

CHAUTARI QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

No. 4. January–March 2024

MC RECEIVES A NATIONAL AWARD FOR ITS SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Martin Chautari (MC) was presented the “HRM Nepal Award for Distinguished Services, 2023” on January 26, 2024 at an event organized in Kathmandu. Corporate Club Nepal, a subsidiary of Growth Sellers, presents such awards annually and there were a total of seven awardees in this category for 2023. These awardees were selected by an independent jury led by the former Secretary of the Government of Nepal, Mr. Krishna Gyawali. MC chair Mr. Kumar Pandey along with other board members received this award.

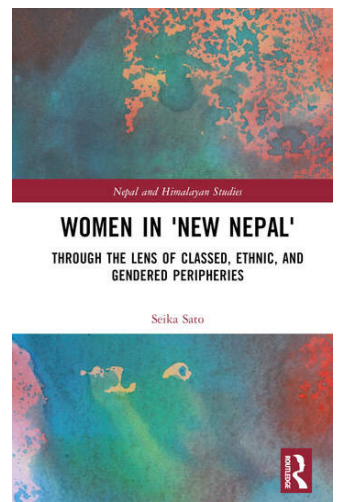


MC team receiving the “HRM Nepal Award for Distinguished Services, 2023”
(Photo: The HRM Nepal)

REGULAR DISCUSSIONS

Chautari’s regular discussions have been held on Sundays and Tuesdays of each week. In the 11 Sunday Research Seminars held in this quarter, we had presentations by in-house researchers but also by colleagues who work in universities and research institutions in China, India, Japan, Nepal, Thailand, and the US. These research presentations have covered a wide array of themes. Two of these have been book discussions in the presence of their respective authors. The books discussed included *Surviving the Sanctuary City: Asylum-Seeking Work in Nepali New York* (2023) by Tina Shrestha; and *Women in ‘New Nepal’: Through the Lens of Classed, Ethnic, and Gendered Peripheries* (2023) by Seika Sato. More than 200 people participated in these seminars and additional others joined their live streaming.

Similarly, a total of 13 discussions were organized as part of the Tuesday Seminar Series. Among them, two seminars each month were co-organized with the Nepal Madhesh Foundation and Democracy Resource Center





Rita Baramu and Shristi Karki speaking at the Tuesday discussion on March 26, 2024

Nepal, respectively. These discussions have covered a wide array of subjects including journalism, federal transition, domestic violence, experiences of doing research on the Madhesh, educational statistics, the proposed federal education act, lessons learned from feminist writings, etc. More than 275 people participated in these discussions and others joined via Facebook. Details about both seminar series can be found here: <https://martinchautari.org.np/events>

For about one and half decades, Martin Chautari has been celebrating March as a women’s month while organizing discussions. All the speakers during the month of March are women. The aim of this initiative is to encourage women’s participation in the public forum as well as to enhance the public debates on various women’s issues.

CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES

WORKSHOP OF WOMEN RESEARCHERS-I

Martin Chautari organized a one-day “Workshop of Women Researchers” on March 17, 2024 in its seminar hall at Thapathali, Kathmandu. Eight papers were presented at the workshop. The topics of the paper were diverse: representation of rape in Nepali newspapers, Madheshi women and the feminist movement in Nepal, female hero character in Nepali movies, motherhood, and knowledge and practice of exclusive breastfeeding. Other topics included digital technology and inclusive education, early childhood education, and disaster risk of reconceptualization.

Most of the presentations were based on research done for formal college or university degrees. The workshop



Hasina Shrestha and Bibeka Thapa presenting their papers at the workshop on March 17, 2024

was attended by more than 50 people who were mostly university students. Some CSO members, independent researchers and university faculty also participated. A similar workshop will be organized in mid-May 2024.

READING SEMINAR

Chautari is offering a reading seminar on “Decolonial Theory and Practice.” This eight-week seminar started on March 19 and runs through May 7, 2024 meeting every Tuesday for an in-class discussion. This reading seminar explores the philosophical and political movement that challenges the legacy of colonialism and imperialism shaping the modern world. It aims to expose the ways in which colonialism continues to impact the lives of people in formerly colonized countries, including those countries that claim to be not colonized in the past. This seminar will also unravel the practical use of decolonial thought in both academic and non-academic landscapes. It questions power hierarchies and aims to dismantle orthodoxies. The seminar is being led by Dr. Sanjay Sharma, a scholar of feminist historiography and decolonial thought who recently finished his PhD from the National University of Singapore. A total of 22 individuals (mostly university students and independent researchers) are participating in this reading seminar.



A session of the reading seminar being held at MC premises

ENERGY POLICY DIALOGUE

In collaboration with Urja Khabar media team, Chautari is starting a monthly “Energy Policy Dialogue” series from April 2024. The dialogue will be held at Chautari on the last Tuesday of each month. The aim of this series is to bring practitioners/promoters, policy makers, journalists and researchers together and augment the quality of debates and discussions on various aspects of Nepal’s energy sector. The two parties have initially agreed to run this dialogue series for a year with the possibility of continuing it in the following years.



Laxman Biyogi, Editor of Urja Khabar (left) and Kumar Pandey, Chair of MC, after signing the mutual agreement

RESEARCH

RESEARCH ON THE HISTORY OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLING

Chautari has been implementing a research project “History of the Public School Education in Nepal” from April 1, 2023. This research has explored various aspects of the history of public school education in Nepal and the related history of access to schools for Nepalis in India. Given the dominance of the state-centric approach in the existing writings on the subject, Chautari researchers have proposed a different approach to this history. First, they have focused on the agency of individuals and collectives that made school education possible for members of various groups and communities that had hitherto little access to schools. This kind of research has been done by Devendra Uprety with focus on the work of Mahananda Sapkota in East Nepal and Rukh Gurung with focus on the work of Manisingh Gurung in establishing the Gorkha Pathshala in Shillong, India. Pratyoush Onta has done preliminary research on the role of Gopal Pandey “Asim” in starting the Nepal Shiksha Parishad through which he institutionalized “Rastrabhasha Shiksha Pranali,” a whole system of school education exclusively based on the Nepali language.



Bhupal Pati at Dabjong (Dapcha), where the Bhasha Pathshala was established in 1929; photo taken some 30 years ago by Lanam Ngyasur Tamang.

Second, Chautari researchers have also researched how a school in a specific location is differentially related to various social constituencies present in that locality. Such research has been carried out by Sanjila Moktan in Dabjong (Dapcha) in Kavrepalanchok, where a Bhasha Pathshala was established in 1929 but Tamang students did not have access to it until after the 1950s. Third, Chautari researchers have also looked at the historical discourses around school education. In particular, Lokranjan Parajuli has examined the voices that opposed co-education in Nepal during the middle decades of the 20th century. Fourth, they have examined the founding of particular types of schools. Parajuli has done research on the founding of the first boarding school in Kathmandu in the early 1950s and published an article in a newspaper in March 2024 (see, <https://ekantipur.com/koseli/2024/03/16/and-a-boarding-school-opened-in-nepal-06-17.html>).

Uprety, Moktan and Gurung have presented their research in Chautari’s regular seminars as well as in a panel during the Chautari Annual Conference 2023. The resulting full-length articles by Uprety and Moktan are being published in *Samaj Adhyayan* 19. Gurung’s draft article is being revised. In one of his columns published in *The Kathmandu Post* in March 2024, Onta has also drawn attention to the importance of doing plural histories of school education in Nepal (see, <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2024/03/14/plural-histories-of-school-education>).

PUBLICATIONS

STUDIES IN NEPALI HISTORY AND SOCIETY

Volume 28, No. 2, December 2023 issue of the journal *Studies in Nepali History and Society* was published in February 2024. This publication is editorially curated at Martin Chautari and is published by Mandala Book Point. This issue contains two full-length articles written by historians that focus on India-Nepal connections during the early decades of the 20th century. Another article examines the migration histories of professional Nepali Gurkha women during the later decades of the 20th century whereas a fourth article is an anthropological study of the cult of Mātṛkā/Ajimā goddesses in the Kathmandu Valley. This issue also carries extracts from a 19th century royal scrapbook, a review essay of two recent historical photo books on Nepal and six



Studies in Nepali History and Society

Vol. 28 No. 2 December 2023

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- New Historic Images of Nepal • Book Reviews
- Selling Railway Sleepers After WWI
- A 19th Century Royal Scrapbook
- Deserting Gurkhas and Sovereign Claims
- Migration Histories of Nepali Women Professionals

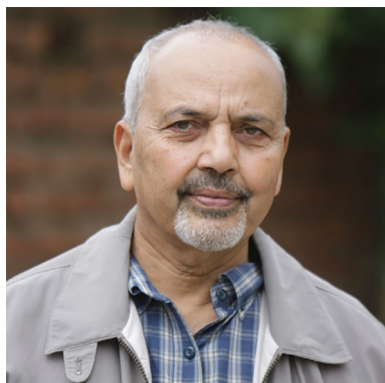
A Mandala Book Point Journal



book reviews. The table of contents of this issue can be found here: <https://martinchautari.org.np/mc-publications/sinhas-volume-28-number-2>

THE CHAUTARI FOUNDATION LECTURE – 2023

The Chautari Foundation Lecture – 2023 was delivered by senior advocate Mr Radheshyam Adhikari at the Chautari



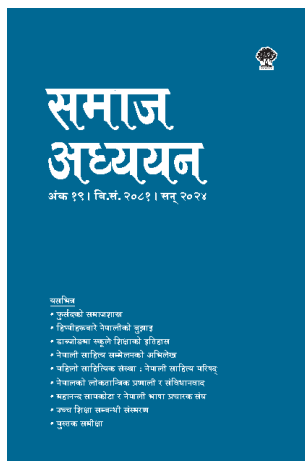
premises on Friday, December 22, 2023. Adhikari who is also a former lawmaker and a member of both Constituent Assemblies that deliberated and promulgated the Constitution of Nepal, 2015, spoke about “Nepal’s Loktantrik

(Democratic) System and Constitutionalism.” As reported earlier, a video of Adhikari’s lecture can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bb0INr1P77E&t=225s>. The text of the lecture has now been published. Its table of contents can be found here: <https://martinchautari.org.np/mc-publications/nepalko-loktantrik-pranali-rasambidhanbad>

The Annual Chautari Foundation Lecture is an occasion both of mature reflection on Nepal’s past trajectory and of stimulating debate on the future by some of the best public minds. It was founded in 2015. The lecture was not held in 2020, 2021 and 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The full texts of the previous lectures have been published and are available here: <https://martinchautari.org.np/event-categories/chautari-foundation-lecture>

SAMAJ ADHYAYAN 19

Chautari is the editorial home and the publisher of the annual



Nepali language journal *Samaj Adhyayan* (Studies of Society, established in 2006 as *Media Adhyayan*). All of the pre-press work on volume 19 of this journal has been completed and its printed copies will be available in late April 2024. The table of contents of this issue can be found here: <https://martinchautari.org.np/mc-publications/samaj-adhyayan-19>

SELECTIVE EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONIES THAT DESCRIBE MC’S “IMPACT”

In late 2023 and early 2024, we asked various friends and colleagues to write short testimonies of how Martin Chautari’s work over the years has impacted their work and lives. We also asked them to reflect on the general importance of Chautari’s work for Nepal’s public sphere, research and publication landscapes. Here are some excerpts from what three of them have said in their testimonies.

A VIBRANT SPACE FOR CIVIL DISCOURSE

Having the space and vibrant practice of civil discourse is an important aspect of promoting pluralist democracy and more so in the context of a country like Nepal, given the recent



transition to a federal mode of governance. Civil discourse requires particular processes and capacities; the space for civic gathering, exchanging ideas, experiences and information; the skills to listen, present informed arguments, debate

and engage in dialogue, and generation of knowledge to determine course of action. Generally speaking, civil society institutions including academic institutions offer such spaces. However, given the lack of institutional building, political interference and limited capacities, many institutional spaces in Nepal do not afford such possibilities. In this context, I believe Martin Chautari has been offering such a space to some extent that has directly and indirectly benefited those that engage in the various activities organized in this space.

With the speedy access to information as well as misinformation in this digital age and the intensity of polarization of views and contested understandings of the world around us, the need to build the competencies for civil discourse is an important educational agenda for the Nepali society. For this, Martin Chautari’s regular sessions on diverse topics, workshops, reading seminars and annual conference provide that educational space for young people to engage and learn. For instance, the sessions on Sundays and Tuesdays offer the opportunity for a speaker to share their ideas on a particular topic and receive questions and comments. From what I have experienced, these sessions are often attended by a diverse group of individuals from retired senior individuals to young university students to professionals in the related fields.

An important contribution of Martin Chautari, in my opinion, are the publications. As someone involved in the sector of Education, I have found the various publications, including academic papers in the journal SINHAS, the policy briefs and the books published examining and exploring various aspect of the state of education and educational governance in Nepal extremely useful. I have used these resources in my own work in writing but have also included them in the syllabus of courses and workshops I have conducted. The significance here is getting reliable well researched resource materials that is local and contextualized. For instance, I recently used Chautari's Policy Brief No. 38—*Kina Banena (Sanghiya) Shiksha Ain?* that explores the reasons behind the delays in formulating the federal act on education in Nepal—in a forum of young educators as reference material to inform their debate and discussion on the issue.

Amina Singh

Member, University of Nepal Board and
Visiting Faculty, Kathmandu University School of Arts

A PRODUCTIVE PLATFORM FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

I know Martin Chautari, foremost, as a productive, well respected and vibrant platform for social research. It also functions as a center for policy research. Chautari's research



outputs, which are published in the form of books, articles, reports, and policy briefs are read and utilized by academics and policy makers within and outside of Nepal.

I also read regularly the two refereed journals that Chautari researchers edit, one of which is also

published by the organization. One comes out in the English language (SINHAS) and the other in the Nepali language (*Samaj Adhyayan*). I know well that the senior members of Chautari put in a lot of effort in editing these journals. I also know that both the journals have a sizable readership. Chautari's library, which is also open to non-Chautari members, has remained a useful resource utilized by many researchers.

Chautari continues to remain a busy platform for workshops and conferences. I have often found the Chautari grounds and corridors humming with weekly—sometimes twice-weekly—seminars conducted principally by young and aspiring intellectuals, media persons, activists, etc. In addition, Chautari also conducts an annual conference as well as periodic workshops that also mostly engage young intellectuals and other professionals as well as social activists. Several of the young persons are now established

professionals in their respective fields. This long standing and sizable engagement of the young in intellectual and social justice fronts may well, in the long run, turn out to be the most important of Chautari's contributions.

In closing, I must also note that Chautari is unique in that it is a private non-profit social research institution devoted to the exploration and examination of public institutions and processes. It deserves our support.

Chaitanya Mishra

Professor of Sociology (Retired), Tribhuvan University

A GENEROUS AND INTELLECTUALLY RIGOROUS ENVIRONMENT

As a college student and neophyte Nepal Studies researcher living in Kathmandu at the end of the aughts, there were few places in the city more exciting to me than Martin



Chautari. My younger self remembers well the thrill of attending afternoon research seminars in the meeting hall at Chautari. I knew few people in Kathmandu in those days. But on Sundays, I would sit on a *chakati* side by

side with scholars and with eager students waiting my turn to introduce myself to the audience gathered to hear the latest and best in research about Nepali society and history. It was in the meeting hall at Chautari that I was socialized into the academic life of Kathmandu, learning how to listen, observe, and dive into the rapid-fire question and response generated by stimulating seminar discussions. Afterward, tea kept the conversation going, providing opportunities to exchange knowledge and build relationships across institutions and countries. The connections I made with researchers and members of Chautari continue to be important to me and have shaped my growth as a scholar. I am ever grateful for the community Martin Chautari has built for researchers devoted to Nepal Studies.

The generous and intellectually rigorous environment at Chautari has supported me in my academic journey from graduate student to early career scholar. I considered it a great privilege to have published my first single-authored paper with Martin Chautari's flagship journal *Studies in Nepali History and Society* (SINHAS). The editorial team at SINHAS guided me through the entire publication process. This began with facilitating the sharing of the paper's ideas with the Chautari community. In June 2022, I gave my first presentation at the Research Seminar Series organized by Chautari. The quality of feedback I received on that occasion sharpened the paper's arguments and deepened



its historical context, resulting in a stronger manuscript. During peer review and proof-reading stages, the editorial team was in regular communication and maintained transparency about all editing decisions.

I was especially grateful to have the unprecedented opportunity to sit with the editor to go over figures and spellings in my article. I was able to move through the publication process with confidence (and a lot less anxiety) thanks to the hands-on editorial team at SINHAS. Later, my SINHAS article was selected for publication in an edited volume in the Chautari Book Series. This was again an enjoyable process with high transparency and clear communication throughout. Based on my experience, I believe anyone, but especially graduate students and early career scholars, would benefit from publishing with Martin Chautari—for insight into the publication process and, as importantly, for the development of their writing and arguments.

Amy Johnson

Assistant Professor, Georgia College & State University

ANNOUNCEMENT

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS FOR THE CHAUTARI ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 2024

MC has announced a call for abstracts of research papers for its “Chautari Annual Conference, 2024.” The conference will be held in Kathmandu on November 27-29, 2024. The abstracts can be in English or Nepali and should be of 500 words. The important deadlines of the call are:

Abstract submission deadline: June 10, 2024

Announcement of accepted abstracts: July 25, 2024

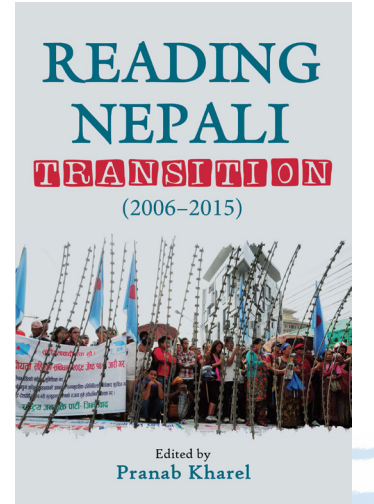
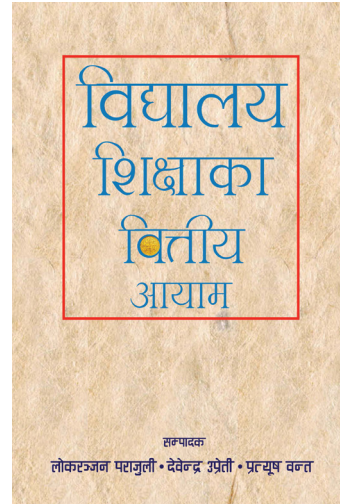
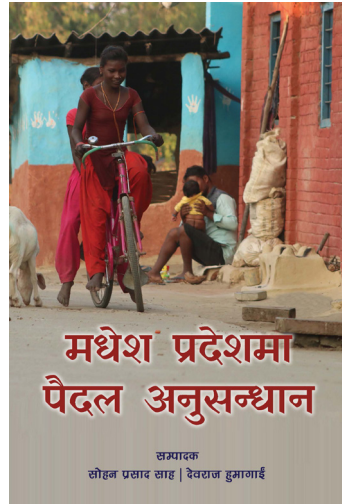
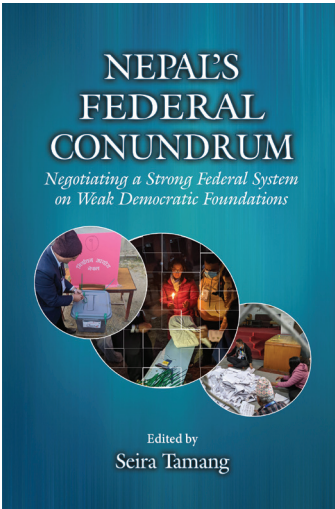
Deadline for the submission of full papers (max 5,000 words): October 31, 2024

Announcement of accepted papers: November 10, 2024

Conference days: November 27–29, 2024

Further details of the call are available here: <https://martinchautari.org.np/events/call-for-papers-panels-chautari-annual-conference-2024>

RECENT CHAUTARI PUBLICATIONS



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