

CHAUTARI QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

No. 10 | July-September 2025

REGULAR DISCUSSIONS AND SEMINARS

Between July and September 2025 Martin Chautari continued its regular discussion series on Sundays and Tuesdays at its own premises. 20 such events were held; two of these were book discussions. On July 27, the book *Dhorpatan: Itihas, Samaj ra Artha-rajniti*, published by Dhorpatan Sarokar Samaj in 2025 was discussed. The 560-

page book is edited by Ujir Magar, Harichan Chhantyal, Jhakendra Gharti Magar and Gobinda Chhantyal. This book explores and documents the politics, history and political-economy of the Dhorpatan region of Baglung District in Gandaki Province, Nepal. The book contains research articles, memoirs and commentaries contributed by various writers. In the discussion event, two independent writers/journalists, Nabin Bibhas and Sushma Barali, commented on the book. One of the book's editors, Harichan Chhantyal, responded to their comments and shared his experiences in putting together the book.

On August 10, another book *Bhuktaman: Rajyako Akarmanyata ra Nagarikko Nirihata*, published by Shangrila Media Group in 2080 v.s., was discussed. This book is written by Dharendra Sinal who is a journalist, development worker and human rights activist. It is based on the author's own experiences and observations regarding Nepal's health service practices, policies and politics. Madhusudan Subedi, a Professor at the Patan Academy of Health Sciences and a member of Martin Chautari, and Sushmita Aryal, a Legal Adviser at Kathmandu Metropolitan City commented on the book. The author Dharendra Sinal, responded to their comments and spoke about scope of the book.

Out of 20 discussions held during this quarter, two were held under the Democracy Dialogue Series which is jointly organized with Democracy Resource Center Nepal (DRCN).



Nabin Bibhas and Sushma Barali commented on the book discussion event on July 27.



Madhusudan Subedi and Sushmita Aryal commented on the book discussion event on August 10.

Two discussions were held under the Karnali Discourse Series which is jointly organized with Karnali Discourse Society.

Due to protests organized by members of “Gen-Z” and the subsequent violence recorded in the Kathmandu Valley and across Nepal on September 8 and 9, Chautari decided to cancel all the discussions and seminars that had been scheduled between September 9 and 21. No discussions had been planned for the rest of September due to the Dashain festival.

CHAUTARI ANNUAL CONFERENCE – 2025

Chautari Annual Conference – 2025 will be held on November 26–28 at the MC premises in Kathmandu. The call for abstracts of papers and panels was put out on February 1, 2025. The extended abstract submission deadline was June 30. On July 27, 2025, the Conference Organizing



Closing session of Chautari Annual Conference – 2024.

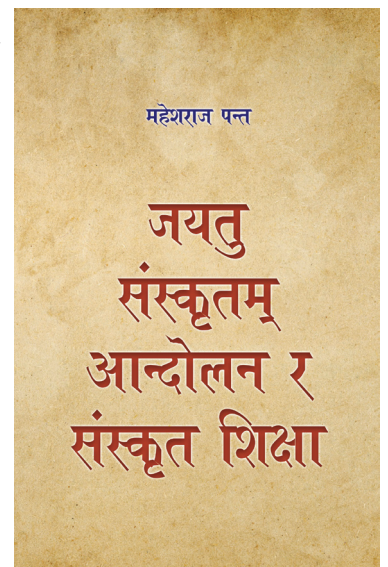
Committee selected 110 papers, including four panel proposals. The deadline for the submission of full papers of 4,000–5,000 words is October 30, 2025.

NEW CHAUTARI BOARD

The Annual General Meeting of Chautari was held on September 22. The meeting approved the progress and financial reports for the last fiscal year (2024–2025) and the work plan and budget for the current fiscal year. A new executive committee has been formed with Kumar Pandey (chair), Kailash Rai (vice-chair), Seira Tamang (secretary), Man Kumari Thada (treasurer), Surendra Man Shakya, Pramod Bhatta and J.B. Biswokarma (members).

NEW PUBLICATION

Towards the end of the Rana era (1846–1951) of Nepali history, students at the Tindhara Sanskrit Pakshala in Kathmandu went on a strike making various demands. The Rana government under Prime Minister Padma Shamsher, was eventually forced to address their concerns. This movement, named Jayatu Sanskritam (or Hail Sanskrit), was primarily an educational protest, but its roots were



also intertwined with hardcore politics. The Jayatu Sanskritam movement, therefore, is considered a significant event in Nepali history. While a number of writings (books, articles, and memoir essays) about this movement do exist, the correspondences between the then-director of the Sanskrit Education Department, Hemraj Sharma, and the Rana rulers had not been made public until now. Eminent Nepali historian Dr Mahes Raj Pant has not only compiled these letters in the book *Jayatu Sanskritam Andolan ra Sanskrit Shiksha* but has also analyzed the movement and its



Dr Mahes Raj Pant

impact on Sanskrit education in the country. Those interested in Nepal's educational and political history will find this book useful. Its table of contents can be found at <https://martinchautari.org.np/mc-publications/jayatu-sanskritam-movement-and-sanskrit-education>



Dinesh Dulal speaking at the Urja discussion event on July 29.

CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES

Urja Policy Discussion Series

Martin Chautari and Urja Khabar have been jointly organizing the monthly energy policy discussion series since April 2024. As part of this series, on July 29, Dinesh Dulal, Chief of Sustainable Energy Banking, NMB Bank spoke on “Investment in Energy: Opportunity or Compulsion for the Banking Sector?” The second seminar, held on August 26, 2025, was led by energy and climate change expert Bivek Raj Kandel. He spoke on “From Production to Market: Contradictions on the Nepal’s Energy Transformation.” Bhoj Raj Poudel, a development economist, also shared his views as a discussant. The third discussion in September could not be held due to the Dashain festival.

TESTIMONIES ABOUT THE IMPACT OF CHAUTARI’S WORK

A Shared Journey

As a social anthropologist engaged in educational research in Nepal for the last three decades, I grew up with Martin Chautari as an academic backbone during my stays in Kathmandu. I have witnessed how MC developed from a debate forum for engaged, critical researchers into a substantive research organization involved in a broad range of academically advanced projects on issues of high relevance to Nepali society.

From early 2015 and over the following eight years, I had the pleasure of being part of a comprehensive collaborative

research project, *Locating Public Finance Dynamics in Education in Nepal*, funded by the Danish Development Agency, Danida. As the lead institution, Martin Chautari competently took charge and guided partners from Kathmandu University and Aarhus University through the ups and downs that any large project spanning different disciplines, research traditions, and nationalities entails—all spiced up by the uncertainties created by COVID-19. As highlighted in Danida’s evaluation report, “... despite the Covid upheaval the project has published impressively,” including numerous academic articles, policy briefs, media posts, and not least, four PhD dissertations.

Working with the team at Martin Chautari was not only professionally rewarding but also personally enriching. The spirit of mutual respect, intellectual generosity, and genuine curiosity made the collaboration feel more like a shared journey than a formal partnership.

A Crucial Chautari for Nepal Studies

I cannot recall when I first heard the name Martin Chautari. Even before that, I had already recognized some of its (then, some still now) core members, first as editors and/or contributors of *Studies in Nepali History and Society* (SINHAS), the semi-annual academic journal full of



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surprisingly innovative and critical papers, and as editors of several Nepali books in media studies. Since SINHAS, Chautari Book Series, and *Media Adhyayan* began to be published directly by Martin Chautari, they have provided major reference points in my research on Nepal. Notably, SINHAS has become one of the first choices when considering where to submit

papers on Nepal Studies in English, not only because it has been one of the best academic journals in Nepal Studies but also because I have received highly rigorous and constructive comments from its reviewers.

For over a decade now, when I visit the Kathmandu Valley, I have endeavored to attend seminars and discussions regularly held in MC. These events, where people from diverse backgrounds engage in free and equal debate, sometimes in English, sometimes in Nepali, have provided me with a much wider range of insights than obtained from reading literature or talking with my Nepali friends. In all these senses, I believe MC have served as a crucial *chautari* for Nepal Studies in both publication and events.

MC has been at the Heart of My Journey as a Researcher



Uma Pradhan
Associate Professor
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Martin Chautari has been at the heart of my journey as a researcher, especially through its focus on education in Nepal, which has shaped much of my own work. I first began engaging with its work during my DPhil fieldwork in 2013, and it has remained central to my research ever since. After completing my PhD, I joined the project *Locating Public Finance Dynamics in*

Education in Nepal led by Chautari, working as a postdoctoral researcher based at Aarhus University, Denmark. That experience was a real turning point for me—it gave me the grounding and confidence I needed as an early career researcher. Working closely with a team whose scholarship I had long admired was both inspiring and profoundly formative. I have also been deeply influenced by Martin Chautari's contribution to Nepal Studies. *Studies in Nepali History and Society* is still the leading journal in the field,



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Professor
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and I have been fortunate not only to publish there and engage with its vibrant debates but also to serve as an Associate Editor. I have also relied extensively on the resources and networks that Martin Chautari sustains. It is hard to overstate how important its role has been, both for the wider study of Nepal and for my own research journey.

A Hub of Knowledge Creation, Research Dissemination, and Debate

My initial interaction with the team from Martin Chautari started about six years ago, first as an audience member in one seminar it had organized and then three times as a speaker. I have presented on lab-based pedagogy in education, shared insights from my PhD research, and discussed transdisciplinary research. As a management scholar and educator, I was deeply impressed by the participants'



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interest and insightful comments, many of whom were from fields other than management. Chautari's role as a confluence of diverse ideas is what intrigues me the most. The debates, conversations, and deliberations on various topics are truly admirable. Equally commendable is the team's persistent effort to bring together scholars, practitioners, and researchers to address contemporary issues.

My interactions with Chautari's participants and team members have enhanced my research, writing, and thinking skills. Beyond its discussion sessions, Chautari's publications are notable for their high quality. The library's collection, which covers society, literature, economics, and a wide range of other topics, is invaluable. The book *Nepal in the Long 1950s* (2024) which I recently read was insightful. I am confident that Chautari will continue to spark critical and contemporary discussions on the changing political, social, and economic systems that will shape Nepal's future. I wholeheartedly support and encourage its ongoing efforts, whether in research, discussion, mentoring, or as a hub of knowledge and a library. Its rich history is a treasure that must be preserved for future generations.

Something Quite Extraordinary

Martin Chautari is really something quite extraordinary. It has given Nepal Studies a firm platform for knowledge formation and sharp intellectual dialogue across three different sets of boundaries: between different research disciplines (such as history, anthropology, political science, literature, economic history, Indology, musicology); between





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Nepali scholars and foreign researchers from an array of countries and academic traditions (such as France, Germany, Austria, Japan, Britain, the USA, the Nordic countries); and between public intellectuals, journalists, academic researchers, social activists, and people working in the development sector as well as in policy and politics. What all have in common is a solid focus on Nepal

and a deep engagement with concrete Nepali issues.

This variety of perspectives has served to enrich the work of participants, has a wide variety of applications (development, public intellectual discussion, policy, education and so on), and has fostered high quality research.

While research on Nepal always has had an inter- or multi-disciplinary orientation and involved practitioners from more or less all over the world, the widely scattered Nepal Studies “diaspora” (of which I myself am a member) typically came together only at few and long-between international conferences. With Chautari’s infrastructure of discussions, journals and books we now have a central node for exchange of ideas and research results, thus making the globally dispersed scholars of Nepal into a real community. Chautari’s own research efforts and mentorships mean that this community is also continuously reinforced with (often up-and-coming) Nepali scholars.

I myself have researched the cultural, media-related, social, material and political transformation of Nepal—from the Panchayat era to the Republic—with musical practices as a point of entry since 1981, with PhD fieldwork in 1985–1988, follow up research *in situ* in 1992–1998 plus a number of shorter periods since then. When Martin Chautari gradually came into being, I found it very welcome since (unlike my French, British or German colleagues) I had no relevant infrastructure “at home” to rely upon—and indeed indispensable for my research work.

A little paradoxically, I found Chautari to be fundamentally important when working from my home environment at a Swedish university, far from Nepal. Chautari—and especially the journal *Studies in Nepali History and Society* (SINHAS)—makes it possible to keep up the connection, meet writings of upcoming scholars, and stay tuned to what goes on at the research frontier of Nepal Studies. I’ve learned a lot also from being a reviewer for a number of SINHAS articles. Unlike most other academic journals, in an issue of SINHAS I regularly find all articles worth reading: they present

interesting data, well-thought-out arguments, and to-the-point discussion. The writers, moreover, clearly know what they talk about!

I myself see SINHAS as the first-hand alternative for an article. This is where one can write for informed readers (as well as probing and initiated reviewers!) and reach a relevant readership. In a SINHAS article one can go directly to the case at hand—in this journal unlike most others, it is not necessary to devote a third or so of the paper to “background” information on Nepal, or to refrain oneself to make points only on an abstract analytical level which will work for “any” society or culture.

What Chautari in general and SINHAS in particular provides us with, then, is high quality research that instead of staying within (often Western-biased) internal disciplinary concerns (theories, arguments and so on) remains rooted in Nepali concerns and realities. I’m glad that I have been able to take a small part in Martin Chautari’s efforts to institutionalize, enhance and put into practical action Nepal Studies.

NEWS ABOUT MC MEMBERS

Bhaskar Gautam, Rukh Gurung, Pratyoush Onta, Sirjana Subba and Devendra Uprety contributed various articles to the annual magazine, *Sankathan: Manthanmala 2081-82* published recently. A publication of Bookworm Foundation, this issue focuses on various aspects of the connected histories and relationships between Nepal and India. A translation of an original reportage in Hindi, written by Jagadish Chandra Aroda related to then Indian PM Jawaharlal Nehru’s visit to Nepal in June 1951, done by Lokranjan Parajuli was also published in the same issue.

Bandana Gyawali is continuing to do research on the history of early 20th century Nepal. She has recently published an article with the title “Trade Records as Historical Source: The Daily Accounts of Subba Tirtharaj Manandhar, 1974 vs” (*Purnima* 148: 500–539, 2082 v.s.). According to Gyawali, this “piece is based on a trader’s daily accounts from 1974 v.s. Drawing from the cash entries, it explores non-narratives and fragments in history writing.”

Jhakendra Gharti Magar recently attained tenure as a lecturer in sociology at Tribhuvan University. Pratyoush Onta spoke on the inaugural session of the Kalam Konversations on “Nepali Non-Fiction Writing, Publishing, and the Public Sphere.” This session was moderated by the journalist and writer Anish Ghimire and was held in the r-sala of Nepalaya in Kathmandu on September 5, 2025.



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