

CHAUTARI QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

No. 9 | April-June 2025

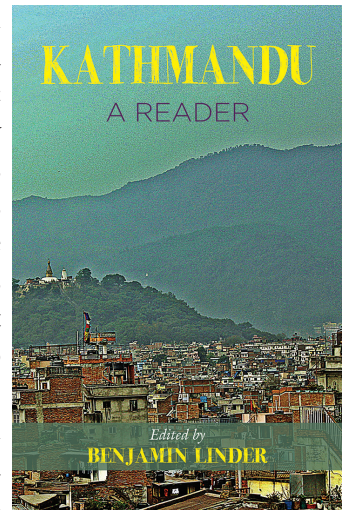
SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

Martin Chautari's seminar series are held on Sundays and Tuesdays at its own premises. Between April 1 and June 30, 27 events were held under the Sunday Research Seminar Series, the (Tuesday) Mangalbarey Discussion Series and additional sessions. Two of these were book discussions. The first one, focused on *Kathmandu: A Reader* (Martin

Chautari, 2025), was held on May 30. This book is a compilation of 16 academic articles that primarily document the many changes that Kathmandu has experienced in the past three decades. The anthology was edited by anthropologist Benjamin Linder who has also written a long introduction.

The book discussion began with a video-recorded presentation by the book's editor Benjamin Linder who could not be present in person. Pranaya Rana, writer/journalist; Rachana Upadhyaya, PhD researcher, University of Bristol; and Sumina Rai Karki, public policy and governance expert, shared their comments on the book before they took questions from other participants.

The second book event was held on June 8 and was focused on the recently published monograph *Implementing a Global Health Programme: Smallpox and Nepal* (Manchester University Press, 2025). This book was written by Susan Heydon who is a historian of the health sector in Nepal and an Associate Professor in Social Pharmacy at the University

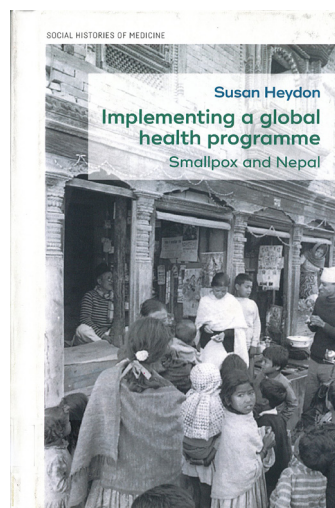


Pranaya Rana, Rachana Upadhyaya and Sumina Rai Karki speaking at the book discussion event on May 30.



Susan Heydon speaking about her book.

of Otago, New Zealand. The author herself was one of the speakers and she presented a summary of her book. Dr Anup Subedee, a practicing physician and an expert on infectious diseases, was the discussant. He has subsequently



published a review of this book in *SINHAS* 30(1) June 2025 issue, which can be read at <https://martinchautari.org.np/storage/files/sinhas-vol30-no1-book-review-anup-subedee.pdf>.

Out of 27 discussions held during this quarter, three discussions each were held under the Karnali discourse series and the Energy policy dialogue series. The scheduled seminar for May 4 had to be

cancelled at the last minute upon the request of the speaker.

On June 27, Martin Chautari along with Social Science Baha, Nepal Madhesh Foundation and North South Collectives organized an event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the classic, *Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal*, written by Frederick H. Gaige. Speakers were Arjun



Speakers Arjun Guneratne, CK Lal and Indu Tharu sharing their views about the book.

Guneratne, Professor of Anthropology, Macalester College, US; CK Lal, prominent social and political commentator; and Indu Tharu, writer and activist. The program was held at Nepal Tourism Board, Pradarshani Marg, Kathmandu. The same event was also held in Janakpur the following day.

CHAUTARI ANNUAL CONFERENCE – 2025

Chautari Annual Conference – 2025 will be held on November 26–28 at the MC premises in Thapathali, Kathmandu. The call for abstracts of papers and panels was put out on February 1, 2025. By the extended submission deadline of June 30, we received about 110 abstracts of proposed papers and four proposals for panels. The Conference Organizing Committee will read these submissions and make an announcement of selected papers and panels by July 27, 2025. The deadline for the submission of full papers of 4,000–5,000 words is October 30, 2025.

Until 2019, the annual conference used to be held in the month of April. The conference was not held during 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2022, it has been held during the last week of November each year.

PUBLICATIONS

Samaj Adhyayan

Samaj Adhyayan is 20 years old! 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*). Volume 20 became available in late May. This issue contains a special section on the history of school education in Nepal. Two articles look at educational initiatives in eastern Nepal during the late



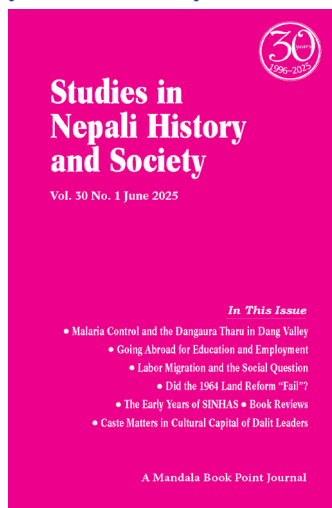
19th and early 20th centuries. The first by Arjun Panthi analyzes the work of Shadanand Adhikari in the founding and management of the Sanskrit Pathshala in Dingla. The second article by Devendra Uprety looks at the life of businessman-educator Krishna P. Koirala and the initiatives he took to establish various schools in eastern Nepal.

The third article written by the famous historian Mahes Raj Pant looks at the strike launched by the students of the Ranipokhari Sanskrit Pathshala in Kathmandu in 1947. The fourth article by Lokranjan Parajili and Rukh Gurung revisits the early history of three boarding schools established in Kathmandu immediately after the end of Rana rule in

1951. Indologists and historians Nirajan Kafle and Rajan Khatiwada present “notes from the archive” with five documents related to the history of education in Nepal. The issue also contains two other articles, two commentaries and four book reviews. Further details about the table of contents of this issue and the full-texts of the four book reviews it contains can be found at <https://martinchautari.org.np/public/mc-publications/samaj-adhyayan-20>.

Studies in Nepali History and Society

Studies in Nepali History and Society (SINHAS), a leading journal of Nepal Studies, is now 30 years old! Volume 30, no. 1, June 2025 issue of the journal was handed over to the publisher for printing in late June. This publication is editorially curated at Martin Chautari and is published by Mandala Book Point. This milestone issue contains six full-length articles and five book reviews. The first two



articles are related to Nepali history of the long 1960s. The first one is a reassessment of land reform initiated in 1964 with data from the eastern Tarai. The second one analyzes the consequences of malaria control and land reform on the Dangaura Tharu of the Dang Valley in western Nepal. The third article asks how caste matters for Dalit leaders.

The fourth article surveys the aspirations for education and employment abroad among youth and parents in Chitwan in central Nepal. The fifth article “builds on recent scholarly work on the question of social protection of migrant workers and examines how migrant-sending states facilitate (or deny) access to welfare under the façade of ‘management.’” In the final essay, one of the founding editors, Pratyoush Onta, recollects the early years of the journal. Further details about the table of contents of this issue and the full-texts of the five book reviews it contains can be found at <https://martinchautari.org.np/mc-publications/sinhas-volume-30-number-1>

CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES

On May 25, 2025, Chautari organized a workshop entitled “Journeys to the Past: An Anthropology and History.” It was facilitated by Amy Leigh Johnson, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Georgia College & State University, US. The aim of the workshop was to “discuss different ways anthropologists experience traveling in the past and making those worlds meaningful for people in the present. ... Visiting the past—whether in written documents, artifacts, or social



A participant giving a presentation on behalf of his group as part of the workshop activities on May 25, 2025.

memory—involves immersing oneself in a different way of life and translating that cultural world for a present-day audience.” The workshop was attended by 34 participants out of which 12 were women.

Energy Policy Dialogue Series

Martin Chautari and Urja Khabar have been jointly organizing seminars under the Urja Policy Dialogue Series once a month. In this series, there were three discussions held between April and June. On April 29, Kumar Pandey, Executive Head at National Hydro Power Limited and Chairperson of Martin Chautari, gave an experience-based



Kumar Pandey giving a presentation at the seminar on April 29, 2025.

presentation under the title “Three and Half Decades Dedicated to Energy Development: A Reflection.” The second seminar, held on May 27, was led by Netra Prasad Gyawali, former Chief Executive Officer at Rashtriya Prasaran Grid Company Limited. He spoke on “A Strategic Roadmap to Elevate Nepal’s Transmission Infrastructure to the Next Level.”

The third energy discussion was held on June 24. Chandan Kumar Ghosh, Director of the Power Systems Management Department at Nepal Electricity Authority spoke on the “The Current Status and Challenges in the Management of Power Systems in Nepal.”

SELECTED TESTIMONIES ABOUT THE IMPACT OF MC’S WORK

Chautari Gave My Scholarship a New Lease of Life



Swatahsiddha Sarkar
Professor, Centre for Himalayan Studies,
University of North Bengal

It is a pleasure to delineate how impactful Martin Chautari, the Research Institute located at Thapathali, Kathmandu, has been to my own life and career.

I have been associated with Martin Chautari (henceforth MC) since 2015 in connection with a research project on “Nepal Studies in India: A Survey of Themes and Perspectives in Indian Sociological and Social Anthropological Literature” that was funded by the BP Koirala India-Nepal Foundation (BPKF) and was executed by MC. Not to mention, I was only digitally acquainted with one of the Research Directors of MC (Dr Onta) during that point of time but when I first visited Kathmandu to participate in a Brainstorming Workshop in connection with the project, I became aware of a group of finest quality of scholars working at MC and was amazed by their academic professionalism, seriousness, and untiring spirit of hard work with a tint of cooperation, comradeship and empathy.

It is a world in itself that I came to realize by bits and pieces every time I encountered MC. Since 2015, meeting MC colleagues and attending MC Annual Conference has become a regular affair for me that allowed me to test many of the ideas I have been experimenting with. I have no hesitancy in saying that the panels that were pitched by myself along with my colleagues and research students from my university (University of North Bengal, India) have been seriously taken up by the MC colleagues and also by the conference participants so much so that we came out with

publications out of such presentations and could plan for preparing our manuscripts as well. I think our papers read out in these panels have received their first round of peer review comments on the dais of the Conferences we attended so far. The enriching comments and the sharp criticism and constructive suggestions offered by the audience led us revise our work and such inputs were immensely productive for our purpose. In short, myself, my colleagues and students of the University of North Bengal (NBU) have benefitted more than perhaps what we reciprocated to MC.

Besides attending Conferences, I must say that I have received huge support from MC library. Even in my physical absence the library staff have been so efficient that they provided me in lightning speed whatever kind of support I asked for my own research purpose. Many of my research students by now have visited MC library and were all equally astonished by the richness of its collection and systematic management.

I am in the Editorial Board of MC’s flagship journal *Studies in Nepali History and Society* (SINHAS) in the capacity of Associate Editor since January 2023. I feel fortunate to be in the editorial team and the experience of being a member of the team and the experience of being an avid reader of a Journal (before 2023) and also as a contributor to the Journal as an author are different from each other. SINHAS has been continuously getting published for three decades now, and I first encountered SINHAS during my PhD years in the NBU library while searching out publications on Nepal from Nepal. I was captivated by seeing some of the initial issues that were available in our university library. Later on, when I came across with MC and developed my familiarity, I came to realize how important SINHAS is for the reputation not only of MC but also of the entire country, if not of entire South Asia itself. Being a contributor, I became familiar with the rigorous blind peer review process that SINHAS practices while entertaining a submission for publication. Maintaining a good journal demands meticulous review process, timely feedback, and facilitating the authors while revising their work particularly when some submissions appear to be valuable for its content but not for its style. I, myself, have received such facilitations and that undoubtedly improved the quality of my own work substantially before appearing in the pages of SINHAS. But, as a member of the editorial team, I now can feel why SINHAS is SINHAS. The professionalism, hard work, punctuality and commitment that the Editors maintain while giving serious attention to the pieces under review is perhaps unparalleled. I can vouch for SINHAS as one of the best platforms on South Asian Scholarship that is getting regularly published from South Asia itself.

I think my own scholarship since 2015 has gained a new lease of life and that is only because of my association with MC and the colleagues who have been striving hard tirelessly

towards reinforcing updated and diversified scholarship on Nepal in an institutional frame that runs beyond the purview of state funded universities. MC has a lot of potential and the worth of this claim gets validated with my recent book *Contours of South Asian Social Anthropology: Connecting India and Nepal* (Routledge, 2022), which was the result of my association with the MC executed research project (mentioned above) that I completed under MC's stewardship in 2015. I wish MC a prosperous future in the years to come so that many a scholar from within and outside of Nepal, like myself, gets benefitted out of their association with the institution.

An Accessible Academic Space



Samjhana Wagle Bhattarai
Independent Researcher

Around the year 2072 v.s. (2015 A.D.), I was pursuing an MPhil. in Sociology at Tribhuvan University in Kirtipur. During that time, I had to read various research-based articles published in different journals. However, such academic materials were not easily available at the university and they still aren't.

It was amidst this lack that I heard about Martin Chautari from seniors and friends. That is when I first visited Chautari, and my association with it continues to this day. I benefited from using its library and the resources available there to finish my degree. For those living in Kathmandu and involved in study and research, the lack of reliable resource materials is partially redressed by the Chautari library. In addition, MC provides a calm and academically supportive environment for students.

My first journal article was also published in *Samaj Adhyayan*, a journal edited at and published by Martin Chautari. This publication helped me gain a modest foothold in the academic sphere. Similarly, various academic discussions, workshops, and conferences organized by Martin Chautari—both at the national and international levels—have provided me and many others with access to an academic platform. The academic seminars held at MC, often led by renowned professors and scholars from Nepali and foreign universities, have played a significant role in the creation and dissemination of knowledge about Nepal. I try to participate in these discussions as often as I can. This has not only connected me to the academic world but also contributed to my personal development. For this reason, I consider Chautari an important companion in my academic journey.

Collaborating with Chautari was an Enriching Experience



Safal Ghimire
Manager - Policy, Research & Evaluation
Department of Justice
Queensland Government, Australia

My engagements with Chautari have been a transformative experience, significantly shaping the trajectory and breadth of my research pursuits. I have passionately followed Chautari's works since 2004. Its public discussions, library resources, and publications have played a pivotal role in shaping my comprehension of media, democracy, livelihood, sustainable development, and military affairs. The insights gleaned from Chautari's publications, both in terms of research methodology and content, have proven invaluable.

Chautari's unwavering dedication to rigorous and peer-reviewed research is evident in the quality of its publications. The depth of analysis and extensive fieldwork showcased in some of its works has consistently served as an inspiration for my own projects. Access to its publications, facilitated through its library and website, has been instrumental in cultivating a more nuanced understanding of the intricacies within my own research domain.

Collaborating with Chautari, including the reception of a research grant—the Chautari Media Fellowship in 2009—was an enriching experience. The critical yet constructive peer-review process employed by Chautari elevated the rigor and credibility of my work. The feedback provided by Chautarians enhanced the validity and quality of my outputs.

Participation in Chautari seminars is intellectually stimulating. This platform has allowed me to disseminate my research findings to a broader audience, renowned for its critical yet civil discourse on researched ideas. Such a discussion culture is crucial to nurture in an emerging democracy like Nepal. The constructive dialogues and diverse perspectives shared during these sessions not only refine ideas but also cultivate valuable connections with like-minded researchers. Chautari's commitment to fostering a collaborative research community is evident in the vibrant intellectual exchange that characterize these events.

Chautari's commendable efforts in cultivating a research culture among aspiring Nepali academics and elevating the quality and impact of evidence-based publications deserve unequivocal appreciation. I extend my gratitude to Chautari for enriching my academic journey through its publications, collaborative publishing processes, seminars, and regular discussions.



UPDATE ON MC ENDOWMENT FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

Since early 2023, MC has been raising money for its Endowment Fund. The target of the Fund is NRs. 50,000,000 (fifty million rupees). By the end of June 2025 the collected amount, including the interest earned thus far, has reached nearly 10 million Nepali rupees. This amount includes contributions from our friends and well-wishers from within and outside of Nepal as well as MC's own seed contribution to the Fund. The amount thus far raised is held in several fixed accounts. Only the interest earned from the collected funds will be used to support MC's core activities. Further information on the Endowment Fund Campaign including the ways in which you can make a gift contribution can be obtained at <https://martinchautari.org.np/appeal-for-contribution-to-chautari-endowment-fund>.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS OF MC MEMBERS



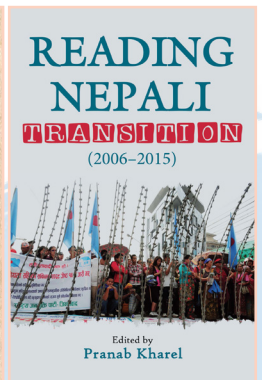
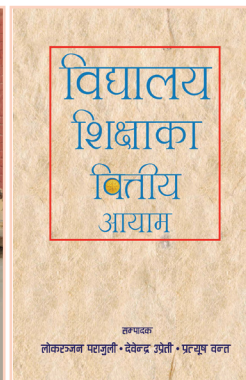
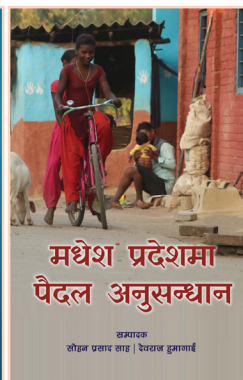
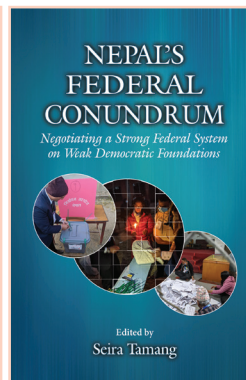
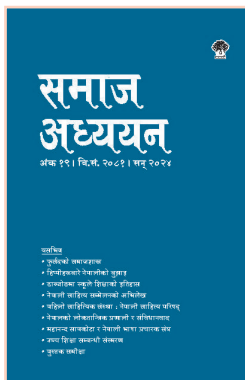
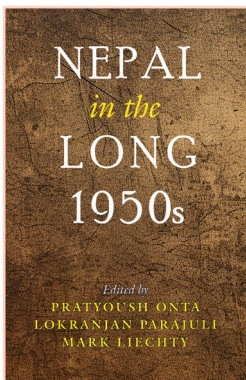
Sangita Thebe-Limbu was awarded a PhD in Risk and Disaster Reduction from University College London, UK in June 2025. She is now a Research Associate at the Urban Institute of the University of Sheffield, UK.

Sangita's dissertation was titled "Between Recognition and Erasure: Indigenous Knowledge, Gender, Culture, and Socio-Environmental Politics in Nepal." Its abstracts states: "As Indigenous Knowledge gains increasing visibility in the global climate change discourse, this study critically examines the political, epistemological, and ontological tensions that shape its contemporary recognition and application. While

Indigenous Knowledge is frequently referenced in climate adaptation efforts, such recognition often remains superficial, marked by conceptual ambiguities, essentialist portrayals, and depoliticized narratives. Grounded in feminist and decolonial perspectives and situated in Nepal, this research explores how Indigeneity and Indigenous Knowledge are constituted, represented, and contested across diverse actors, scales, and contexts. A central case study highlights the riverine relationships of the Majhi Indigenous communities and their resistance to river diversion and hydropower induced displacement in Nepal's central hills. Drawing on nine months of fieldwork, combining ethnography, oral histories, archival and policy analysis, and autoethnography, this research engages with Indigenous activists, environmentalists, community members, engineers, policymakers, and development professionals to trace how knowledge, identity, and power intersect in environmental governance. I advance three core arguments: First, Indigenous Knowledge cannot be understood without engaging with the political struggles that have brought prominence to the categories of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Knowledge. Second, I critique reductive portrayals of Indigenous Peoples as isolated, distinct, and inherently harmonious with nature, advocating instead for a more nuanced understanding of Indigenous lives as complex, dynamic, and shaped by diverse aspirations, histories, and struggles, as articulated by Indigenous communities themselves. Third, I argue that meaningful recognition of Indigenous Knowledge, which centers place-based ontologies, gendered knowledges, and the right to self-determination, requires addressing the ontological, discursive, and legal contestations that underpin its marginalization, particularly in relation to authority, consent, development, and temporality. This research contributes to scholarship on Indigeneity, decoloniality, gender, and development in South Asia, while offering critical insights into how global narratives of energy transition and climate justice are interpreted and contested across diverse landscapes and realities."

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MARTIN CHAUTARI PUBLICATIONS



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