

Martin Chautari

invites you to a

Lecture by

Jeevan R. Sharma

on

**From Subjects to Citizens? Political Economy
of Social Change in Rural Nepal**

Martin Chautari Seminar Hall, Thapathali, 7 January 2014 (Tuesday), 3:00pm

Nepal is on a cusp of a major “transformation” from a relatively stable condition of reproduction of socio-economic relations based on feudal and caste strictures to a more fluid and open condition where the old “order” is changing if not collapsing and a new order is emerging. Based on a fieldwork in rural Nepal since 2008, this paper discusses that alongside the rapid and compressed political change in Nepal, there is clear evidence of a qualitative “step-change” in the way Nepali society is organized which is beyond the continual or “regular ” process of incremental change that are always at work. Many existing social norms and patterns are being challenged and are being re-negotiated. A major transformation is taking place in the political economy of rural livelihoods with its diversification and population mobility. Although traditional forms of semi-feudal labor relations have not disappeared completely and some poorer households are still engaged in semi-feudal and caste-based labor arrangements in agriculture, there is a clear evidence of increasing numbers of laboring households involved in wage labor within, or increasingly outside, the village. At the same time awareness of rights about discrimination based on caste, ethnicity and gender has increased massively, the collective agency of women, oppressed and marginalized groups has escalated and has led to a durable step-change in how individuals, groups, and institutions interrelate. However, ‘transformation,’ such as it is, has yet to make a serious dent in the structural violence that continues to characterize life amongst Nepalis either at home or abroad. Mobility of labor has not necessarily meant more freedom for poorer migrants, although the idea of freedom appears to be driving much of the out-migration from rural Nepal .

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Dr. Jeevan R. Sharma is Lecturer in South Asia and International Development at the University of Edinburgh where he teaches and researches on international development issues with a specific focus in South Asia. His current areas of interest include marginal areas of South Asia, border-crossing, political violence, social transformation, livelihoods, labor mobility, masculinities, brokerage, public health systems and foreign aid. Between 2010 and 2012, he studied research cultures in the health sector in South Asia as part of a multidisciplinary team on a DFID / ESRC funded research project "[Biomedical and Health Experimentation in South Asia: Critical Perspectives on Collaboration, Governance and Competition](https://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/staff/south_asian_studies/jeevan_sharma)". He will be commencing a couple of research projects as Co-Investigator from May 2014 on brokerage in maternal and child health service development and delivery in Nepal and Malawi and on documentation of torture and ill-treatment in Nepal, Bangladesh and Kenya, both funded by DFID/ESRC. Between 2009 and 2011, he worked as a Senior Researcher and Assistant Professor at Feinstein International Centre at Tufts University where he carried out extensive fieldwork on foreign aid, Maoist insurgency and local perceptions of social change in Nepal. For details on Sharma's research and publications please visit: https://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/staff/south_asian_studies/jeevan_sharma.

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This is a public lecture and admission is free and open to all.