

Defect of Modern Development: An Analysis of Destroying Traditional Chautaris

Saroj Raj Panta¹ 

¹Teaching Assistant
Sociology and Anthropology Department
Dhawalagiri Multiple Campus, Baglung
Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Corresponding Author

Saroj Raj Panta
Email: sarojpanta.sp84@gmail.com

To Cite this article: Panta, S. R. Defect of Modern Development: An Analysis of Destroying Traditional Chautaris. International Research Journal of MMC, 6(1), 247–266.
<https://doi.org/10.3126/irjmmc.v6i1.78153>

Submitted: 8 March 2025

Accepted: 20 March 2025

Published: 31 March 2025

Abstract

This paper examines the destruction of Chautari in Phalebas Municipality-7, Limithana, Parbat, using a survey research design and purposive sampling. The study found that modern development activities are responsible for the decline of Chautaris, with most respondents citing the destruction of trees and the use of AC and fans instead of Chautari. The study also found that Bar, Peepal, and Sami trees play a crucial role in controlling harmful insects. The decline of Chautaris is attributed to migration, the decline of native traditional culture, the rise of modern transportation, and political influences. The lack of traditional rituals and the dominance of modern transportation contribute to the erosion of cultural continuity. The study emphasises the importance of preserving Chautaris to maintain the region's cultural heritage and highlights the need for strong collaboration among stakeholders, including academia, researchers, and planners. The findings will be beneficial for academia, researchers, and planners in addressing these issues and preserving the region's cultural heritage.

Keywords: Chautari, conservation, development, destroy, traditional

1. Introduction

In Nepal, the word “Chautari” translates to “rest stop,” but its significance extends far beyond this simple meaning. Traditionally, Chautari are circular stone structures constructed around the bases of banyan (*Ficus benghalensis* Linn.) or peepal (*Ficus religiosa* Linn) trees and often both found along trails and roads to provide shade and rest for travellers. In Nepal’s mid-hills, some Chautari are also built around lankuri (*Fraxinus floribunda* Wall.) trees, adding

to the region's distinctive landscape while serving the same purpose. These Chautari hold deep cultural, religious, and ecological significance, yet they are vanishing at an alarming rate, particularly in urban and suburban areas where infrastructure projects are booming.

Recently, in Nepal, these important assets of physical and spiritual life have been destroyed due to the rush to build roads in the name of development. With the convenience of motorways and the use of vehicles, Chautaris are being forgotten. As people stopped moving, the importance of Chautaris also started to decrease. Chautaris are disappearing because trees are being cut down when roads are built, and people seek coolness from air conditioning and fans instead of Chautaris and do not want to plant new ones. Bar peepal destroy harmful insects and provides clean air all year round, making it very important from an environmental point of view. Bar peepal, mango, and sycamore trees play a role in controlling harmful insects such as locusts and American armyworms.

In the 20th century, new evolutionists believed that the future and fate of a culture depend on its ability to adapt to its environment. They considered the environment to be a crucial factor in determining the development of a culture. New-evolutionism posits that the development of human culture is tied to the energy used, and that cultural progress is not always linear but can also be regressive. Leslie A. White (1900-1975) is a prominent new-evolutionist known for his theory of Cultural Revolution, which emphasizes the role of energy in cultural development. White's work highlights the importance of energy in meeting human needs and driving cultural progress.

Chautari is a place to relax and unwind from the weariness of Batuwa, a place to take a break. However, with the expansion of the motorway, Chautaris are being forgotten. As people stop frequenting them, the significance of Chautari diminishes. In modern Nepal, amidst the rush to construct roads in the name of progress, will these vital elements of physical and spiritual well-being be eradicated? Chautari, the sanctuary of 'heavenly joy' cherished during the summer months, where one can lie down and rejuvenate, will it regain its former glory (Panta, February 8, 2024).

Nepali society is a melting pot of Hindu castes, tribes, and ethnic groups, each with its own unique language, culture, and way of life (Bista, 2001). Despite differences in climate, physical environment, culture, and society, Nepali society shares common concepts, symbols, and behaviors that reflect a consistent cultural heritage (Dahal, 1991). Unfortunately, these Chautaris are being destroyed in the name of development, disregarding their true value and importance. The number of Chautaris is decreasing over time, leading to conflicts like the incident in this study area, where an old worshipped Peepal Chautari cut down. This event sparked debates on whether to conserve or remove Chautaris for semi-urbanization.

In daily life, everybody is sharing and symbolizing the meaning 'CHAUTARI'. Chautari is unique existence and a part of study area. Chautari is a common word that Nepali people use in day to day spoken language as well as in the songs, literatures and philosophies. But unfortunately, day by day these Chautari are being destroyed in the name of development activities with disregarding the real value and importance of Chautari. In present time, the numbers of Chautari are in decreasing order in comparison with the past time. This is the issue of discussion to conserve the Chautari or to fell down the Chautari for urbanization. The rationale of study focused on this hot raised issue.

People have forgotton the importance of such structures used to be different when there were no road network and no hotel facilities. Due to the accessibility of road facilities in places,

the operation of hotels and restaurants in the market, and homestays in villages, the original structures of such historical importance are starting to collapse and disappear. Do not build new structures where there is no need; although this can be understood, what is the reason for the destruction of structures that have been built and used since ancient times? Where did we come from, which land, and from which civilisation did we come here? Or are we not careful with this serious question? It is sure to be determined.

The number of Chautaris is decreasing, and gradually, the local people are migrating, although they are becoming aware of the importance of Chautaris. Chautari is not a common word, but its meaning and function are important in Nepali culture. Public participation in the construction and management of Chautaris plays an important role in benefiting the ecological and cultural civilization of Nepali culture. This study aims to address this pressing issue by exploring the significance of Chautari through various perspectives. What is the historical and the current condition of "Chautari"? What is the significance of "Chautari"? Why are traditional Chautaris being destroyed and how can we preserve them?

2. Methods of Research

This study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, alongside descriptive and explanatory research designs, to gather data. Surveys, observations, and interviews were conducted with the villagers, utilizing questionnaires to obtain primary data. The sampling process involved selecting a representative group from the study area, specifically targeting 30 Chautaris from Phalebas Municipality-7, Limithana. In total, there were selected 42 Chautaris in the study area, from 92 were randomly selected. Additionally, secondary data was collected from various sources, including journals, books, and municipality profiles. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were conducted, with tables employed to enhance the understanding and interpretation of the findings.

2.1 Introduction of the Study Area

Nepal is divided into seven administrative provinces and 753 local bodies to decentralize power. Parbat, specifically Phalebas Municipality, is located in the Gandaki Province and is a famous area for its natural beauty. Phalebas Municipality is divided into 11 wards, each showcasing different cultural traits of Various castes, including Brahmin, Chhetris, Damai, Kami, and Sarki. According to census reports, the population of Limithana is facing a migration problem due to factors such as unemployment opportunities, a lack of quality education, health services, and sustainable development. Due to rapid migration and increasing development activities, the study area faces both opportunities and challenges in sustainable development.

Between the Gangetic Plain and the Tibetan Plateau, at latitudes of 26° 22' and 33° 27' in the north, Nepal contains the world's most diversified climate range and physical environment. The Nepali society is made up of a Bariety of Hindu castes, tribes, and ethnic groups, each having its own unique language, culture, and way of life (Bista, 2001). Although there are differences in climate, physical environment, culture, and society, Nepali society nonetheless shares some concepts, symbols, and behaviours that are indicative of a consistent cultural heritage (Dahal, 1983).

These trees are thought to attract gods and ancestral spirits, imbuing the area with divine energy. Many Chautari even house small shrines or temples beneath their sprawling branches,

further embedding them within Nepal's spiritual landscape. During festivals and religious ceremonies, leaves from these sacred trees are collected for rituals, symbolizing purity and a connection to the divine.

The term "Chautari," which translates to "rest stop" in Nepali, carries a deeper symbolic significance. Traditionally, Chautari are round stone structures built around the bases of peepal (*Ficus religiosa* Linn.) or banyan (*Ficus benghalensis* Linn.) trees, and often both, located along roads and paths to provide shade and a resting place for travelers. In the mid-hills of Nepal, some Chautari are also found around lankuri (*Fraxinus floribunda* Wall.) trees, adding to the area's unique charm while serving the same purpose. Despite their cultural, religious, and environmental importance, these Chautari are rapidly disappearing, particularly in urban and suburban regions where infrastructure development is on the rise (Regmi, November 14, 2024).

Manandar (2002) explained the legend why Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) and Bar (*Ficus bengalensis*) are planted at Chautari a trail side rest stop built by a family as a gift for tired travelers in memory of departed elders and in cemeteries. Once there was a Limbu couple living in a place in eastern Nepal (Thakkekmalung in Limbu). They had 5 sons; the first one was tiger, the second one a bear, the third one a leopard, the fourth a man and the last one a dog. The eldest son, the tiger always tried to attack the man. Once the man trapped the tiger and was about to kill it then their mother arrived and told the man to free the tiger, because he was the man's elder brother. After the incident the tiger requested his parents' permission to leave the area and went into the forest. Two brothers and the bear and the leopard also followed the tiger into the forest. The youngest, the dog told his brother the man that he would stay with him and serve him well. When a parents got old, the mother told the man that he should make Chautari (trailside, rest stop) after his parents' death and they would grow as Peepal and Bar trees and under which travelers could rest during their journey. The man did as her mother wished. They believe that tiger, bear and leopard lives in the forest and dogs lives with man.

Adhikari (2003) has published the collections of articles "Urban context of environmental Justice". A study in Pokhara among the articles, Hemraj Giri and Jagnath Adhikari has been focused on total number of Chautaris. Pokhara from 1978 to 2001 AD in this article 632 Chautaris are found in 1978 AD. On the issue taking detail information from all ward offices, only 278 Chautaris are numbered in 2001 by authors in their field study. In that article both government and people have been responsible for degradation of number of Chautari in various condition.

Regarding Bar, Peepal, Sami and Chautari different Ved, Puran, Upanishad and books had written in the past by our ancestors, which is reviewed as follows:

Trees provide fuel to humans, shade and resting place to travelers, nests to birds and medicine from their leaves, roots and bark. These five great favors given by the tree are like the five great sacrifices (Baraha Purana, 162 p. 41–42). Who plants one peepal, one neem, one banyan tree (Bar), ten flowering trees, two pomegranates, two oranges and five mango trees will never go to hell. (Baraha Purana, 12:2-39). Trees with flowers and fruits satisfy this world. One who donates a tree gets salvation from that tree in the other world. (Mahabharata Anuparva, 58 p. 30). God said – 'O good! I am the one who takes care of all the three peoples sitting on the Peepal tree. Where there is no peepal tree, I will not dwell. (Mahabharata Vaishnava Dharma Parbha, 19). A person who worships Vishnu with Tulsi leaves can never fall into sin like a lotus leaf in water. (Brahmavai Barta Purana). If you destroy the tree you also destroy the leaves, flowers and fruits and the country gets famine as a result of less or more rain.

(Agnipurana). One who plants a tree in this world gets a son in the next world. (Vishnu Dharma Sutra, 91 p. 4). To those who plant trees, trees are like their sons. There is no doubt that it is because of those trees that man attains heaven after death. (Mahabharata Anuparva, 58 p. 27). Trees are like gentlemen who help others. They stand in the sun but shade others. Their fruits are also for the use of others. (Vikram Charitam, 65). Making one tank than digging ten wells, having one son than having ten tanks and planting one tree than having ten sons will attain salvation. (Matsya Purana, 512). Just as a good son of a family makes the whole clan dignified, so a single fragrant tree full of flowers makes the forest and environment fragrant and heavenly (Chanakya Ethics, 3 p.14). Trees fulfill man's desires with their leaves, flowers, shade, roots, bark, wood, fragrance, ash, charcoal, buds and new leaves. (Srimad Bhagavata, Skandha, 22 p. 34). Trees devote their whole lives to protect us from storms, rain, wind and hail. Hence trees are very fortunate, says (Srimad Bhagavata, Skandha, 22 p.37).

Tree! You carry the load of flowers, leaves and fruits, you give relief from the sun, you give support in winter. Thus, you dedicate your entire life to helping others. Therefore, you are greater and greater than *Sajjan* (honest). So trees are installed in specific places saying please accept our greetings. (Bahmini Vilas, 86). The Rigveda instructs not to cut or uproot trees that provide protection to living beings. Thus, Hindu scholars have never imagined themselves anywhere without trees.

Plants are the eternal effort of the earth to speak to the void heaven.' This is the saying of Rabindranath Tagore. It's not just said for the sake of saying it. It has scientificized the mutual unity of the Panchamahabhuta elements. "Plants are poems, which the earth writes in the sky." Philosopher Khalil Gibran also quoted Rabindranath Tagore. He considered plants as poetry. It is mentioned in the Ramayana that Hanuman rescued Lakshmana, who had fainted from Meghnad's divyastra during the Ramayan (Sriram-Ravana) war, by bringing Sanjivani booti along with the mountain from Dronachal Mountain. Succulent plants like sungabha, kettuke, ghiukumari, bhuinkatahar perform photosynthesis only during the day through a process called 'crassulacean acid metabolism' to prevent water loss from their body and only exchange gas at night. "If you want to learn strength and patience, associate with trees." Hal Borland's experience is free of preconceived notions.

2.2 Theoretical Lense

A theoretical review looks at and summarizes different theories that are connected to a particular topic or research question. Informing the reader of rationale for selecting specific theories, their relevance to the gap in the literature, and their relationship to goals and objectives is the aim of writing a theoretical framework.

2.2.1 Neo-Evolutionism

In 20th century, new evolutionist has believed future and fate of culture, depends on its capacity to adopt with its immediate environment. They take environment to be the important factor for determining a culture. Neo- evolutionism holds the notion that the overall development of human culture was to be understood in terms of increase in level of energy used. The modern trend in new-evolutionism about the progress of culture is that culture is not always progressive but sometimes retrogressive too (Upadhyay, 2005). Leslie White (1990-1975) is a new popular neo- evolutionist because; he has found a new base for a theory of Cultural Revolution. According to white, culture is mechanism for providing man with

substance protection, offence and defense, social regulation cosmic adjustment and recreation and to serve the needs of man, energy is always required. Culture thus comforts as an elaborate thermodynamic mechanical system.

Assuming the factor of habitant to be a constant, the degree of cultural development measured in term of amount of human need serving goods and serviced produced per capita is determined by the amount of energy harnessed per capita and by the efficiency of the put to work white explains this in the following formula. Here, $E * T = C$ Energy * Technology = Culture. Here, 'C' represents the degree of culture development, i.e. the culture. 'E' the amount of energy harnessed per capita per year and 'T' the quality or affiance of the tools employed in the expenditure of the amount of energy. Leslie's understanding of culture is board based and it has four components (Upadhyay, 2005).

Julian Steward (1902-1972) claims that the whole of human experience can be never reduced to a few distinct stages of cultural development. He explains that multi-linear Evolution searches for parallels in specific evolution. It doesn't attempt to develop a comprehensive set of evolution and principle to cover the growth of culture from earliest prehistoric times to present. Rather it deliberately narrows its scope to focus on parallel developments in limited aspects of the cultures of specially identified societies. It undertakes to determine whether identifiable sequences of cultural change occur in the same order in independent culture. According to Steward, evolutionary description can be used by these different methods like: a. Unilinear Evolution b. Universal Evolution c. Multi-linear Evolution

2.2.2 Cultural Ecology

Ecology is a Greek word "oikos" means house and "logos" means scientific study. In reality, Ecology is a branch of biology developed by German biologist Earnest Haeckel in 1869 AD. The study of the relation between organism and their environment is the main subject matter of ecology. Park and Burges had used the word ecology in 1921 in the social and cultural aspect. Later on many attempts were made to associate ecology with culture. Cultural Ecology explains the international relationship between "human culture and the Natural Environment" adaption is regarded as a major process of cultural change and the analysis of socio-environmental adaption serve to uncover Variables that explain the origin of particular features in similar environmental condition. This is existence of "Giving and taking" relationship between culture and environment but the degree and kind of functional inter dependence among the parts of culture are not equal (Upadhyay, 2003). In cultural Ecology, Barient debate on relationship between cultures Nature occurs.

2.2.3 Environmental Determinism

Culture of particular region is determined by the environment it plays. The prime role in the origin, structure formation, progress and the change of cultures, comparing to culture, environment originates first, that's why its role is vital.

2.2.4 Ecological perspective

It occurs a constant interplay nature and culture. It gives high priority to man and environment equation and shows the relation $A=B$, $B=A$. This perspective is highly emphasized a power struggle continuity between culture exist control on nature, where as in another time nature controls human behaviors.

2.2.5 Environmental possibilities

It explains that cultures are not determined totally by the environmental but these are certain component in environment which helps in formation of culture. It believed that man creates his culture and environment provides chances only.

2.2.6 Actor Based Model

This model that notion of adaption occurs not at group level but at individual level. Every individual will have to adopt with the environment for survival, more the capacity of adaption, higher the chances of survival. Actor's decision is also vital for adaption which enables the actor to survive.

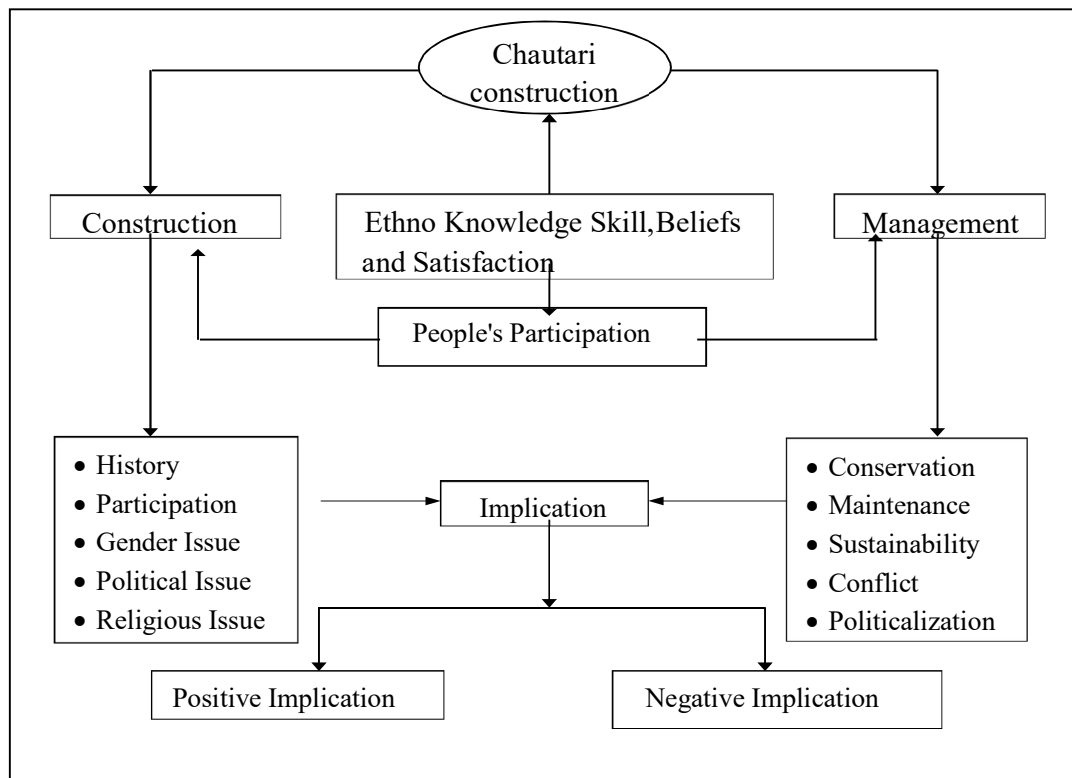
2.2.7 Ethno-ecological Model Believes that Locals Environment

This model influenced by "emic" approach and concentrates on how the natives of a geographical area perceive their physical environment.

2.2.8 Conceptual Framework

For this study, the present condition of Chautari and local people's participation in construction, protection, and management of Chautari have been studied. History, participation, gender, political, and religious issues have been involved in the study of the construction of Chautari. In management of Chautari conservation, maintenance, sustainability, conflict, and political issues have been studied.

Figure-2: Conceptual Framework



Source: Field Survey-2024

2.3 The local people of the study area

During field work (2024), among 30 respondents from study area were questioned with scheduled questionnaire. They were the members and relatives of the person who had constructed and cultivated the Chautari. The respondents were not the family member but he had participated in the construction of Chautari in Limithana.

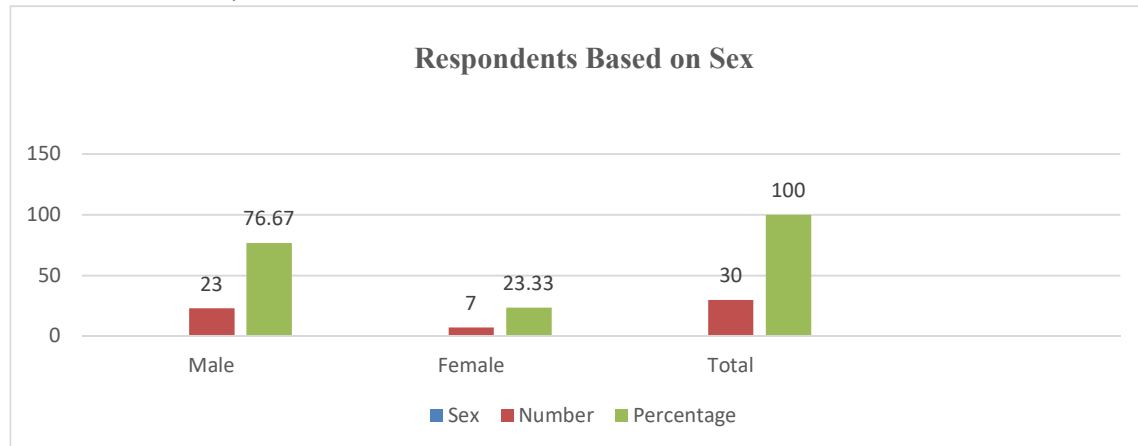
2.4 Sex of respondents

During the field work oldest respondent was Balkrishana Paudel whose age whose age was 87 years old. The youngest respondent was Keshar Panta whose age was 39 years old. Respondent's age group is categorized by taking intervals of 10 years, starting from < 40 to 81-90 years. The primary data collected from these group shows that old citizens have more important information about Chautari. There is lack of information of Chautari among younger generation.

Table 1: Respondents Based on Sex (N= 30)

SN	Sex	Number	Percentage
1	Male	23	76.67
2	Female	7	23.33
Total		30	100.00

Source: Field Study, 2024



Among total respondents, 76.67 percents are male respondents and 23.33 percent female respondents were selected. Those who know about Chautari and involve actively in various social worker, vital role, decision making level, teachers, community reform work (*tole sudhar*), women group, ward chairperson, ward member, ward secretary of study area were selected because the researcher selected the number from various sectors to collect reliable, authentic data and information.

Table 2: Respondents based on caste (N= 30)

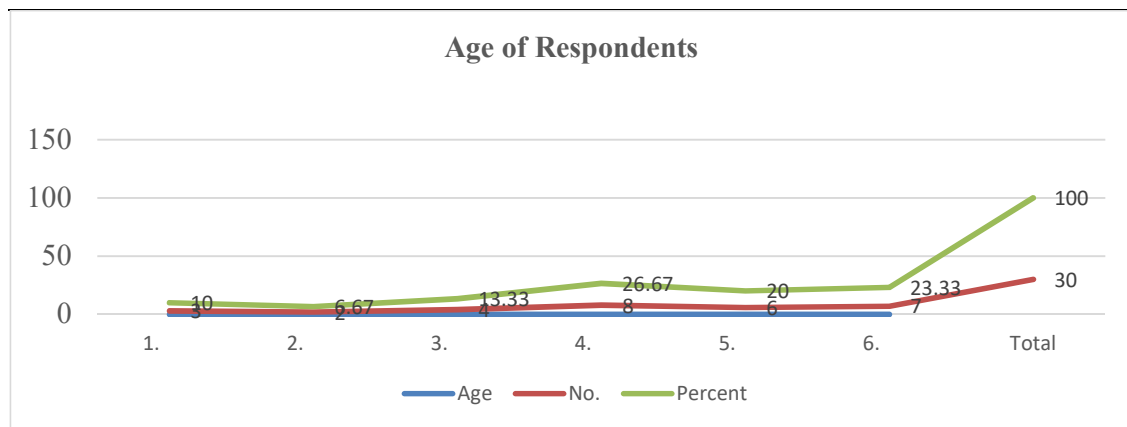
SN	Caste	Number	Percentage
1	Brahmin	22	73.33
2	Chhetri/ Gharti	3	10.00
3	Dalit	5	16.67
Total		30	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Respondents were categorized among total 30 in Brahmin, Chhetri/Gharti and Dalit. Different Chhettri caste are grouped in one chhettri caste. The highest percentage of respondents were belonging to Brahmin with 73.33 percentages and second highest number of Dalit 16 percent and Chhetri/ Gharti were 10 percentages. Chautari construction was done by Brahmin caste. Comparing the percentage between Brahmin, Chhetri and Dalit caste. Therefore, Brahmin respondents were selected more to know the strong information and data.

Table 3: Age of the respondents (N= 30)

SN	Age	No.	Percent
1.	31- 40	3	10
2.	41-50	2	6.67
3.	51-60	4	13.33
4.	61-70	8	26.67
5.	71-80	6	20
6.	80 Above	7	23.33
Total		30	100



Respondents age was categorized 30 to below 90. The highest percentage of respondents were belonging to 61 to 70 years' age group and second highest number of 80 above these age group provide more data and information on Chautari construction, present condition. Therefore, respondents were selected more to know the strong information and data.

2.5 Religion of Respondents

Among the respondents, 30 respondents 100 percentages are from Hindu religion. There is less number of Buddhist religion. Religious tolerance is the example of respondents through they have different rituals and beliefs.

Table 4: Socio-economic and demographic information of the respondents (N= 30)

Factors	Variables	Frequency	Percent
Education	Basic level	15	50.0
	Secondary level	13	43.3
	University education	2	6.7
Family size	2-4 persons	4	13.3
	4-6 persons	17	56.7
	More than six persons	9	30

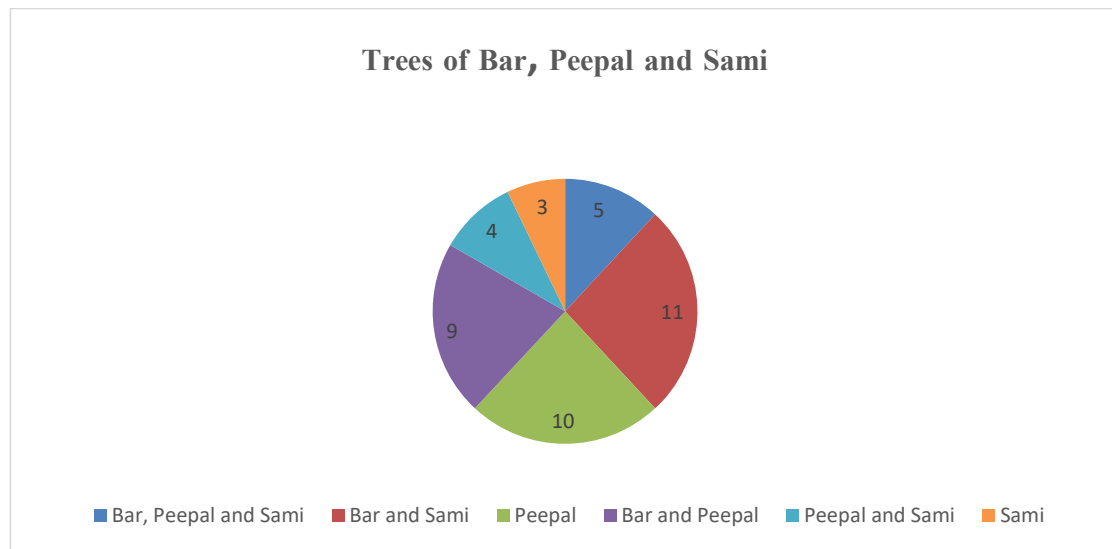
Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 4 shows the demographic information of the respondents in the study area. This table further shows that the family size of 4-6 persons has taken this profession as their main livelihood. This study also observed that 50 percent of respondents studied basic level, 43.3 percent studied secondary level, and 6.7 percent of respondents studied university education.

Table 5: Trees of Bar, Peepal and Sami

Trees	Number	Percentage
Bar, Peepal and Sami	5	11.90
Bar and Sami	11	26.20
Peepal	10	23.80
Bar and Peepal	9	21.42
Peepal, Sami, Mango	4	9.53
Sami	3	7.15
Total	42	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024



Bar (*Ficus bengalensis*), Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) and Sami (*Ficus benjamina*) were dominant trees found in plantation at Chautari. The oldest tree of Pipa (*Ficus religiosa*), App. 200 years old was found at Pantako Chautari. The oldest tree of Bar (*Ficus benghalensis*), App. 140 years old was found at Dhadagrako Chautari. Trees found at Chautari had signified that local people had their own indigenous knowledge about trees and uses mechanism of trees.

There are many themes in Bhagvad Gita's philosophy, but the three main themes are Karma, Bhakti, and Gyan (Mascaro, 1962). According to Kanji's definition in 2003, the word "Karma" is derived from the Sanskrit word "Kris" which means to create. Creation is the beginning of the journey to future existence, which requires effort, work, and self-control all the time. Bhakti, the devotion to work, is the connection between people and the union between people, while Garan provides knowledge that leads to vision and the joy of the ultimate

achievement.

Bar (*Ficus bengalensis*), Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) and Sami (*Ficus benjamina*) are belongs to family Moraceae. On the way between Madyam Path, three Chautari were found where Bar (*Ficus bengalensis*), Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) were planted rectangular shaped Chautari.

Respondent Balkrishna Paudel had explained that though one Chautari was round and another was rectangular and looked as two Chautari, it counted and thought to one Chautari representing Bar (*Ficus bengalensis*) as Shiva, Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) as Bishnu and Sami (*Ficus benjamina*) as Brahma, trinity of destructor, survivor and creator. In every religious ritual, leaves of these trees must essential to complete the ceremony. Bar (*Ficus bengalensis*), Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) and Sami (*Ficus benjamina*) are the main trees among the five scared trees of Hindu ritual known as "Pancha pallab". 11 BarPeepal Chautari were found in area of field study whereas 10 Peepal Chautari and 9 Bar Chautari were also found. Traditionally, Bar (*Ficus bengalensis*), Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) were planted at one Chautari. Only Bar Chautari and Peepal Chautari were the evidence of Bar Peepal Chautari. Respondent Bikram Panta (70) told that huge number of Chautari were fall down by government to construct and widen the road.

2.6 Modern development threatens Chautari as causes of Deteriorating Chautari

Modern development activities are responsible for Desterying traditional Chautaris in the study area. Regarding this, one of the respondents said:

Traditional Chautari are destroying day by day due to development activities. The main cause of destroying Chautari is migration of the villages (Krishna prasad paudel, personal communication, 7th October, 2024).

In rural Myagdi district, road expansion projects have resulted in the destruction of cultural heritage. Since 2065 BS, there have been numerous road expansion projects. Nevertheless, unplanned road construction is occurring all over the nation without a thorough engineer survey. When expanding roads, dozers and excavators are used without taking the environment into account. In many rural areas of the district, ancient resting shelters, Chautari, traditional architecture, and ponds have been destroyed as a result of haphazard road construction. Many more of these traditions are still in danger.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest among philosophers and researchers in interpreting Sanskrit texts, including the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita. Throughout history, many distinguished scholars and philosophers worldwide have analyzed the Bhagavad Gita, offering insights through various publications and lectures (Satpathy & Muniapan, 2008). For instance, in his recent work, *The Idea of Justice*, Amartya Sen discusses the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, highlighting the key message that 'duty is important' (Sen, 2009). He illustrates how the Gita serves as a valuable example of the need for impartiality in decision-making (Anderson, 2012). The Bhagavad Gita is a discourse by Sri Krishna to Arjuna on the proper approach to life (Dharmaratnam, 1987). Philosophers have placed the Bhagavad Gita at the forefront of their reinterpretation of Eastern philosophy and Hindu teachings, driven by significant social and cultural transformations (King, 1989). Due to the perseverance and dedication of the locals, who actively participated, the historical Chautari may be discovered in the study area. The way that people view Chautari is evolving along with the time, place, and circumstance. Due to its construction on public land close to the edges of

the roads, Chautari is both a victim and a barrier to the advancement of infrastructure. Certain trees with enormous branches have the potential to cause accidents when there is a lot of rain, wind, or hail.

2.7 Types of Cultural Tradition Destruction

- Physical destruction like burning or demolition of buildings and artifacts.
- Erosion of traditional practices and beliefs through modernization and globalization.
- Natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes can cause significant damage.
- Human-made conflicts like war and political upheaval can result in deliberate destruction of cultural landmarks.

2.8 Conflicts in Different form and Destroying Chautaris

In human civilisation, conflicts are inevitable due to the diversity of individuals, their perspectives, and their ideologies. People split into opposing groups when decisions were taken that infringed on the interests of others. Since the introduction of Chautari's civilisations, conflicts had already arisen. Respondents and a few important informants originally provided inaccurate information regarding past conflicts. They had come to terms with the fact that these were distinct conflicts after the indirect queries about the conflict were repeated. As time, circumstances, and surroundings changed, so did the nature of confrontations. From the past to the present, caste conflicts have been common. In order to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to share and use Chautari, it was designed as an altruistic act. Regarding this, one of the respondents said:

After political change in Nepal liberal condition is seen in religious faith. People thought that god does not bless us. It is just belief. The awareness of people on traditional faith is changed. Therefore, Chautaris doesn't cover value as in the past. (Keshar Panta, Personal Communication, 8th October, 2024).

In present condition, new tenure system of land and rising value of land have been caused the encroachment of land by the local elite political leader and other institution. During field work ponds were not found near any trees which were constructed during the "Prachista". These ponds were encroaching by people we can see then and now character encroachment strategy is starting for getting more land. People don't directly destroy the Chautari on the name of better management, trees were unscientifically plumed and slowly trees die. After dying, now trees are planted immediately. These events cause conflict between conservers group and land needed group.

From the past to the present, caste conflicts have been common. Chautari was portrayed as a selfless act since individuals were unable to exercise their equal right to share, and the caste system is one of the most effective ways to distinguish between people's assigned states. Although this attributed state was intended to balance and harmonise the functional approach of Hindu society based on task division, it instead causes tensions. During the "Dharma Shala Period," low caste members were prohibited from using the Chautari and drinking water. The "Dharma Shala Period" ritual was also practiced by members of lower castes.

In the early 1900s, for instance, hundreds of hectares of forest were cleared along the east-west highway's roadside, and massive amounts of timber were extracted for

the building of bridges, culverts, heating charcoal for pitching, and other structures. (Regmi, 1994). Deforestation in Nepal has been closely associated with the process of development, as is the case in many developing nations. Development activities linked to building roads, schools, hospitals, cemeteries, irrigation canals, dams, and settlement expansion have all contributed to an increase in deforestation in recent years. Degradation and loss of forests are being caused by unplanned and unregulated development activities, most of which lack environmental impact assessments.

2.9 Impact of Destroying Chautaris on Environment and Humans

Deforestation varies by country in terms of its rate, causes, and effects. However, due to various forms of deforestation, degradation, and deforestation as well as political and economic factors that lead to nations concealing or exaggerating deforestation, the rate of deforestation is frequently disputed (Miller, 2004). Effects of destroying Chautaris in Limithana, Parbat as loss of culture, on the environment are as follows:

- **Reduces ecosystem stability:** Destroying Chautaris loss can decrease an ecosystem's resilience to disruptions like climate change, disease outbreaks, or invasive species.
- **Declines ecosystem services:** Healthy ecosystems provide essential services like water and air purification, soil formation pollination, carbon sequestration, and climate regulation.
 - **Loss of genetic resources:** Destroying Chautaris is a reservoir of genetic resources used for crop development, medicines, and cultural expression.
- **Alters biogeochemical cycles:** Destroying Chautaris loss the cycling of nutrients in ecosystems, leading to changes in ecosystem productivity, water quality, and greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Increases risk of species extinction:** The loss of individual species can have cascading effects on other species within the same ecosystem, leading to further declines in destroying Chautaris and increased risk of extinction for multiple species.

2.10 Affects of Destroying Chautaris

- **Reduced food security:** Destroying Chautaris loss and reduce agricultural productivity and increase vulnerability to pests, diseases, and climate change.
- **Decline in human health:** Destroying Chautaris play a critical role in the development of new medicines and can lead to increased exposure to pollutants and pathogens.
- **Economic losses:** Destroying Chautaris loss the productivity and sustainability of activities like agriculture, forestry, and tourism.
- **Loss of cultural values:** Destroying Chautaris can result in the loss of cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, culture and spiritual connections to nature.
- **Increased vulnerability to natural disasters:** Destroying Chautaris can increase human settlements' vulnerability to natural disasters.
- **Reduced resilience to climate change:** Destroying Chautaris reduce ecosystems' capacity to adapt to changing climate conditions.

2.11 Ways of Conserving Chautaris

It is everyone's responsibility to protect the trees that add beauty to public spaces and roads. Conservation efforts should preserve their original form and not spoil their originality

during reconstruction. Chautari is not just a common word; its meaning and function are very important in Nepali culture.

The Gandaki state government is embarking on a campaign to protect the Chautari by making a law. The bill approved by the Gandaki Provincial Assembly on January 27, 2075 has defined causing physical damage to any square within the province as a legally punishable act. As it is everyone's duty to protect it, it has also been arranged that if someone damages it, they will be punished according to the prevailing law (Gandaki Provincial Assembly, January 27, 2075).

Today, these historical structures are in crisis. It seems that they should be protected. From the point of view of the environment, we all have the responsibility to preserve the structures connected with human civilization. Travelers and batuwa used to sleep in Chautari when they were tired after walking all day and in the evening if they could not reach their destination, they stayed in Pauwa. This matter has become a story for today's new generation. Today Chautari, Patipauwa wells and ponds have been covered by roads. The village roads used by pedestrians are deserted. It is difficult to see those stone streams with history today (Chautari, ponds and Dhungedheras, which are full of history, Lokpath, 2079, Bhadra, 22, Wednesday). Regarding this, one of the respondents said:

For conservation and maintenance of Bar-Peepal and Chautari-Pokhari which are closely associated with religious beliefs and environmental purity. The campaign has been conducted in the villages (Ramakanta Paudel, personal communication, 26th October, 2024).

Hapazard construction of roads without feasibility study should be stopped. Tol Sudhar Samittee should be active to run the development with huge participation. Demand base and sustainable development should be focused rather than haphazard and supply base development.

In close collaboration with community members, they should be actively involved in biodiversity conservation, forest fire containment, illegal harvest control, forest protection, and sustainable management. Modern concerns pertaining to the forestry industry, including mitigation and adaptation to climate change, the growth of businesses based on forest products, the green economy, and the payment for environmental services, have to be addressed by extension and outreach initiatives. The creation of audiovisual materials, posters, pamphlets, brochures, and conservation education needs outreach and extension-related initiatives. Street theatre, instruction, workshops, and seminars on governance, forest management, and office management, as well as soil conservation, watershed management, and biodiversity conservation.

3. Discussion

This study has been conducted to find out the history of Chautari, focusing on the causes and effects of the destruction of traditional chataries in Phalebas Mnicipality-7, Limithana, and Parbat.

On the basis of research objectives, the center part of the study is Chautari, and the person who had participated in the construction and management of Chautari is the primary source of data collection.

We are deeply saddened by the condition of Chautaris, the legacy left by our forefathers, which is being destroyed and neglected in the name of road development and expansion.

The theoretical framework of this study is guided by an ecological and symbolic interpretation of beliefs, rituals, customs, and rituals relating to the construction and management of Chautari under the exploratory and descriptive research design based on qualitative as well as quantitative approaches.

Guided by Hinduism's ideology and using indigenous knowledge about trees and the environment, the Chautari construction was developed.

Different rituals and customs were developed to manage the Chautari. The study area is experiencing the loss of traditional Chautaris as a result of modern development activities. A significant factor in this decline is the migration of villagers, which has caused a shift away from traditional practices and beliefs. Unplanned construction, often carried out without proper engineering surveys, has resulted in the loss of ancient resting shelters, Chautari, traditional architecture, and ponds. The primary reasons for the deterioration of Chautari include migration, the decline of native traditional culture, the rise of modern transportation, and political influences. As villagers move away from their traditional practices and beliefs, cultural continuity is being lost. The absence of traditional rituals and the prevalence of modern transportation have also played a role in the fading of traditional Chautari.

Chautaris are disappearing because trees are being cut down to make way for roads, and people prefer to cool off with AC and fans rather than Chautaris. Although, Chautaris have environmental importance. Peepal trees are important from an environmental point of view as they destroy harmful insects and provide clean air all year round. Peepal, mango, and sycamore trees play a role in controlling harmful insects like locusts and American armyworms.

Radhakrishnan (2008) observes, "The Vedas are the earliest documents of the human mind that we possess." He further explains, "There are four Vedas: Rig, Yajur, Sama, and Atharva". This study argues that the hymns of the Vedas, when viewed through an eco-critical lens, soothe troubled minds by highlighting the interconnectedness of fire, earth, rivers, birds, plants, air, and animals. If there are many peepal trees near fields, the soil will not only remain moist as the roots won't dry out, but it will also help control harmful insects that destroy crops as birds will eat them. Patipauwa and Chautari are considered the first schools of Gurukul education. The common Chautari in the social ground was used to relieve the tiredness of the elderly and provide them with company. However, these Chautaris, along with patipauwa, have been targeted by development.

In the name of modern development, patipauwa and Chautari have started to disappear. However, recently, all these things have started to disappear after motor roads reached the villages with imported development. Previously, hilltops were destroyed by wind but were protected again. Now, in the name of development, people have started uprooting them with dozers.

Chautaris with different histories and cultures have been affected by modern development. As dozers of development started running over Bar, Peepal, Sami Chautari, trees, and plants, the water sources in villages started drying up. Even the water from old streams is drying up as the Chautaris age. Modern development has damaged nature itself by drying up water sources. Historical squares, whether in the middle of a village or on top of a hill, in Deurali or Bhanjyang, are disappearing day by day.

After the opening of the motorway in Ghargaon and Dandapakha, the Chautaris were also isolated. If Chautaris and patipauwa cannot be saved from encroachment in time, future generations may not even learn about them. The local, state, and federal governments should

pay attention to the protection of Chautaris. In Hindu religion and culture, it is believed that children will be happy when both the bride and groom worship the bride's plant. However, areas of religious, cultural, historical, and environmental importance are disappearing due to development. The government should pay attention to the protection of such trees, which also play a special role in climate change.

Chautari was built guided by Hindu ideology and using tribal knowledge about trees and the environment. Various rituals and customs were developed for Chautari management. This study explains the history and public participation in the construction and management of Chautaris. It focuses on the ecological and symbolic interpretation of beliefs, customs, and rituals associated with Chautari. Regarding this, one of the respondents said:

'Bhariya Daile Bishaune Bhari Sun Maya Dandaiko Chautari' sung by artist Bishnu Khatri reminds us of Chautari when we listen to this song. However, those who were walking with heavy loads used to say when they reached Chautari and lay down their heavy burdens. At that time, it was a special pleasure to rest the tired body by sitting on the Chautari of Bar-Peepal (Punya Prasad Pandey, personal communication, 28th October, 2024).

Chautaris have become a place of residence for the elderly. When the members of the household are busy, they spend the whole day enjoying themselves in roadside quarters and waiting rooms. However, with increasing urbanization, Chautaris are disappearing. It is rare to find high boxes made of bricks and stones and Chautaris with the bride and groom in the middle. Chautaris can still be found in some market squares, where passengers can slow down and wait for vehicles. However, waiting rooms have started to be built on the roadside. Regarding this, one of the respondents said:

Recently, although the idea of tourism promotion has come up in the villages, there has been no discussion about the reconstruction of historical structures. In the name of infrastructure development, the development of road network is considered as the main development. The local Padampani Sharma said that the historical structure established by Baubaje could not be promoted along with the modern development (Krishna Prasad Chapagain, personal communication, 26th October, 2024).

There was a time when people, whether lovers or friends, used to go to Chautaris to relieve their fatigue by gathering grass and firewood from the forest, Pakhapakhera, and Lake Bensi. Whether it was during a fair or going up and down, after feeling tired, people would sit on the Chautari, enjoy the breeze, and have friendly and intimate conversations. Elderly people used to reminisce about their childhood while sitting in these squares. Time seemed to stand still while sitting in the coolness of the Chautari.

With the disappearance of structures that give rural life its originality, the current generation is deprived of the joy they bring. In the past, there were no means of transport like today, so porters would carry goods. The place where porters would load heavy goods was often a Chautari. Chautaris were the proper places for porters to relieve their fatigue after walking long distances. They were also places where young people showed their love and old people gathered to share their sorrows and joys.

Similarly, shepherds who went to see the chaupaya and leisurely people doing household work would gather and use Chautaris to spend the day playing in the garden. The protection of peepal trees, which are connected to religious faith, important from a natural and scientific perspective, and connected to village identity, should be prioritized at all levels.

Regarding this, one of the respondents said:

Faith on god and planting bar peepal and Sami for creating a space in the heaven is less priority in comparison to last time. Thus, traditional Chautaris are destroying (Keshav Regmi, Personal Communication; 5th October, 2024).

Increasing public participation in the construction and management of Chautaris will play an important role in benefiting ecological and cultural civilization. Among thirteen days of Hindu death ritual, the ritual of making Chautari was done on the 11th day. The key informant Banduraj Adhikari has told that the soul of the death person had to travel the 'Yamlok' where extreme heat of twelve sunshades to endure by the soul of the death person. If son or relative could be constructing the Chautari, the soul would get the chance to sit under the shade of tree at Chautari and would get relief.

The study area is facing the degradation of traditional Chautaris due to a variety of factors, including migration, the decline of traditional culture, modern transportation, and political influences. The study has exposed and explained the history and people's participation in the construction and management of Chautari, which are as follows: In the study area, 42 Chautaris are found while studying; out of them, only two are managed in good condition by the provincial government. 15 Chautaris were destroyed due to development activities like construction of roads by local people during the period of 10 years. The 'Prachista' word represents the marriage rituals of Bar and Peepal at Chautari. Bar and Peepal Chautari is the symbol of marriage, justice, status, altruistic work, and resting places. Chautari is the culture produced by the combination of indigenous knowledge of ecology, topography, ethnomedicine, and Hindu rituals. Different local people's groups are actively participating in the construction and management of Chautari. There are taboos found in rituals and customs of Chautari. In the present condition, there are challenges and conflicts with the management of Chautari.

4. Conclusion

Chautari is a part of human civilisation, culture, and environment. Destroying Chautari is one of the serious issues of this study area. To create awareness and to suggest ways to conserve them, this study was carried out. In the study area, 42 Chautaris are found while studying out of them, only two managed in well condition by the provincial government. 15 Chautaris were destroyed due to development activities like construction of roads by local people during the period of 10 years. Among the 42 Chautari, 17 Chautari are in critical conditions. The number of Chautari is decreasing slowly, and local people need to be aware of the importance of Chautari. Chautari is not a common word but had significant meaning and function in Nepal's own culture.

The people's participation in the construction and management of Chautari plays a vital role in benefiting the ecological as well as cultural civilization of Nepal's own culture, which is the final conclusion of the study. Chautari connects the past and present by embodying Nepal's rich cultural legacy. They function as natural sanctuaries, hubs for communal gatherings, and sites for spiritual connection. Parks or bus stops cannot replace the function of Chautari, which has special ecological, cultural, religious, and artistic importance. To guarantee that these natural and cultural gems be preserved and valued for upcoming generations, legislators, conservationists, and community leaders must collaborate. In the midst of the drive for modern development, Chautari should be preserved because they are more than just rest areas; they represent an essential component of Nepali identity. The study area is facing the degradation of

traditional Chautaris due to a variety of factors, including migration, the decline of traditional culture, modern transportation, and political influences. Preserving these cultural landmarks is essential for maintaining the region's cultural heritage. Similarly, a culture's treasured customs, beliefs, and rituals must be passed down to the next generation in order to maintain them for the present and the future. Ethics and values need to be taught to them at home, students in school, and colleges. New construction of Chautari is not yet found, but old Chautaris are destroying day by day, which is a great challenge for this village.

The government of Nepal, on the one hand, is not capable enough to properly implement existing policies, and on the other hand, there are several challenges for conserving Chautari. Prepare a policy to conserve traditional Chautaris and fully implement it. Provide an awareness programme to conserve traditional Chautaris. Prepare curriculum in school and college-level courses to explore the value and importance of Chautaris. Conduct a mass awareness program to encourage the replanting and repair of them. Inform the new generation on the values and norms about the importance of traditional Chautaris. Conduct research to conserve them at the local level. Promote a supportive environment by organising social, cultural, and scientific activities. To preserve Chautaris religious faith-saving environment is required to revive. Village campaign and focuses on the feasibility study before starting development activities.

5. Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate:

I declare that this research has been conducted ethically.

Consent for Publication:

Not applicable.

Availability of Data and Materials:

The data will be available upon request.

Competing Interests:

There are no competing interests with any individual or agency.

Funding:

No funding was available for this research.

6. Acknowledgments

I would like to express my profound and sincere gratitude to the chief editor and all the members of IRJMMC editorial board who encouraged and guided me to make this research work strong, valuable, and publishable. I am thankful to the research participants of Phalewas Municipality-7, Limithana for their strong support and co-operation on this research issue. Similarly, I would like to thank all the anonymous manuscript reviewers who provided constructive comments and insightful feedback that helped to make this research work valuable.

References

1. Adhikari, J. and Giri H. (2003). *Urban context of environmental justice: A study in Pokhara (In Nepal)*. Martin Chautari/Social Development Research Center.
2. Adhikari, N. (2071). *What I understand gita (Nepali)*. Ramakanta Adhikari.
3. Anderson, D. (2012). *Is building relationships the key to leadership?* Performance Improvement, 51, 15-22.
4. Aurobindo. S. (2013). *The secret of the veda*. Sri Aurobindo Aashram.
5. Baker, L. T. (1999). *Doing social research*. McGraw-Hill, Companies.
6. Bhatia, A. (1999). Participatory forest management implications for policy and human resources development in the hindu-kush Himalayas. *Vol-V, International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)*.
7. Bista, D.B. (2001). *Fatalism and development: Nepal Struggle for Modernization*.
8. Bohannan & Glazer (1988). *High points in anthropology*. Alfred A. Knopf Inc.
9. CBS (2021). *Population of Nepal*. Central Bureau of Statistics.
10. Chalise, K. R (2016). *Scope of Srikrishna gandaki in context to field museum of Nepalese water culture*, PhD. Thesis (Unpublished), Nepal Sanskrit University.
11. Chalise, K.R. (1995). *Chautari reports of Pokhara*. Environment Conservation Union.
12. Chalise, K.R. (2000). *Social marketing approach to conserve ficus religiosa. Link between culture and destroying Chautaris*. Yunnan University.
13. Dahal, D.R. (1983). *Economic development through indigenous means*. Contributions to Nepalese Studies. 11: 1 and 2, pp. 1-20.
14. Dharmaratnam, K. (1987). *Bhagavad-gita in action*. Nathan Publishing.
15. Gandhi, M.K. (2009). *The Bhagavad gita*. Diamond Books.
16. Gautam, K. H. (1997). Forestry for the sustainable rural development in Nepal: Community forestry beyond the subsistence horizon towards the twenty first century. *Paper presented at Eleventh World Forestry Congress, 13-22 October 1997, Atlanta, Turkey*.
17. Gautam, K.P. (May 20, 2023). Historical chautaris and walking trails face extinction. *The Kathmandu Post*. <https://kathmandupost.com/art-culture/2023/05/20>
18. Gurung, H.G. (1980). *Vignettes of Nepal*. Sajha Prakashan.
19. Jha, G. (1920). Manusmriti with the commentary of medhatithi. Wisdom Library. <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmriti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi>
20. Keslinger, F.N. (2004). *Foundation of behaviour research*. Sunjeet Publication.
21. King, U. (1989). *Some reflections on sociological approaches to the study of modern Hinduism*. Numen, 36, Fasc. 1, 72-97.
22. Kothari, C.R. (2004). *Research methodology*. New Age International.
23. Kunwar, R. M. (2002). *Participation and benefits to people in community forest: A case study from Makawanpur District, Central Nepal*. Thesis, Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal, 93 p.
24. Laughhead, S., R. Shrestha and K. D. (1994). *Social development consideration in community forest*. Project Working Paper No.2, NUKCFP, Nepal.
25. Malla, Y. B. (2001). Changing policies and the persistence of patron-client relation in Nepal: Stakeholders' response to changes in forest. *Policies and Environmental History*, Vol.6 (2), pp 287-309.

26. Manandhar, N.P. (2002). *Plants and people of Nepal*. Timber Press Incorporated.
27. Mascaro, J. (1962). *The Bhagavad gita (new translation)*. Penguin Books.
28. Mehta, J.M. (2007). *The wisdom of the gita*. The Amazon Book Review.
29. Microw, D. (1997). *Thirty years in Pokhara you must have seen a lot of changes*. Pilgrims Books House.
30. Miller, G.T., (2004). *Living in the environment principles, connections, and solutions*. Thomson Learning Inc,
31. Panta, R. P. (2010), *Social science research and thesis writing*. Buddha Academic Publishers and Distributors Pvt. Ltd.
32. Radhakrishnan, S. (2014). *The Bhagavad gita*. Harper Collins Publishers.
33. Radhakrishnan, S. (2008). *Indian philosophy (Vol. 1)* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
34. Regmi, R.R. (1994). Deforestation and rural society in the Nepalese Terai. *In Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology*, vol. 4, 72-89
35. Regmi, R.R. (2003). *The essentials of sociology*. Buddha Academic Publication.
36. Regmi, R.R. (2007). *Model of culture*. Academic Book Centre.
37. Regmi, S. (November 14, 2024). Disappearing chautari: Nepal's sacred rest stops at risk amid modern development. *Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS)* <https://sias-southasia.org/disappearing-Chautari-nepals-sacred-rest-stops-at-risk-amid-modern-development>.
38. Reitzel, M. H. (2019). Technology's impact on society and culture. *Virtual Simulation in Nursing Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1891/9780826169648.0004>
39. Satpathy, B., & Muniapan, B. (2008). *The knowledge of "self" from the Bhagavad-gita and its significance for human capital development*. Asian Social Science, 4(10), 143-150.
40. Sen, A. (2009). *The idea of justice*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjnrv7n>
41. Sharma, S. (November 11, 2024). Disappearing chautari: Nepal's sacred rest stops at risk amid modern development. <https://english.onlinekhabar.com>.
42. Sharma, S. C. (Jun 2, 2024). Bar and peepal: The two divine trees in love. <https://kathmandupost.com/art-culture/2023/05/20/>
43. Srivastava, A.K. (2003). *Bhagavad-gita: Economic development and management*. Abhinav Publications
44. Talageri, S. G. (2000). *The Rigveda: A historical analysis*. Aditya Prakashan.
45. Upadhyay, P. (2003). *Model of culture*. Samjhana Publication.
46. Urban Context of Environmental Justice: A study on Pokhara (In Nepali 2003). *Martin Chautari/ Social Development & Research Center*.
47. Whitaker, T. (2018). Innovative ways to impact school culture. *Perspectives on Innovation in Education*, 24-38. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429486104-2>
48. (Jul 11, 2018). Haphazard road construction destroying unique heritages. *Rastriya Samachar Samiti*. <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal>