

“Come, Listen to the Story”:  
A Story about a Nepalese Oral Heritage Conservation  
Project  
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This paper explores ethnographically a youth project in Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, aimed at collecting traditional stories and oral history relating to Newar society and cultural practices. The project aptly named ‘Bakhan Nyene Waa’ (‘Come, Listen to the Story’) was initiated during an architectural rebuilding project following the devastating Gorkha Earthquake of 2015. (Joshi, Tamrakar & Magaiya, n.d.) This paper studies the formation of the Bakhan Nyane Waa initiative and its eventual transformation into a wider exploration of the Newar cultural history. It also analyzes the workings of the Bakhan team as an example of a grassroots youth initiative that focusses on the conservation of an intangible heritage.

A group of Nepalese youth mostly in their twenties and having backgrounds in engineering, architecture, heritage management and related disciplines, have in the last four years been organizing public lectures and discussion fora under the banner ‘Bakhan Nyane Waa’. The group started the program in 2017 when they were working as volunteers to help rebuild Kasthamandap, a centuries-old wooden pavilion in Maru Twah, the central part of Kathmandu city’s traditional core, a site also

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falling within one of the seven monument zones comprising the Kathmandu Valley UNESCO World Heritage site.

The initial idea behind the establishment of the Bakhan Nyane Waa forum was to understand how the local communities were culturally and historically connected to Kasthamandap. As research efforts grew, so did the number of stories. After the organizational framework for the rebuilding of Kasthamandap was restructured by the Nepal Government and the Kathmandu Metropolitan City in 2018, some members of the team were no longer associated with the rebuilding project. In the late summer of 2018, the Bakhan team again came together and began exploring local Newar stories beyond the Kasthamandap milieu.

A study of the Bakhan team's trajectory of progress will deal with the changes and improvements made to the format of oral story collection and retelling; lessons learned in community participation efforts; adaptations made while continuing in challenging global health conditions; and the challenges faced and decisions made regarding ways to conserve and convert oral heritage into more tangible formats.

## References

Joshi, R., Tamrakar, A., Magaiya, B. (n.d.). Community-based Participatory Approach in Cultural Heritage Reconstruction: A Case Study of Kasthamandap. Retrieved from [http://nra.gov.np/uploads/docs2/upcoming\\_events/Rija%20Joshi%20et%20al\\_Community%20based%20Participatory%20Approach%20in%20Cultural%20Heritage%20Reconstruction\\_%20A%20Case%20Study%20of%20Kasthamandap.pdf](http://nra.gov.np/uploads/docs2/upcoming_events/Rija%20Joshi%20et%20al_Community%20based%20Participatory%20Approach%20in%20Cultural%20Heritage%20Reconstruction_%20A%20Case%20Study%20of%20Kasthamandap.pdf)