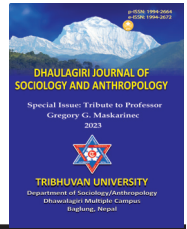


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Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology



## Knowledge Devotee Gregory G. Maskarinec: Dhaulagiri Journal, and Me

- Man Bahadur Khattri

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### Abstract

This paper focuses on my perception and memories of Professor Gregory Maskarinec, who passed away on June 16, 2022, at 71. Professor Maskarinec was a member of the International Advisory Board of the Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology. He was also an author, reviewer, and financial endower. This paper discusses how Professor Maskarinec contributed to promoting journal publication and knowledge dissemination in the field of social sciences in Nepal. The paper aims to highlight the author's perception of devotion to the production and sharing of knowledge, encouragement and promotion to young scholars, and generosity for knowledge production and sharing. Despite limited interactions, I observed some crucial points that I could highlight about his nature and worldview. The information presented here is from my observation, exchanged emails, interviews, papers, field notes, and contributions to the Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology. Professor Maskarinec has shown big lessons and a path for social sciences research scholars. He taught us the importance of having contact with the research subjects. I admire the simplicity of his life and his harmonious relationship with people of different social, cultural, linguistic, and religious identities. These behaviors are based on the cultural relativism that Professor Maskarinec possessed. I strongly felt that Professor Maskarinec was observing his death closely. As he noticed he was dying soon from cancer, he focused his valuable time on the most important spiritual actions. Maskarinec was familiar with Nepali customs and rituals that can be performed before and after the final departure of life. In my understanding, a financial endowment he provided to the Dhaulagiri Journal was a part of the ritual of *dan* (donation). He had also requested his close friend to perform rituals at Pasupati temple in Nepal. The conclusion is that we must follow a scholarly path, which is deeply engaged with the topics and subjects and respectfully committed to knowledge sharing.

*Keywords:* Jajarkot, medical anthropology, shamanism

### Introduction

Professor Maskarinec was a knowledge devotee. This understanding was based on my interaction with him in association with the Dhaulagiri Journal of

Sociology and Anthropology. Professor Madhusudan Subedi first introduced me to Professor Maskarinec. Professor Maskarinec came to Nepal in 1977 as a Peace Corps Volunteer and served as a mathematics teacher in a school in the Jajarkot District. He also



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worked in the field of Medical Anthropology. He has published several books and papers on *shamanism*, including *The Rulings of the Night: An Ethnography of Nepalese Shaman Oral Texts* published by The University of Wisconsin Press & Mandala Book Point in 1995/2000, which was also published as *Nepalese Shaman Oral Text* by Harvard University Press in 1998. Recognizing his work, he won *Tribhuvan University's Mahendra Scholarship* (1981) and received a highly prestigious prize (the *Birendra Pranyalankar*) from the late King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev in 1997 in a special ceremony in the Royal Palace, Kathmandu, Nepal.

The larger question of understanding the role of an individual in society is always a crucial aspect. In sociological understanding, the individual represents a cell of society. How does an individual fit into a larger system? Any action initiated by an individual is significant to change the world? There is a concept of a leader, and different levels of leadership are categorized, and we expect a special role of the leader, which is common around the world. Leaders also mobilize the power of common people's inspiration and motivation. Take a risk, and take advantage of trust] that provides an opportunity to act for "common". What lesson from an individual's behavior or act taken also depends on individual orientation, context, background, and expectations from the individual. With this background, I take advantage of writing about my interaction with an anthropologist Professor Maskarinec, who served as the International Advisory Board member of the *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. Similarly, Gregory Maskarinec was a Professor and Director at the Office of Global Health and International Medicine, Departments of Native Hawaiian Health and Family Medicine and Community Health John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawaii, who passed away at the age of 71, on June 16, 2022.

### **Methods**

Writing memories of a person is challenging as it is subjective. My interaction with Professor Maskarinec was brief yet memorable. I met him briefly three times regarding enhancing the quality and visibility of the *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. He contributed 20,000 NPR in his two visits to the *Dhaulagiri Journal* as support. It was the entry point to understanding the developmental model of Professor Maskarinec. I am the founder editor and Editor-in-Chief, working to develop the

journal further. It has been possible with the support of Professor Subedi, who works at Patan Academy of Health Sciences. I met Professor Maskarinec after being introduced by Professor Subedi. Our meeting aimed to explore a novel, supportive person who could assist us in editing language. Information used in this paper is the subjective understanding of interactions and communications with Professor Maskarinec. Some of my observations and understandings are expressed below. By doing this, I am not delimiting his personality and contributions to society.

### **Gregory was a True Lover and Fond of Nepali Language and Artists of Nepali Literature**

Professor Subedi mentioned that Professor Maskarinec was fluent in Nepali and prefers speaking in Nepali. It was verified when I met him. Thinking it would be unnatural to talk to Nepali in front of an American, I tried to speak in English. However, he insisted that I speak in Nepali. Once I suggested him reading books by Lekhanath Poudel, crest-jewel poet as they are philosophical. He informed me that he was reading poem by Lekhanath. He was a regular audience of Raio Bheri, Jajarkot. He listened to the news and local songs from Jajarkot, at the time he was taking rest of illness. I felt he was a serious person who loved Jajarkot and Nepali literature. Even our last conversation with Professor Maskarinec was in Nepali. When I approach to him to be an advisory board member of the *Journal*, he refused to act as an expert and advisor saying how a person unfamiliar with the situation be an advisor. He further added, "many foreigners are developmental experts in Nepal; they are not familiar with Nepal's diverse ecological and socio-cultural diversity morals, norms, and values. You know much better than any others. You can work better way. We advise our way, which is unnatural." I, however, was able to convince him to be a member of the international advisory board of *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. Finally, he accepted our offer to work at *Dhaulagiri Journal*.

Later I learned that his health was deteriorating due to the multiple complexities of cancer and COVID-19. During COVID-19, we did not have much communication. Suddenly, I had a feeling to inquire about Professor Maskarinec's health. I asked him whether I should share his health condition with the public, and he consented. The email below explains our idea of interviewing Professor Maskarinec:

**Date:** November 29 2020

Dear Man Bahadur-ji,  
Namaskar!

Always good to hear from you, and I hope you and your family are staying safe and staying healthy.

My recovery from the major surgery in April has been complicated. All of my esophagus and much of my stomach was removed, as that was where the cancer was located, and then the remainder of my stomach was stretched up to form a tube from my neck to my intestines. Unfortunately, the place where it joins behind my throat has leaked three times (a common post-surgical complication), with what I was drinking coming out through my neck and requiring additional surgeries to close it again. After the third time, I also caught COVID-19 while in the hospital, adding 36 days to my stay, and 20 days in isolation as COVID was a severe case. However, I have been home now for six weeks, and slowly increasing the amount of liquids that I take orally, though most of my nutrition is still through a tube into my belly. I do go for a walk every morning, and the post-COVID symptoms affecting my lungs and heart seem to be over.

I have to say, it has been a difficult year, let's hope things improve in 2021.

With best wishes,  
Gregory

I discussed the email content with Professor Subedi and decided to interview Gregory Maskarinec, which he agreed. We learn more about Gregory from his own writing and summarized in the introduction published in Vol. 16 after his death. We hope it captured his work. We wrote:

He explored Nepali society and culture and received his MA and PhD in *shamanism*. In addition to his significant contributions to Medical Anthropology, Prof. Gregory was a nature-lover, peaceful, devoted to generating and sharing knowledge, and supportive. He had good relationships with high-level scholars, literature artists, and politicians of Nepal. He also participated in literary festivals in rural areas and promoted local arts and artists. He had visited more than 70 districts of Nepal. ...The interview captured his ideas, thoughts, understanding of anthropology, works in Nepal, and personal life. For the sustainability of the Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology, at the end of his life, he donated US\$ 5000. The journal family is always grateful for his invaluable contribution.

We are glad that we could take his interview. Our mission was to capture hidden realities in

the own words of eminent anthropologists. This mission might encourage young and energetic anthropologists. Understanding the health situation of Professor Maskarinec, we requested him to write something about his family background and academic achievements. He agreed to our proposal. That interview also became useful to the University of Hawaii, as they published part of the interview (<https://jabsom.hawaii.edu/gregory-maskarinec-reflection/>). The full interview is published in Dhaulagiri Journal (<https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/DSAJ/article/view/50999>).

### Writing and Publication

Gregory Maskarinec taught me the importance of writing and publication. This understanding came to me as he agreed to publish his interview when he was extremely sick. Any other person would have refused an interview in that critical condition

Madhusudan Subedi and I held a virtual meeting with Gregory Maskarinec on 05/02/2022. As I was also familiar with some cultural elements of Jajarkot, and Gregory Maskarinec shared his idea how he named his two daughters; I pitched the context of *Kamal Jaisi*, also found a powerful spirit in Baglung District in Nepal. He immediately responded that he would write a paper on the topic, regardless of his condition to be published in Dhaulagiri Journal. I did not believe it. With his dedication and commitment, he completed the paper and submitted it to the Journal within 79 days before his final departure. The paper has been published in Dhaulagiri Journal (<https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v16i01.50951>). Most impressive thing was that he was unable to speak in the virtual meeting. He only listened and answered in writing. I took responsibility for writing and my commitment to publishing is important to scholars, eminent scholars never miss any opportunity. In the same virtual meeting, he promised to send field notes of songs and proverbs based in Jajarkot, which he collected 40 years ago. He has asked us to work on it and publish it. He mailed the field notes and I was able to collect them on March 31, 2022. Now, our responsibility is to make something meaningful and publish it. For this purpose, we will collaborate with a friend already working in the field, and will be published in Nepali. Another aspect of a scholar is to emphasize collecting information and publication that supports maintaining trust with the people. I read that Malinowski's field diary was published after his death which brought a discourse of reflexivity in

anthropology (Nazaruk, 2011).

### **Encouragement and Promotion of Young Energetic Scholars**

I knew the professional relationship between Gregory Maskarinec and Torrey Wyatt, a young research scholar who wished to work in Nepal in Public Health. The title of the project was: Barriers to Maternal Health: A Qualitative Study of Obstacles Women Face Obtaining Care was the title of the project. Gregory somehow played a facilitator role in making contact with Professor Subedi and me. I was working at the Department of Sociology/Anthropology in Dhawalagiri Multiple Campus, Baglung agreed to co-ordinate, however, Torrey Wyatt did not get the scholarship. Torrey Wyatt was much interested in working in Nepal and our response was impressive. I thought Gregory wanted young scholars like us to work in cooperation and learn from each other for future development.

### **Generosity and Voluntarism**

I met Professor Maskarinec for the second time at Patan Academy of Health Sciences with his beloved wife, Gertraud Maskarinec, a Professor at the University of Hawaii. She has several international papers published in ranked journals and I also had a chance to talk to her along with Gregory Maskarinec. She suggested several issues regarding the design of the journal. I presented my vision of making Dhawalagiri journal sustainable. I have a broader vision of doing research promoting young scholars in and around Dhawalagiri region of Nepal. I wish to establish a foundation registered in the government institution to collect funds/donations from public and private institutions and people of warm hearts and positive thinking toward research and publication. I requested him to identify donors in the USA. He gently responded, saying let me see, I may be one of the donors for your mission. He further said, we are working and my daughters are employed as professors. The mission of establishing the foundation was not limited to focusing on the sustainability of the journal but conducting research by young scholars, and supporting policy formulation at the local governments in and around Dhawalagiri region. He kept noticing my vision in his mind and he offered us some money that might support for quality publication he wrote:

Dear Man Bahadurji, Namaskar!

Your final question raises the issue of the journal's future. A yearly cash prize for best entry might help. If you have a suitable bank account number for an account that accepts US\$ wire transfers, In the coming year, I could send perhaps US\$1200 and you could use it for a US\$200 prize for the next 5 years + expenses (both our bank and your bank will deduct some of the money, unfortunately), or for three years at least and cover publishing costs with the rest. Or I suppose without a suitable bank account, I can use Western Union and you will need to pick it up in NRupees.

Each year for five years now, my literary friends from Jajarkot award a prize that I that I have endowed, each time so far in a different district, for their choice of best published volume of poetry, essays, ethnography or folklore by someone who continues to live in that district (anyone who has left their district of birth to live elsewhere, such as in the Kathmandu Valley, the Terai or abroad is not eligible for the award, the winner must still reside in their district). This year the ceremony was in Rolpa. See the attached article for more details.

When I was last in Nepal, in 2019, we held the ceremony in Jumla, and I was able to tour the hospital, too, and meet some friends of Madhu. Last year, the ceremony was virtual and I was in the hospital, and I was of course unable to be there this time, too, but the award will continue.

All the best,

Personally, I feel this idea will bring the issue of sustainability in the future after we use up money. Similarly, awarding process might be subjective and we will not be fair in the selection process. On December 11 2021, we held a meeting of the editorial board and discussed it seriously and decided that we cannot accept donations on the condition of awarding authors based on their writing quality. But we will accept the donation and use it for the sustainability of the journal.

On behalf of the editorial team, I sent the unanimous decision as follows to Prof. Gregory Maskarinec:

**Meeting:** Saturday, December 11 2021

**Agenda 2:** On the proposal of offering money by Prof. Gregory Maskarinec was highly appreciated by all editors, advisors, and patrons and all thanked Professor Gregory wholeheartedly for his generosity



and continuous financial support. All unanimously agree that a challenge to handle the money for the purpose of choosing the best paper. All agree that monetary support should receive as it was offered to enhance the quality of the journal and create an attractive field of research and publication. The donated money will be received in the bank account of Dhaulagiri Journal's/Department of Sociology and Anthropology, DMC, Baglung, Nepal. The money will support the trust, which is a vision to be developed in the near future.

Later Prof. Gregory agreed with our decision and transferred money to the bank account of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Dhawalagiri Multiple Campus, Baglung. After receiving the money, we acknowledge him by writing these words of appreciation as follows:

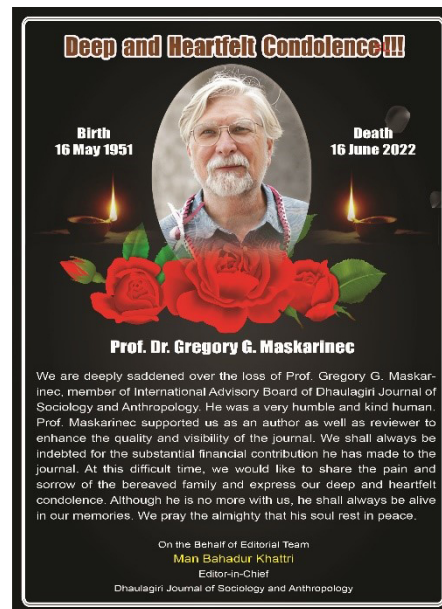
You have contributed to this journal academically for quality publication and financial contribution two times previously. Once again on February 5 2022, you have transferred 5000 \$ for the quality and regular publication of this journal. Your dedication and well



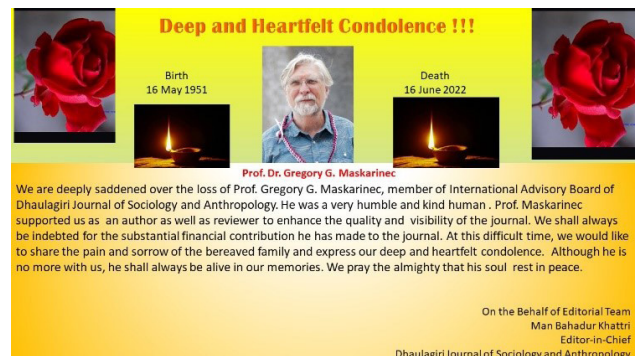
wishes to this journal is always respected highly. We express our deep gratitude for your invaluable contribution. We assure you that we will maintain the spirit of your contribution.

A letter of appreciation was sent to Gregory Maskarinec for his financial contribution.

After the death of our close and respected guardian of the journal, we held a meeting to express our respect for the departed soul and we made two important decisions as follows :



Condolences message published in Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Vol. 16, front page of cover



Condolences message posted in Facebook

**Meeting:** Sunday, June 19 2022

**Decision:** All members of the journal family present at the meeting expressed their deep and heartfelt condolence to the bereaved family and friends at the unfortunate demise of Professor Gregory G. Maskarinec. Dr. Khattri, shall post a condolence message on Facebook and share it among readers, authors and reviewers of the journal. Volume 16 of the journal shall include a condolence message for beloved Prof. Maskarinec.

I as an Editor-in-Chief posted a Condolence message in my Facebook on June 21, 2022. There was another decision as follow to publish a special issue on Gregory Maskarinec.

**Agenda 2: A Special Issue to be Published****Decision**

All members unanimously agreed to publish a special issue of Dhaulagiri Journal before June 16 of 2023 to mark the first annual memory of the death of Professor Gregory G. Maskarinec. For this purpose, Prof. Madhusudan Subedi will co-ordinate to collect writings that would honor and reflect his contribution to the field of anthropology. Dr. Man Bahadur Khattri shall facilitate the publication.

Similarly, we participated in a tribute assembly program. To respect the contribution of Gregory Maskarinec in Nepal and different fields, such as Nepali literature, a tribute assembly program was organized by Yogeshwor Smriti Pratisthan. I participated and I documented some photos and videos that were later published on my YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WopUe8nWQoM&t=41s>). Professor Madhusudan Subedi spoke about Gregory Maskarinec's life and his contribution. Most of the participants were literary background and were originally from the Jajarkot, district of Nepal. A tribute talk was organized on July 26, 2022 by Martin Chautari, Professor Om Gurung, Anthropologists, Dr Pratikshya Pandey, Yoga, and Naturopathy Physician and myself presented a talk on Professor Gregory Maskarinec's contribution. This talk is published in YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IoPl4TGRuOY>).

**Conclusion**

In my short interactions, I come to say some words of appreciation to Professor Maskarinec. I found him to be a person who never hurts others but prefers better serving. He observed quietly and reacted slowly, and gently. His reaction would be realized later. His manner of speaking was gentle and clear. With my little but short interactions, his focus on teaching was self-reliant and independent. He understood Nepali culture as he stayed a long time in Jajarkot, mid-west Nepal, and visiting more than 70 districts of Nepal. He knew knowledge rest on place and diversity of people. He always tried to associate with progressive local common people rather than elites. Respect to others is always the central focus of Gregory Maskarinec. Gregory Maskarinec has shown us a scholarly path to be adopted, which includes deep engagement with topics, subjects and a respectful commitment to sharing knowledge.

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