

Student explores elder care tradition

By Sudbury Star Staff

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Hom Shrestha, a second-year gerontology student at Huntington University, recently attended the 2017 Conference of the Association for Anthropology, Gerontology and the Life Course at Oxford Brookes University in Oxford, England.

Shrestha presented his paper, entitled Bura Janko – Honouring Old Age in Nepal, which was co-authored by Kathryn Molohon, to distinguish conference participants and scholars from the Sloan Center on Aging and Work at Boston College, the University of South Florida at Saint Petersburg, the Wayne State University Institute of Gerontology, the Kilburn Older Voices Exchange in the UK and Purdue University.

This paper examines Bura Janko, an ongoing 5,000-year-old ceremony practiced by Newar people in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal and highlights contemporary approaches and policies for senior care anywhere in the world.

“It was a great honour to be invited to present a paper on my research at this conference,” Shrestha said. “I received scholarships from both Oxford Brookes and Huntington University to help cover the costs of travel, and am pleased to report that the panel members showed great interest in my work, inquiring about its potential as a senior-friendly recreational care therapy or activity for senior care facilities and communities.”

Bura Janko preserves the ancient Newar tradition of bonding families and communities by honouring aging as a divine status. It is celebrated when people reach 77 years, seven months, seven days and seven hours of age, or after they see 1,000 full moons (between 82 and 84 years of age); or at age 88 years 8 months and 8 days.

During this ceremony, grandparents are worshipped as living gods and families and communities bond over the wisdom of aging, especially when grandparents symbolically feed each family member. Chariots with grandparents pulled by grandchildren in homes, temples, and shrines elevate family and community morale and dignity, reinforce constructive leisure, and display how care and love for older people proves the quality of their lives and communities.

“It is very impressive that Mr. Shrestha, as a second-year student, was invited to present at such a prestigious, international conference on aging,” remarked Dr. Krishnan Venkataraman, assistant professor of gerontology at Huntington University. “His research into the practice of Bura Janko provides an innovative perspective and approach to senior care in North America.”