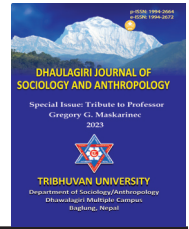


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Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology**In Memory of Professor Gregory G. Maskarinec***Bhim Prasad Subedi***Article Info**

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It was sometime in the Fall of 1985 that I came to know Professor Gregory G. Maskarinec who was doing research in University of Hawai'i. I was an East-West Center scholarship grantee of that year in population studies and had joined the Department of Geography, University of Hawai'i at Manoa. It was one of the Pot-luck party gatherings organized by Nepalese students there. In these Nepali gatherings, other nationals who have worked in Nepal and/or have close link with Nepali nationals there were invited and thus, Professor Maskarinec was invited together with his family. Dressed in Aloha shirt (Hawai'i's special dress) he looked very humble. Bearded, blonde haired, wearing spectacles and carrying a Nepali *Jhola* (bag) on his shoulder, soft spoken and a person who spoke amazingly fluent Nepali. This is the image I still have when I think of Professor Gregory G. Maskarinec whom we lovingly call: Gregory.

We had a brief talk and it was limited to why we were in Hawai'i. In further communication, I learned that he had come to Nepal in 1977 as US Peace Corps and had stayed in Jajarkot teaching mathematics in the high school located at the district Headquarters, the only high school in the district by then. Having

lived in Jajarkot, a very remote district in western Nepal he seems to have been carried away by the local culture and local resident's belief in spirit possession and *Dhami-Jhankri*. His prolonged stay in Jajarkot as US Peace Corps and exposure to a "different world" as per his book *The Rulings of the Night* may have turned a mathematics teacher into a very successful cultural anthropologist.

At the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, the Departments of almost all social science disciplines were in the same building named "Porteus hall" then. My department i.e., Geography, was on the fourth floor and Anthropology was in the third floor. As I did not share common graduate courses and seminars with him as I did with other fellow anthropologists and economists who were East-West Center Scholarship grantee, my academic interaction was rather limited with him. But we used to meet on social gatherings at Hale Manoa, Hale Haluwai and in the international fairs of East-West Center, where Nepali students would have one stall with Nepali food specialties. As far as I know, he was the one who had already done enough fieldwork before he was admitted to graduate studies at the University of Hawai'i. It seemed like he was so carried away by the secrets of Masta and



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dhāmi in western Nepal that he had also participated and traveled long journey following shamans at various locations and festivities. In doing so he collected, translated and drew meanings from verses and narratives obtained from these shamans before he joined the university. This particular conquest of his was even supported by the then King of Nepal.

Of all the meetings and gatherings, I cannot forget three memorable comments and/or adventures he made. First one is related to my doctoral field work. I carried out my fieldwork in Eastern Nepal which lasted for almost 18 months. It was about people's mobility and transnationalism of the concept of migration and mobility and exploration of the native typology of human mobility in a rural Nepali village. After my return to Honolulu, I met him casually. We talked about my field work experience and I expressed my worries of sorting out the information and difficulties of organizing them into a suitable document. He commented, "You are a geographer and hardly any other social scientist expects a geographer to carry out field work for one and a half year. The way you are telling me about your approach and the duration of fieldwork you are more of an anthropologist than a geographer. Anthropologists these days are moving away from long-term field engagement and are being satisfied with short-term convenient fieldwork."

Second, his collection of in-depth information from shamans on their mantras and their remarkable oral recitals and so many publications afterward remind me of two things. The first one is what would have happened if a Nepali researcher (say anthropologist) had tried to do the same? Would the shaman share all the details with a fellow Nepali citizen as he did with a foreigner? The other one is how come Nepali anthropologists especially cultural anthropologists are not interested in exploring and bringing out these cultural aspects to the forefront of world readers? My own experience during our collaborative research work of Tribhuvan University (TU) and the University of Bergen in Manang during 2002-2005 is skeptical. It was during one of our summer visits to Manang my colleague from the University of Bergen, Norway (late) Professor Tor Aase, myself and one of our graduate students went to visit Milereppa Cave across Marsyangdi river in Bhraka. We introduced ourselves to the Lama (monk) there and wanted to know the "secrets" of the role of Lama and Manangi's beliefs of life and society there in upper Manang. He was very reluctant and did not open up about spiritual issues. We came back that evening. The next morning my foreign colleague went to meet the Lama alone in the early

morning. Surprisingly, during our lunch meeting, he told me that Lama was very open with him and was able to obtain some of the secrets. I have also found elsewhere in Nepal that people with "mantras" do not share the verse and the essence with fellow Nepalese but with foreigners they are frank enough. They only share with one or two people whom they consider their disciples. There is an impression that the more you share the mantras, they become powerless.

Third, it was in early 1992, one day, he invited some of us (Nepali families) for dinner. At that time, his family lived in Manoa Valley, Honolulu, Hawai'i. He lived with his wife Dr. Gertraud and two daughters with Nepali names Malika and Maya. He had a simple life. Items and decorations in the living room looked quite natural, nothing lavish and no TV. I had learned that it is a general courtesy in the US that when you are invited for dinner you are supposed to bring along some items, normally some dishes or drinks. So, we prepared a typical potato dish (*aalu achar*) and brought it along with us. And Dr. Ram Chhetri's family had brought vegetable curry. Gregory's family as host, had prepared many Nepali varieties. All of us enjoyed the dinner. We chatted about our works, Nepal and Nepalese culture. When we were about to leave, we thanked him and his family for dinner and that every item was delicious. He looked at us and said in Nepali "*tapaiharule mitho ta bhannubhayo tara tapaiharule lyayeko item sabai sakkiyo tara hamile banayeko banki nai chha hernuhosta*" meaning, you said every item was delicious but look at it, there is no leftover from the items you brought and items we have prepared have remained as leftovers. To recall, they really wanted to serve us with as many Nepali dishes as possible. We said because you are the host, you prepared more than enough; obviously, there would be some leftovers. Knowing that we Nepali, loved *achar*, of the many items, he had also prepared sesame seed *achar* which in fact, had turned a little bitter because it was over-dried (fried).

I was very saddened by the news of his sudden demise in June 2022. Last time, I met him was in 2006 in Bergen, Norway where he was on his vacation tour with family and I was on a short visit to the Centre for Development Studies, University of Bergen as a Visiting Research Scholar. I met him in downtown Bergen. We had a brief chat on the whereabouts and what abouts of our career with coffee. I could not meet him last time when he was in Nepal. With his

departure, I have personally felt like I have lost a good friend and so do many Nepali colleagues in academia. I believe we have lost a great cultural anthropologist, if I may call him, a very engaged person who loved and cared for Nepal and Nepali. I am not an anthropologist and did not want to touch upon his academic contributions here. Although he is no more physically, his contributions have definitely made him immortal.

June 2023

Bhim Prasad Subedi, Ph.D. (University of Hawaii, USA) was a Professor of Geography at Tribhuvan University until he retired in 2018 after almost four decades in the institution. He served as a Chairman of the University Grants Commission, Nepal - the apex institution of higher education in the country (2018-2022). Apart from Tribhuvan University, he has also worked as short-term research scholar at University of Copenhagen, Denmark (2016); University of Bergen, Norway (2000, 2005, 2006); University of Zurich, Switzerland (2004); University of Oxford (Institute of Ageing) 2002; and University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (1998). His specific research areas include migration, urbanization, ethnic diversification, ageing, tourism and climate change. He has written more than 70 articles and book chapters.

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