

## Preamble: April 25, 2015

It was a normal Saturday afternoon in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. All schools, colleges, and government offices were closed, but most businesses, shops, and restaurants were open as usual. I was attending a conference, the International Folklore Congress, where people from different parts of the world gathered. Around 11:40 a.m. local time, I was taking selfies, tweeting, and texting as I prepared to attend a presentation about urbanization. The room was filled with 30-40 individuals. Suddenly, the building started to shake violently. I went into shock and was disoriented, but I remember that all the people in the room began to rush toward the door, screaming and fighting against the shaking building, not knowing what to do next. I asked someone, "Is this an earthquake?" to which they replied, "No." I ran under a table, thinking it would keep me safe. As I write this, years later, I can still feel myself trembling in that instant.

Within a few moments, though, I, along with the others, ran out of the building. Fortunately, the conference building was one of the lucky edifices that hadn't collapsed. After reaching a safe spot, I checked Twitter on my phone. Within five minutes of the chaos, pictures, news articles, and information began to circulate worldwide, informing everyone that a 7.5 magnitude earthquake had struck Nepal. It was hard for me to comprehend what I had just faced. All the people in that room along with my family and close friends had survived, but more than 8,000 people lost their lives, and around 26,000 were injured throughout the 14 districts of Nepal on that day.

In 2015, I had two jobs and an online presence in Nepal. I worked as an English newsreader at Radio Nepal, Nepal's national radio station, and I worked as a communications officer at a nonprofit organization called Teach for Nepal. Both jobs and my online presence made me a disaster responder as a journalist and a communications practitioner managing community-based disaster response. Following the earthquake, I was immediately reporting, tweeting, replying, and retweeting, as were thousands of Nepalis in Nepal and abroad and non-Nepalis. Nepal is considered one of the most vulnerable

populations during a time of disaster, but after the earthquake, I witnessed the rhetorical agency of the Nepalis in responding to a disaster and managing the aftermath. As a responder to the Nepal earthquake, I witnessed discrepancies in aid distribution and crisis communication that exacerbated social injustices.

Disillusionment made me pursue a PhD in rhetoric and composition. Experiences during other crises in both Nepal and the US motivated me to explore how systems of oppression aggravate the consequences of disasters among the most vulnerable and marginalized communities; how technology, which is crucial for the survival of such communities, creates dire circumstances by reinforcing inequities; and how marginalized communities use and create technology for their survival and resistance.

Admiration of the power of the vulnerable and marginalized to resist their own oppression led to my writing this book.