

Lecture

BEYOND RESPECTABILITY TO DEMANDING RESPECT: THE WORK OF MEENA ACHARYA

Seira Tamang

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to give this talk on Dr Meena Acharya and her intellectual contributions. It is an honor for me and I hope to be able to do justice to her work.

I'd like to begin this talk with the obvious—we stand upon the shoulders of others, we build upon the struggles of those that came before us. For my own work, nothing strikes as more true in terms of the intellectual labor of Meena ji. I remember reading her work while as an undergraduate and then graduate student—that a Nepali woman could write, analyze and provide accounts of Nepal, the situation of women in Nepal, the politics of being a woman, the costs of patriarchy etc., had a huge impact on me. One talks of the importance of “role models”—why one needs a “role model” is exemplified by her influence on my own academic trajectory.

While I had initially intended to focus on only Meena ji's academic work narrowly defined as academic books and journals, I realized that her impact, as in her multi-disciplinary approach, transcends artificial categories. It also points to a larger issue of the political economy of research in Nepal, a point to which I return to later in the talk. What follows, therefore, is my account of her contributions (her original intellectual work has been in the English language), from numerous published sources, excluding op-eds. My examination of her work was made immeasurably easier by my colleague Devendra Uprety who, understanding the importance of Meena ji's body of work, had already compiled a bibliography of her books and articles (Uprety 2018a), published an interview with her (Uprety 2018b) and written an article on her (Uprety 2015 v.s.). I am grateful for his labor and his prescient vision.

I begin this talk with an initial canvas of her writings and their importance. The key here is what I've stated in the title—beyond social ideas of “respectability” and the “proper role” of women, to demanding respect for women for their real contributions—this is the crucial reorientation that Meena ji consistently insists upon in her research on women.

I then discuss the reception of her work, tying this to the institutional settings from which she has produced work. This includes a discussion of the reasons I see her work as being under-valued—ironic given all her work on the need to value women's labor. I elaborate on why these dynamics need to be understood for the larger issues of undertaking academic enterprises in a country like Nepal.

The last section of the talk will attempt a critical assessment of her feminist interventions, highlighting the manner in which certain facets of her work reflect political limits and silences. The lecture will end by sharing how these contributions, including the silences, have played a critical role in the academic evolution of my own work.

Overview and Trends

Meena Acharya's work spans a multitude of interests, from liberalization, globalization, social reproduction, political party dynamics, foreign aid, I/NGOs, democracy, labor migration, to of course, women.

There are critiques of how social exclusions continue even as political reforms are undertaken and analyses of how the promotion of neoliberal reforms by ostensibly socialist political parties have led to increased income disparities and impoverished large sections of population in rural areas, with very specific gendered repercussions. There are studies on the economic underpinnings of the Maoist movement, the lack of representation of women in the state, and the role of foreign aid and donors in propelling policy and development initiatives detached from the economic, social and political realities of the country.

Most importantly, from my viewpoint, is that her work has been critical to expanding the sphere in which politics is assumed to occur—the household. Her analyses have clearly shown that the household is key to understanding inequalities and their transmission into economic, social and political spheres. Her work on gender and households brings to the fore “the personal is political” and the impact of this in the reproduction of wider social and political inequalities.

There is a key focus by Meena ji on understanding and valuing women's work within the household and outside, and tracking changes overtime. Demanding respect for women's contributions in all their changing dynamics is key to ensuring appropriate measures to aid women. Thus her early critiques of stereotyped income generation and training and calls for interventions that go beyond sewing, knitting, weaving or carpet making. And her insistent demand through the 1990s and beyond for equal property rights for daughters/women in general. From the recognition of women's productive role in the household economy, to the socio-economic and political limitations put on women, to the legal and policy measures necessary to remedy inequalities, her intellectual contributions are considerable. Her work demands respect and through her work, she demands respect for women.

Her commitment to policy and affecting change is also clear. In her keynote speech for a 2011 conference organized by Martin Chautari for young women researchers, the first of her list of lessons learnt from her "long research life" was the following: "...social science theory without practical relevance is meaningless" (Acharya 2011). Hence her stress on research-based policy recommendations and numerous engagements with the government and donors. The list is extensive but includes her 1996 work with the Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) submitted to the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW) on valuation of household maintenance work (Acharya 1996) and a paper on engendering the budgetary system for the education sector; the latter includes insights such as "[g]ender considerations entered in this process only at the NPC and line ministry program level. DDC and VDC planning process were still very rudimentary and generally women were paid scanty [sic] attention" (Acharya 2005a: 10).¹

Meena ji's contributions stand out in four key ways. One is the multi-disciplinary approach, the second is for the clear emphasis on the economic and data, the third is the manner in which she consistently "drills down" her analyses for the impact on women—her feminist political and intellectual commitment is clear. And the fourth is her consistent search for knowledge and intellectual engagement.

¹ NPC is the National Planning Commission of Nepal. DDC stands for the District Development Committee and VDC for the Village Development Committee.

Multi-disciplinary Approach

In terms of the multi-disciplinary approach, it is clear that her family's political background (including the willingness to bravely break moulds), her early association with anthropologists in *The Status of Women in Nepal* volumes, and her economics training, infuses her work.² For example, in numerous pieces, economic analyses invariably contain sharp critiques of unplanned liberalization, donor imperatives and policy weaknesses tied to the dysfunctionality of party politics and the imperatives of political party elites. There are political, social and economic analyses drawing on critical globalization work, Marxist theorists, sociological insights and feminist critiques. In a 2003 piece “The Economic Foundations of the Current Socio-Political Crisis in Nepal,” she states

The basic economic foundations behind the current socio-political crisis is the accelerated market penetration in the hinterland and neglect of the impact of this whole transformation process on the people by policy makers and donors, dominated in the last decade by the philosophy of the invisible hand and the mirage of globalization as a panacea for all of Nepal's economic problems. (Acharya 2003: 239)

Indeed, her criticisms of structural adjustment policies initiated by the government at the behest of donors is detailed and insightful—pointing out the increase in the income disparities and impoverishment of large sections of the rural populations (Acharya, Khatiwada and Aryal 2003). Her political analyses are equally on point; in an article on property rights for women in Nepal, she writes of the then proposed bill for women's legal right to property that

² *The Status of Women in Nepal* series was a ground-breaking attempt to comprehensively account for women's work patterns, economic contributions and decision-making in rural households. Funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and undertaken by the Centre for Economic Development and Administration of Tribhuvan University, the studies were published between 1979 and 1981 and consisted of twelve books divided into two volumes. Some of the other researchers in the project included anthropologists Lynn Bennett, Sidney Schuler, Drone Rajaure and Augusta Molnar. For reviews of parts of the series, see Upadhyaya (1996) and Fujikura (1996).

[t]he strength of the opposition to this Bill itself is an indicator of how this right is fundamental to women's empowerment in Nepal. The strongest argument the opponents have so far produced is that it will fundamentally change the social structure and create havoc in the society. Whether it will create a havoc is not clear, but the fact that it will affect the social structure fundamentally is not in dispute. (Acharya 2001: 27–28)

The Importance of Data

The incisive critiques of policy weaknesses, foreign aid and donors as well as the under-counting of women's contributions to the economy and development are backed with data and analyses of impact. While offering data and actual facts to back up arguments may not appear to be particularly laudatory for academic interventions, anyone aware of the nature of the majority of "academic" outputs in Nepal will understand how important these intercessions are. Indeed, in her work data and economics have always taken a central stage and she is one of the very few social scientists who regularly engages with large-scale data in Nepal. From her early publications, to *The Status of Women* volumes and numerous other research, statistics and economic analyses form key components.

For example, her 1977 article on the role of women in economic development draws from the 1973 Year Book of Labor statistics to compare Nepal with other countries (Acharya 1977). Data for her analyses on the impact of globalization on women in Nepal are drawn from the Nepal Census (1991 and 2001), family budget and living standard surveys (1984–1985, 1996–1997, and 2003–2004) and Department for International Development, UK (DFID)/World Bank Studies on Gender and Social Analysis (Acharya 2008a). In articles on gender equality and democracy, data is used to show how on the national scale, women's access to positions of power in Nepal is much lower than in other South Asian countries, even though their economic activity rate is higher. She links this to how women's political participation is severely limited by the lack of access to economic resources and control over her mobility (Acharya 1994).

Furthermore, in her work on *The Status of Women* onwards, the importance of disaggregated data is clear. In *The Status of Women* volumes, eight different ethnic/caste groups were studied. In her book *Labour Market Development and Poverty with Focus on Opportunities for Women in Nepal*

(Acharya 2000a), the Nepal Living Standards Survey (1996) was utilized to break down remittances received by household heads by urban, rural, male, female, and caste breakdowns within each of the male/female categories. This enabled analyses such as: “Tharu women seemed to receive the largest number of remittances, but Gurung/Rai and Newar women received the largest amounts per person” (Acharya 2000a: 90). A 2000 article titled “Socio-Economic Development from a Gender Perspective” discusses structural changes in the economy. Meena ji reveals women earn two thirds of what men earn in agriculture, are concentrated in lower echelons of the industrial hierarchy and have less access to institutional credit. She adds, but “Brahmin/Chetri [sic] and Newar women have greater access to credit compared to women in other castes/ethnicity. Women from low castes and dis-advantaged ethnicity have no access to institutional credit at all” (Acharya 2000b: 71).

Her insistence is on understanding the impact of underlying economic changes and thus her impatience with analyses that stay at the level of generalization is consistent. For example, in a paper on parties, donors and the Maoist movement in Nepal, she notes the literature citing oppression as the primary cause for the attraction of disadvantaged ethnic communities and Dalits to the then Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist. But indicating her dissatisfaction with this level of analyses, she adds these works “rarely deal with the impact of globalization policies on such traditional patterns of exploitation and consequent acceleration of class differentiation. This literature...does not go into the precise economic processes as to how this differentiation is taking place” (Acharya 2005b: 92).

In her specific work on women, these processes are laid bare. From understanding women’s work patterns, economic contributions and decision-making roles in rural households, statistical analyses and methodological rigor is evident. Building on data, in numerous articles she shows the gendered impact of globalization including the escalation of marketization of the village economy, decreasing food security, and the concomitant shift to urban wage work under exploitative conditions for women.

Drilling Down to Women

The above analyses are also examples of the tracing of larger political and economic transformations and a narrowing down to the impacts on women. There are other examples as well—in her 1997 article on NGO-

led development strategy, she drills down to the impact of donors and NGOs on the strategies and activities of women activists and the women's movement (Acharya 1997a). The same is true of her 2005 article on the Maoist movement, which includes an analysis of women's groups and their ability to raise awareness of women's rights as well as critiques of sister organizations of political parties (Acharya 2005b).

This constant reference to women and their roles as part of analyses and as central components of articles is an important exercise especially in the context of the dominant logic that economic and political changes have the same impact on women as with men. Her work on labor market development and poverty revealed, among other things, that more women than men were being pushed back into agriculture and self-employment but that their participation in the modernizing sector of the economy was increasing (Acharya 2000a). Her analyses reveal the many ways in which globalization has had positive impacts but also how it perpetuates gendered hierarchies given the social contexts in which changes are embedded. These interventions are especially important given that male academics rarely make such differentiations.

Changing Orientations

Lastly, important to note in Meena ji's writings is a clear progression of thought and thinking. For example, one can see Panchayat imperatives in her 1977 article "The Role of Women in Economic Development." At that time, she wrote, "In order to involve women in the process of accelerating economic development, it is essential that radical changes occur in their deteriorated physical, mental, intellectual, cultural and political status resulting from thousands of years of economic slavery" (Acharya 1977: 17). There are here notions of unchanging patriarchy, the need to "uplift" women for *bikās* and the good of the nation—a work far removed from her later analyses mentioned above, including the biting critiques of women's insertion into the capitalist national and global economy.

There is, furthermore, continuing attention to differentiating women in Nepal. Her early work in *The Status of Women* volumes revealed that ethnicity and caste play an important role in the economic activity of Nepali women. It is noteworthy that she continued to follow up on this earlier research, stating in later works that findings of women from "Tibeto-Burman" groups as more

enterprising than those from Indo-Aryan groups (Acharya and Bennett 1981) was only partially supported by current findings (Acharya 2000a: 102–105).

Her work on differentiated women in Nepal expands beyond just economics. For example, in her 2000 article on NGO and INGO efforts to empower the disadvantaged, while there is the continued stress on “women,” she also writes, “[T]he largest disadvantaged groups across all ethnic and caste subgroups and class, are women,” adding “the situation becomes quite oppressive when various kinds of disadvantages overlap as in the case of lower caste people, particularly women (Acharya 2000c: 69).

Ten years later in her piece “Changing Discourse on Women’s Movement: A Critical Lookback,” she importantly draws parallels with US feminist movement along racial lines (Acharya 2010: 121) and writes

Since social inequality entails multifold oppression for women as women, as poor, and as members of the disadvantaged groups, feminism has to recognize social diversity and the need to address it in the context of feminist movement. The caste, class, ethnicity and language-related inequalities, must also be addressed. (Acharya 2010: 97)

These specifically *political* changes in orientation must be acknowledged—we see very little of this continue engagement and expansion in thought and analyses among self-professing feminist *netys* in Nepal—and these changes must be applauded—a reflection for her continued thirst for knowledge and her dedicated reading habits.

Academic Reception

I now turn to the reception of her work in academic circles. In my analyses, the contribution of Dr Meena Acharya is truly remarkable. From her multi-disciplinary approach, to her insistence on empirically based analyses, to her constant challenge to dominant forms of knowledge, norms and values, her work has formed an invaluable base for future generations of researchers and academics. To put her contributions in historical perspective, her Nepali contemporaries—also born in the 1930s (Meena ji was born in 1937)—include Dhanavajra Vajracharya (1932–1994), historian; Kamal P Malla (1936–2018), scholar of literature and history; and Harka Gurung

(1939–2006), geographer/multi-disciplinary expert.³ She is a pioneering scholar of this same acclaimed cohort.

Yet, for all her intellectual contributions, it can be argued her work remains less recognized in academia. Indeed, there are others less prolific and/or academically rigorous who receive much more acclaim than her, including those who produce material in the English medium—in other words, language of work is not the main factor for her relative relegation. We have numerous “superstar” academics, nationally recognized “intellectuals,” whose actual written output is considerably smaller, and/or with methodological, analytical, and factual work that is less than satisfactory.

One explanation of why Meena ji’s work has received less recognition is of course the fact that Meena ji is not a man, and has been primarily slotted as a “gender expert” as opposed to a political economist with all the marginalization that then entails.⁴ Another variable is her placement outside of the university setting and the exclusion from certain types of legitimacy that the title of “professor” then bestows—including student *celās*. Other issues to consider include a male-dominated media that relies on interviews and soundbites of “public intellectuals” (read men), rather than actually reading books and articles.

The under-valuing of her work is most evident in the politics of citation. While this relates to the national sphere as well, I think it has particularly important ramifications in relation to international vectors. The latter was reconfirmed in my mind by a fairly recent article on Nepal in which two Western academics advocated the importance of returning to the household level and utilizing feminist theories and methodologies to analyze changing political dynamics and processes of social reproduction Nepal. They stated their realization of the “importance of early feminist theorizing on development and agrarian change” and advocated returning to “linking processes happening within households and communities to processes at regional and national scales” (Nightingale and Rankin 2014: 106). This is precisely what Meena ji has done in numerous articles including her piece on the “Global Integration of Subsistence Economies and Women’s Empowerment” (Acharya 2008b). However, no mention is made of Meena ji’s

³ I thank Pratyoush Onta for pointing this out to me.

⁴ This is the apt description given in an article on the women’s movement: “Dr. Acharya is a Senior Political Economist” (Acharya 2010: 85).

work in Nepal among the citations of numerous authors based in Western academies.

This could be seen as an aberration—an oversight—but there is a long-standing issue of how contributions by Nepali scholars are, or are not, utilized. Subedi and Uprety (2014: 22) in their review of the state of anthropology and sociology in Nepal stated the following: “Interestingly, Western reviewers [of disciplinary history] have rarely discussed the contributions made in sociology/anthropology by Nepali scholars.” These findings hold true for other disciplines and studies in Nepal as a whole (and I leave aside for the moment the much needed discussion on the lack of citations of Nepali sources). In the division between the “research Sherpas” (Pratyoush Onta’s fitting description) and those who do the analyses—Western counterparts with assumed theoretical and conceptual dexterity and “knowledge of the literature”—the politics of citation is as Sara Ahmed (2013) explains, “a rather successful reproductive technology, a way to reproduce the world around certain bodies.”

These practices also relate to the limiting of legitimate sources of “academic knowledge” and the disregard of other avenues for the production of the same. I have in the past had conversations with senior Western academics who have discounted the validity of development consultancy research utilized later as “academic articles” and raised questions on the legitimacy of “donor funded” research as “real research.” Such a perspective imposes Western university and academic practices as the only legitimate forms by which academic research can be generated. It also disregards the political economy of research in Nepal where access to large grants and funds administered by research-supporting councils available in the West are either non-existent or extremely limited.

Further, it is well known that in the West, the publish or perish environment is situated in an ever tightening and exploitative academic labor employment market, and grants are linked to publications in international peer-reviewed journals with their expensive pay-walls. Clearly, the market audience for researchers based in Western academies is not Nepal, even for Nepal-based research.

However, that is not necessarily our market, or the public domain that is our priority. Part of this is our own funding priorities linked to the political economy of academic/research work—we are primarily reliant on donors, and individual and institutional research projects do enhance organizational

and individual profiles. Importantly, while the choice of Nepali researchers to publish in Nepal is predominantly assumed to reveal levels of competence and ability, there is the issue of different research and publishing priorities. This includes the fact that there is a larger concern of making information about Nepal, relevant to Nepal, available to Nepalis in a timely manner—a prioritization that is most evident in Meena ji’s work.

Thus I return to the fact that while I had initially intended to focus on only her academic work narrowly defined as academic books and journals, I realized her intellectual contributions are differently situated and generated via various research modalities given Nepal’s political economy of research and differently situated relations to knowledge production goals. Take for example Meena ji’s 1993 paper “Feminist Movement in Nepal” for a NGO workshop in Kathmandu (Acharya 1993), and her 1997 “Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women: A Status Report” for a donor (Acharya with Acharya 1997). These papers laid out a historical and analytic framework of women’s histories and initiatives for the rights of women unavailable elsewhere. They provided a solid basis to challenge traditional *male-stream* views about what we know about political movements and effects of development—a foundation upon which I and others have built. While this particular history might be common knowledge now, it is in no small part due to these differently situated interventions by Meena ji.

That these considerable intellectual contributions by Meena ji stem from her work outside of the university settings, in research institutions officially registered as NGOs, also points to a need to reconceptualize sites and modalities of knowledge generation, and therefore necessary supports to the fostering of intellectual activities in Nepal.

Critiquing Interventions

I now turn to attempt a critical assessment of her feminist interventions. I’d like to begin by noting that I had started this talk by underlining how we stand on the shoulders of others. The following is not meant in any way to minimize the contributions of Meena ji outlined above. It is in the spirit of holding each other up and pushing ourselves on methodological, conceptual and theoretical rigor, that I offer the following thoughts.

Her work on politics, the economy and social processes have formed the core of many interventions. From her writings on women’s exclusion from state institutions, to migration analyses as it impacts women, to how the

women's movement can be conceptually framed, the foundational blocks that Meena ji has put in place in how we study and understand women in Nepal are actually too innumerable to account for here. However, there are, from my perspective (and I can, and have been, offering only mine in this talk obviously) certain limitations and silences that are evident in her work.

One is a larger, more conservative, political outlook. This can be seen in a number of her articles. For example, in a 2000 article she writes:

Nepal faces a colossal task of consolidating the Nepalese national identity, while at the same time redressing the genuine grievances of women, various ethnic and castes groups and geographically disadvantaged areas....The greatest challenge today is to make the dominant culture understand that it has to accommodate the dissenting voices within the nation. On the other hand, various ethnic groups have to understand we survive or die together, there is no way history can be reversed without bloodshed, which does no good for the people in general. (Acharya 2000c: 80)

Despite the recognition of the need for intersectionality, this orientation is also manifest in descriptions of the demands from women of excluded groups. For example, she writes of the divisions in the feminist movement in the following manner:

The divisions in Nepal may partly be attributed to the inability of the middle-class based movement—led primarily by women from historically dominant castes, classes, and ethnic groups (Brahmins, Chhetris, and Newars), to comprehend fully the intersectionality of class, caste, ethnicity, and gender-based oppression. On the other hand, ethnic movement, which seems to be guided primarily by the ideology of revenge and past oppression, rather than by the vision of a truly democratic, equitable, and just state and society, is affecting the movement's unity. (Acharya 2010: 121–122)

There is in these words, a rehearsal of alarmist narratives of the threat to national integrity posed by the demands of historically excluded, with the “survive or die together” and “no way history can be reversed” choice of words undermining the demands for equality with others and the possibility

of a reimagining of a more just Nepal that builds upon history. There is a consistent mis-understanding of motives and visions of the future—“ideology of revenge...rather than by a vision of a truly democratic, equitable and just state and society”—which align with the more conservative of political outlooks in Nepal.

The second critique I offer is related to the above. While there has been a consistent emphasis on the differences between Tibeto-Burman, and Indo-Aryan (in the predominant language of the past papers) women, Meena ji does stress the “commonality of oppression under the dominant Indo-Aryan culture” which implies a homogeneity of experience of women in Nepal. Indeed, Yasuko Fujikura points out in her 1996 study of the crucial “Summary and Recommendations” chapter of *The Status of Women* volumes that while the research sought to confront the specificity and diversity of the lives of Nepali women, these differences were suppressed in order to fulfil the initial project objective of providing guidelines for national planning to increase the productivity and the status of these women. Thus, “rural women in Nepal ultimately resemble the standardised image of ‘rural women’ constructed by Women in Development discourse” (Fujikura 1996: 37).

It can be argued that these generalizing and homogenizing tendencies in her work stem from the fact that her work continues to be embedded in the “Women in Development” (WID) framework, and propelled by generalized policy initiatives and the political conservatism mentioned above, continue to form obstacles to making further key critical contributions.

Third, there is also in her descriptions of the women’s movement, a problematic narrative of progress, especially post-1990. She writes that in the years from 1991 to 2004, the governments became more liberal and those years “saw a remarkable upsurge in feminist consciousness” (Acharya 2010: 91). Among other things, Meena ji cites a growing NGO sector working for gender equality, more women in political parties and their sister organizations knowledgeable of the broader agenda of women’s rights, and social mobilizations, reinforced by international movements for gender equality and empowerment (Acharya 2010: 91–94). This narrative of progress stands in isolation to the larger power relations, institutional developments and transformations in state structures that took place, including political party patronage, the weakening of rule of law, the increase in impunity, high levels of corruption and weakened formal control institutions. The results are clear

when we look at sexual violence in Nepal today and recent constitutional developments and laws, including those on citizenship rights for women.

There are also key silences evident in her work. These include: the cooptation of feminisms by *bikās*, the benefits derived from a certain form of patriarchy and structured inequalities by particular women and thus their complicity in maintaining the system, issues of the redistribution of power at the household level and notions of sexuality (i.e., beyond those imposed by Hindu patriarchy), and identities of, for example, lesbians, gays, bi-sexuals, transgendered and intersex in which the fluidity of social constructions comes to the fore.

Concluding Remarks

I end by stating that Meena ji's dedication to research and thus the search for knowledge throughout her productive career has been impressive. And while the impact of her work on research on women in Nepal is multiple and varied, I can only point to a few examples from my own work.

As noted above, I have used Meena ji's analysis of the women's movement/feminist movement in Nepal, and added to it, highlighting certain issues that I found missing, or uneasy in her analysis. This includes my critique of homogenized identities of women in Nepal (Tamang 2002a) and building on Meena ji's work on the secondary role played by sister organizations of political parties—the post 1990 role of the Maoists and other political parties in furthering feminist demands (Tamang 2009). My work on civil society is shaped by her work on NGOs and women's political and social organizations, including the role of foreign aid, and I extend the critiques in many ways including the roles played by high-caste elite women (Tamang 2002b). My recent work on elected political women focuses on representation and the need to look beyond numbers to actual meaningful participation and the role of the household and social relations in contouring the possibilities and limits of women in politics (Tamang 2018). While I also have failed to exercise my citation politics and under-cited Meena ji among others, my debt to her work on the household and politics is cumulative.

I end here by thanking Meena ji for all her intellectual contributions, and importantly, also for how she has lived her feminist principles. She has through the years maintained a feminist professionalism—by which I mean a sense of equality hard to find among feminist *netīs*. She has always addressed me as Seira ji and *tapāī*—this in the context of the slips to *bahinī*, Seira, etc.

of others, Nepali women and men. And we've had productive conversations despite different views—she's asked for readings from me—imagine! In Nepal's context, this is amazing, refreshing and a testimony to who she is and how she has and continues to live her life.

Thank you Meena ji.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this text was delivered as a lecture in Kathmandu on October 3, 2019. I am grateful to the Social Science Baha for the invitation to give that lecture as the first of the “Nanda R. and Pamela L. Shrestha Lecture Series: Honouring Nepal Scholars.” I am further indebted to Devendra Uprety, Anjam Singh and Pratyoush Onta for their incisive comments on earlier drafts and the painstaking work of SINHAS editors.

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Biographical Note

Seira Tamang's research interests have focused on gender, state and democracy. She is the author of numerous articles in English and Nepali that have appeared in edited volumes and journals such as *Citizenship Studies*; *Feminist Review*; *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*; *Nepali Journal of Contemporary Studies*; *Samaj Adhyayan* and *Studies in Nepali History and Society*. She is also a former chair of Martin Chautari. Email: seirat@gmail.com