 13 discussions as part of the Magalbarey (Tuesday) series. These discussions covered a wide range of thematic areas, including political parties, democracy, ethnicity, citizenship, nationalism, proportional representation, research archives, journalism, ecology, indigenous women and rights of differently-abled citizens in Nepal.

In addition, MC hosted nine research seminars on Sundays. These seminars covered a wide range of thematic areas, encompassing international politics, education, digital transition, disaster management, socio-political border dynamics, wildlife conservation, and regional landscape studies. The speakers in this research seminar series are associated with various universities in Nepal and abroad as well as other independent entities. Further details about these seminars can be found [here](#). On September 24, MC researcher Devendra Uprety presented his ongoing research on the role of Mahananda Sapkota and the Nepali Bhasha Pracharak Sangh in the promotion of school education in eastern Nepal during the middle decades of the 20th century (see photo below).



We witnessed robust participation in these discussions. A total of 267 individuals attended the Mangalbarey (Tuesday) discussion series while 189 participated in the research seminar (Sunday) series. Additionally, these events were streamed live on both Facebook and YouTube, where we conservatively estimate that the discussion series attracted viewership from over 13,000 on Facebook and 5,000 on YouTube.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Between July and September 2023, MC organized three special events, two of them outside of Kathmandu.

On September 13, 2023, a seminar titled “Seven Years of Federalism Implementation in Nepal: Exploring Policy and Legislative Development at the Local Level” was held in

Kakarbhitta, Jhapa District. The panel of guests included:

- 1) Fulbati Rajbanshi, Chair of Gaurigunj Rural Municipality;
- 2) Bimala B.K., former Member of Federal Parliament;
- 3) Arjun Karki, Ward Chair of Mechinagar Municipality; and
- 4) Dinesh Shrestha, public intellectual. This event was co-organized with a local institution, Readers Jhapa, and saw the active participation of 34 attendees.



Likewise, considering the widespread debate and contention surrounding the proposed Federal Education Bill, MC organized a seminar titled “School Education and Constitutional Vision” on September 28, 2023 at its seminar hall in Kathmandu. On the occasion, Radheshyam Adhikari, a Senior Advocate and Constituent Assembly member, was the invited distinguished speaker (see photo above). He talked about the vision regarding school education governance in the

2015 Constitution of Nepal and pointed out the anomalies experienced in the years following its promulgation. Other participants—43 in total—included representatives from various CSOs working on education, education activists, journalists, public intellectuals, legislators and academics.

BAREFOOT RESEARCH INITIATIVE

MC has been implementing the “Barefoot Research Initiative” (Phase II) in the Madhesh Province since December 2020. This work has been supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). We have successfully achieved all the outcomes of the project as planned such as the publication of two policy briefs ([Research Brief 33](#) and [Research Brief 36](#)) and various research conducted by a team of barefoot researchers. Activities of the project included those mainly aimed at enhancing the capacity of barefoot researchers to analyze and

write about socio-political phenomena. In the process they immersed themselves in research and writing about a specific theme close to them for about a year. Their work is included in the edited volume—*Barefoot Research in the Madhesh Province* (in Nepali).

**‘संघीयता कार्यान्वयनका सात वर्षः
स्थानीय तहका नीति/कानून र योजना निर्माणका विविध पक्ष’
विषयक अन्तर्क्रिया**

वक्ताहरु



फुलवती राजवंशी
अध्यक्ष
गौरीगञ्ज गा.पा.



बिमला वि.क.
पूर्व, संघीय सांसद



अर्जुन कार्की
वडा अध्यक्ष
मेचीनगर ४



दिनेश श्रेष्ठ
अध्यक्ष

२०८० मङ्सिर २७, बुधबार
समय : बिहान ८: ३० बजे
स्थान : होटल हिकोला हेरिटेज, काँकरभिट्टा

आयोजकः



मार्टिन चौतारी



रिडर्स ज्हापा

On September 15, 2023, MC organized an interactive session titled “Civil Society Organizations in the Federal System: Exploring Operations and Management” in Ilam Bazar, Ilam District. There were 38 participants from various civil society organizations (CSOs) of Ilam District.



We organized two events in two different districts of the Madhesh Province—Rajbiraj in Saptari district (eastern side) and Birganj in Parsa District (western side)—to disseminate the research included in the above-mentioned book. These events provided occasions for local stakeholders deeply embedded in their communities (namely, journalists, lawyers, academics, and elected representatives and officials) to engage in reading, reviewing, debating and discussing the book’s contents. In turn, these events also became occasions to raise policy concerns regarding several issues highlighted in the research articles produced by the barefoot researchers.

The book dissemination event on July 19, 2023 held in Rajbiraj featured a panel of distinguished guests (see photo to the right).

This panel included: 1) Satish Singh, Legislator of the Provincial State Assembly; 2) Kiran Sah, Legislator of the Provincial State Assembly; 3) Sudha Dev, Journalist and former elected official of the Federation of Nepali Journalists; and 4) Bharat Yadav, Advocate of Rajbiraj High Court/Chair of Nepal Bar Association, Saptari. Bhola Paswan, a Dalit activist and also the project coordinator, moderated the event. Over 55 participants from various walks of life attended the book dissemination event. All participants received a copy of the book.

We also seized the opportunity to host an additional open interaction program addressing the topic of “Non-Government Organizations within the Federal System: Exploring the Multifaceted Aspects of Operation and Management.” This event aimed to gain insight into the challenges faced by local NGOs in conducting research and advocacy activities.

Similarly, the book dissemination event organized in Birganj on July 21, 2023 featured a panel of distinguished guests. This panel included: 1) Mamta Chaudhary, Deputy Mayor, Paterva Sugauli Rural Municipality; 2) Pratima Chaurasiya, Lawyer; 3) Dipendra Kumar



Chaudary, Principal, Birgunj College; and 4) Binod Gupta, Educationist. Chanda Kishore, senior journalist and also the project coordinator, moderated the event. The more than 30 participants included local youth leaders, professionals and CSO members (see photo below). We provided copies of the book to all the participants. Additional copies of the book were given to those who agreed to share it with elected legislators and local government officials. Hopefully, such dissemination efforts will further strengthen policy interventions from the grassroots.

An additional open interaction focused on the “Seven Years of Federalism Implementation in Nepal: Perspectives from Madhesh” was also held in Birganj. The event commenced with initial remarks from two distinguished lawyers, Rameshwar Sedhai and Pannalal Gupta. They shared their insights on how federalism is perceived at the periphery. This was followed by an engaging discussion involving the participants from various CSOs.

Additionally, we organized a book review meeting on September 23, 2023 at Janakpur, Madhesh Province. The meeting featured a panel of distinguished guests from the Madhesh Province government along with several barefoot



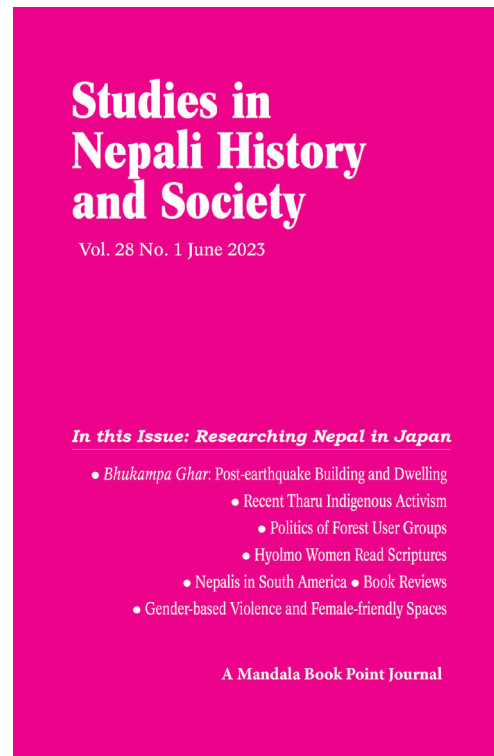
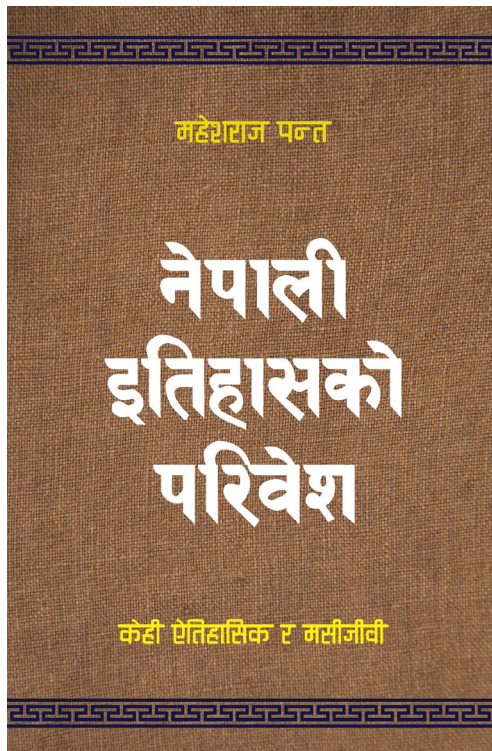
researchers. This panel included: 1) Priti Mandal, Lecturer, Tribhuvan University; 2) Ram Bharos Kapari, President of the Madhesh Academy, Madhesh Province; and 3) Satar Ansari, Executive Director of the Province Research and Training Centre (PRTC), Madhesh Province. The meeting served two main objectives. Firstly, we explored how the “barefoot research initiative” as a whole and its research outputs could be integrated into government institutions tasked with enhancing research capacity within the Province. Secondly, we sought their comprehensive assessment of our edited book.

PUBLICATIONS

The publication department was quite busy during the months covered by this newsletter. Two research briefs were published. In early July, the brief with the title (in English translation) “Why Don’t We Yet Have a (Federal) Education Act?” was uploaded. The text of that brief in Nepali can be found [here](#). In early August, the second brief with the title (in English translation) “Where is the Bill Regarding Civil Society Organizations Stuck?” was uploaded. The text of that brief in Nepali can be found [here](#).

Similarly, a bibliography of the works of Michael J. Hutt, was uploaded in late July. Hutt is a recently retired professor of Nepali and Himalayan Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. This bibliography was compiled by colleagues at Social Science Baha and can be found [here](#). Another bibliography on the *Smriti-granthas* published from Nepal, compiled by former MC researcher Harsha Man Maharjan, was also uploaded in late July. *Smriti-granthas* are collections of memoir essays written to celebrate the memory of departed persons. They constitute a good collective archive for not only understanding the lives and works of the concerned individuals but also the broader history and society of 20th century Nepal. That bibliography can be found [here](#).

The slightly revised second edition of the book, *Nepali Itihasko Parivesh: Kehi Aitihaskik ra Masijivi* (in Nepali; English translation “The Milieu of Nepali History: Some Historians and Writers”), was reprinted in August 2023. Written by the famous historian and Indologist Mahesh Raj Pant, this book was originally published in 2001. Its table of contents can be found [here](#).



Volume 28, no. 1 issue of the journal *Studies in Nepali History and Society* was published in early September. This publication is editorially curated at Martin Chautari and is published by Mandala Book Point. This issue contains a special section of four articles written by Japan-based researchers of Nepal. The table of contents of this issue can be found [here](#).

ODD HOFTUN CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE

During the memorial for late Odd Hoftun held in Kathmandu on March 24, 2023—an event co-organized with several other organizations—MC Chair Kumar Pandey announced the “Odd Hoftun Capacity Building Initiative.” Under this initiative, MC will continue to organize and host various capacity building exercises that it has also conducted in the past and launch new types of such works.

Between July and September 2023, three specific capacity building exercises were conducted.

1) Reading Seminar on the Environmental Crisis, Education and Communication

From climate change to biodiversity, the environmental multi-crisis has come to dominate conversations about the world’s shared future both in and out of academia. This seminar brought the analytical power of anthropology, sociology and related disciplines to ask: What can the social sciences teach us about how to tackle environmental destruction? What are the key conversations about climate change, biodiversity loss and other crises among social scientists? What do these debates teach us about the role of education and public communication in tackling the environmental crisis? The seminar focused on key social science concepts including “the Anthropocene,” “slow



violence” and “petropedagogy” in discussing the nuances and complexities of the environmental crisis—and how educators and journalists might best communicate this complexity.

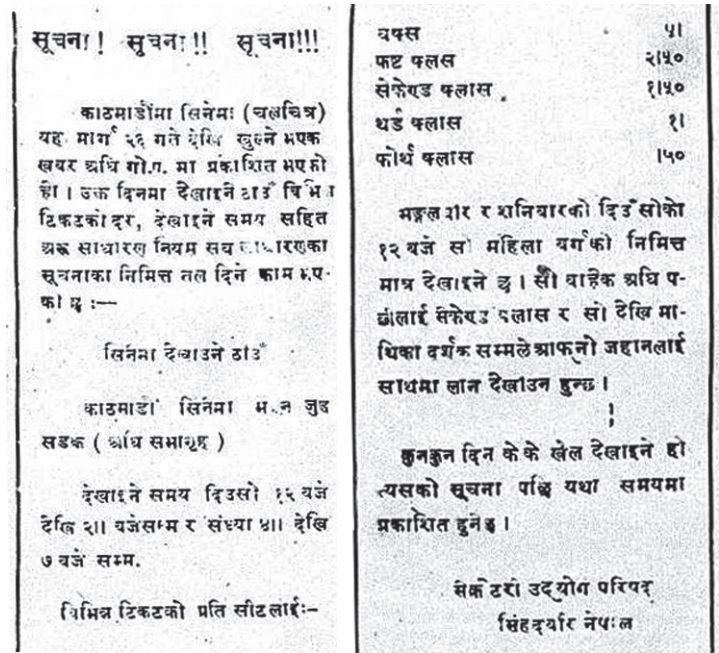
This reading seminar was held during the second half of August in the form of four in-class meetings. There were nine participants. It was led by Peter Sutoris who is an Assistant Professor in Education and Social Justice at University of York, United Kingdom. Peter holds a PhD from Cambridge University. He is the author of two books, *Visions of Development* (Oxford University Press, 2016) and *Educating for the Anthropocene* (MIT Press, 2022) and a co-editor of the journal *Compare*.

2) Reading Seminar on Game Theory and Its Applications

Game theory has revolutionized the way we think about group behavior in fields from economics and political science to evolutionary biology. This class offered a brief introduction to game theory, focusing on its many applications in the social sciences. Topics included political competition, oligopoly, social dilemmas, market failures, institutional design and conflict resolution.

This reading seminar was held during the first half of September in the form of six in-class meetings. There were 20 participants (see photo below). It was led by Avidit Acharya who is a professor of political science at Stanford University, US. He has a PhD from Princeton University and has published articles in some of the world’s most prominent journals in economics and political science, including *Econometrica* and *American Journal of Political Science*. In his research, Acharya applies game theory to the study of elections, conflict and bargaining, and principal-agent problems. He is an advisory editor at *Games and*

Economic Behavior as well as a managing editor at the journal *Social Choice and Welfare*.



Gorkhapatra Mangsir 24, 2006 v.s.

3) Workshop on Using the Gorkhapatra as an Archive to do Research

Gorkhapatra, a newspaper owned by a Nepali state corporation, was founded in 1901 and its issues constitute a very rich archive for writing the history of many topics and events related to Nepal during the 20th century. MC researcher and editor Lokranjan Parajuli has used the contents of the *Gorkhapatra* from the period between the mid-1930s and the mid-1950s to do various research. Upon the request of colleagues who run the Nepal Music Archive in Kathmandu, Parajuli led a workshop to demonstrate how he has used the *Gorkhapatra* as an archive to do research on the early history of cinema consumption in Kathmandu. The workshop was attended by more than 20 participants (some of whom will be doing MA thesis in various topics related to Nepali music shortly) and there was an informative question and answer session after the main presentation.

ENDOWMENT FUND CAMPAIGN UPDATE

MC has thus far relied on donor funds to run its core activities. Since those funds are drying up, one of the ways we might be able to sustain the organization financially in the long run is by creating an endowment fund which can be used specifically to finance MC’s core activities. In early 2023, MC decided to launch an Endowment Fund



Campaign with the objective of raising NRs. 50,000,000 (fifty million rupees) by December 2025. Since it requires the collaboration of many individuals and institutions to create such an Endowment Fund, MC has appealed to various well-wishers for contributions to this fund. Several individuals and some institutions have already contributed to this Endowment Fund.

The principal amount of the raised Endowment Fund will be kept in several fixed deposit accounts and only their interest income will be used to support MC's activities. The first of these accounts was opened in September with NRs. 4.1 million in it, the amount that had been raised as part of this Campaign until early September.

Please find below the details regarding how you can contribute to the Martin Chautari Endowment Fund:

Bank Account Details:

Account name: Martin Chautari
Savings account no: 0810015187401
Bank: Nabil Bank
Branch: Pulchowk Branch, Lalitpur

E-Sewa Details

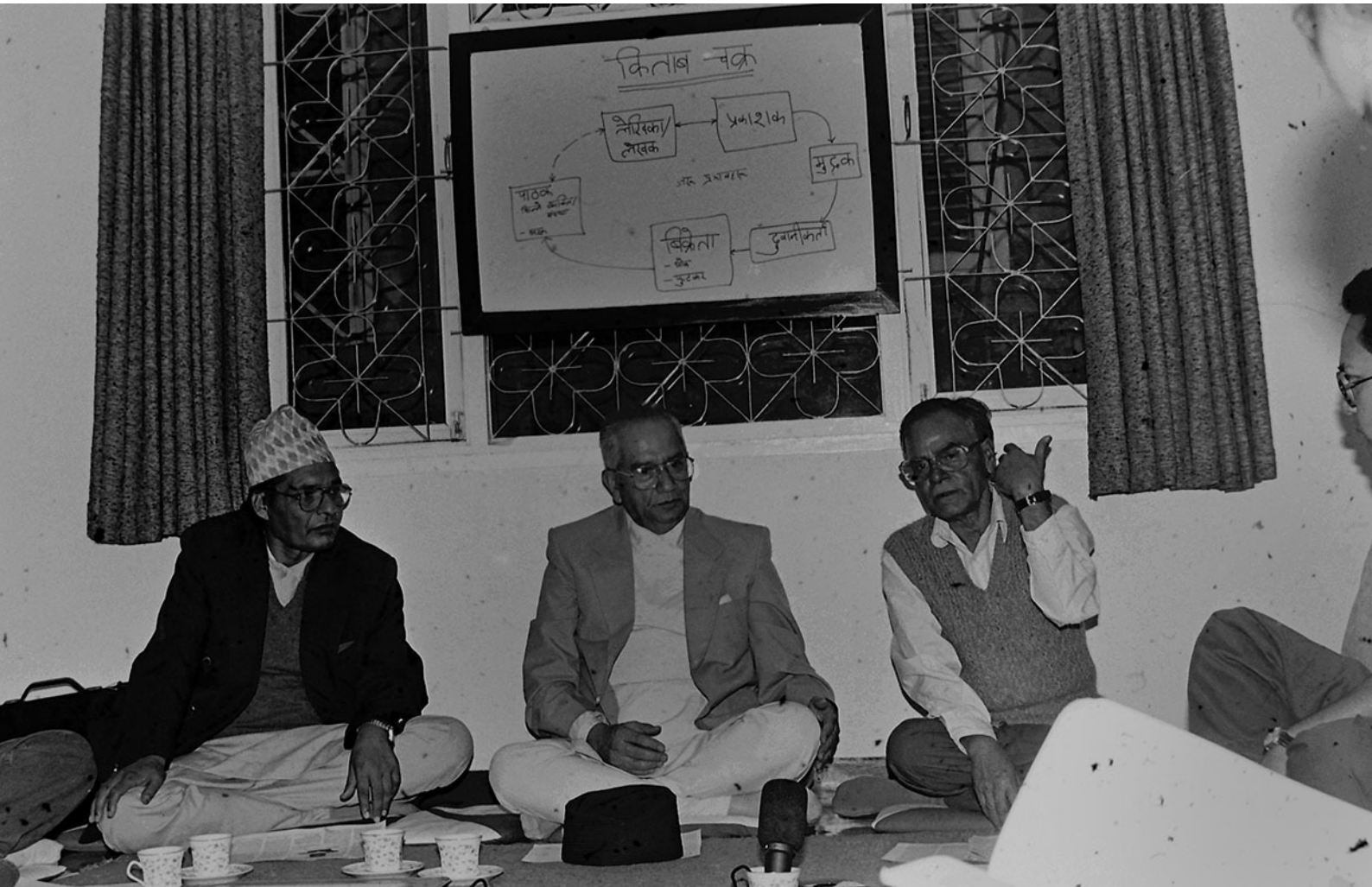
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Further information on how you can contribute to the Endowment Fund from outside of Nepal can be found at [here](#).

FROM THE ARCHIVES

About 25 years ago, MC had organized a seminar pertaining to the history of Nepali books. The distinguished speakers at that seminar included literary historians Ghataraj Bhattarai, Kamal

Dixit and Sharadchandra Sharma Bhattarai (see photo below; all of them are no longer with us). That event was moderated by Pratyoush Onta.



From the left: Literary historians Ghataraj Bhattarai, Kamal Dixit and Sharadchandra Sharma Bhattarai speaking on the history of Nepali books at MC during the late 1990s. (photo by Bikas Rauniar)



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