

## RESEARCH NOTE

# NEPALESE IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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### Introduction

The Nepalese immigrants in the United States comprise a comparatively small community, representing the diversity of Nepalese ethnic backgrounds. Culturally, these encompass the three geographical areas of Nepal, popularly known as the Himal (high mountainous region bordering the Tibetan autonomous region of China), Pahad (middle hills), and Tarai (southern flat area bordering India). Despite their geographic, linguistic, and ethnic diversities, Nepalese immigrants in the US are collectively known by a single group name 'Nepali'. The word Nepali stands for both the people and the lingua-franca of present day Nepal, a country situated between the two giants of Asia, China and India.

The Nepalese people are also known as the Gurkhas or Gorkhalese since the time of the British colonial regime in India. The origin of this national label derives from early colonial writers' attempts to link the history of Nepal with the original unifier of the country, King Prithvīnārāyaṇa Shah of Gorkha (of Western Nepal) and his Gorkhali people.

The predominant sub-groups among the Nepalese immigrants are the Bahun-Chhetris including Thakuris, Newars, and the Bhotias (Sherpa and other high Himalayan people) respectively.

### Definition

The common traits of Nepalese immigrants are classified by their original Nepali nationality, languages, and cultures. Generally, Nepali is the main language of communication within the Nepalese communities, even though they also use other ethnic languages of Nepal such as Newari, Sherpa, Tamang, Gurung etc. The physical features of Nepalese immigrants varies according to their geographical and ethnic origins.

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Nepalese of Bhotia origin (Himalayan highlanders) are considered Mongoloid by their ethnic origin. Their physical feature is very similar to those of Tibetans. Therefore, they are also known as Tibeto-Mongolians. This community comprises different subgroups such as Sherpa, Gurung, Tamang, Kirati, Magar, and the other Himalayan origin people.

The People representing the Pahad (middle hills) are basically Bahun-Chhetris and Newars. Among them, Newars are mainly from the Kathmandu Valley. This community comprises both Hindus and Buddhists by religious beliefs and Indo-Aryan and Mongoloid by physical features, although the Newars are a highly syncretized group with their own language, popularly known as Newari.

Originally, the Bahun-Chhetris were from the sub-tropical hill areas of Nepal. Anthropologists believe they belong to the Caucasoid Indo-Aryan family. They are physically similar to North Indian people, but because of their long time and continuous habitation in remote mountain regions, they have evolved distinctly from the North Indians as seen particularly in their lighter skin and other physical features.

The Tarai people, also known as Madheshe, are from the southern tropical plains, known as Tarai or Madesh. Culturally they are very similar to the Indians of Bihar and Uttarpradesha. Their languages (Maithili, Bhojpuri, Avadi, Tharu etc.) and physical features are quite similar to the Indians of bordering areas and in some cases difficult to distinguish. By the effort of linguistic integration process of Nepal in the past several decades (1960s-1980s) the Tarai people are also able to communicate in Nepali National language.

### **Immigration and Settlement History**

The history of Nepalese Immigration to the US is a recent phenomenon in comparison to most of other Asian and South Asian countries. The earliest Nepalese visit to the US as non immigrant was during the 1940s and records indicate that the first Nepalese obtained a permanent residentship in 1952. A gradual increase in the number of Nepalese immigrants began only after 1956/57, but even today, the total number of Nepalese in the US is relatively small.

The main deterrents for earlier Nepalese immigration into the US were: (a) the Nepalese government's internal restrictive policy, (b) the absence of diplomatic relationship between Nepal and the United States until 1947, and (c) lack of Nepal's access to the Western material culture and languages. Nepal's difficult geopolitical situation has determined the scope and nature of the country's foreign policy and foreign contact through the ages. After the signing of Anglo-Nepal treaty of 1816 Nepal became virtually closed to

all foreigners except Britishers and the Nepalese were legally prohibited to emigrate except to India. This restriction became even tighter after the establishment of Rana autocratic rule in 1846 which lasted for more than a century. The close alliance between British India and the autocratic Rana regime of Nepal became a barrier for Nepalese seeking contact with the Western world. Nepal was able to establish diplomatic relationship with the US only after Indian Independence in 1947.

In 1951, the Rana regime was overthrown and Nepal became a democratic country. Consequently, Nepal's contact with the outside world increased gradually for the next decade. But with the Royal coup of 1960 and sudden collapse of parliamentary democracy Nepalese immigration once again became very difficult. The number of Nepalese immigrants to the US increased significantly, only after the restoration of democracy in Nepal, in 1990. The lottery system implemented by the US government has facilitated immensely the immigration process for Nepalese in the 1990s.

Further causes for the late arrival and small number of Nepalese immigrants in the US are: Nepal's economic disadvantage, poor literacy rates, lack of compulsory education, the physical distance, and cultural and linguistic disparities. The requirement of High-School diploma or occupational skills or experience still prevents common Nepalese from obtaining immigrant visa.

Effectively, Nepalese were prevented at least indirectly from immigrating to the US by the Immigration and Naturalization policy of the US itself. The past policy of immigration quota system by continents prevented Nepalese from coming in considerable number, since the Asian limit was largely filled by other Asian émigrés from the countries like India, China, Pakistan, Philippines, Korea etc. Because such a small group of Nepalese immigrants in this country at present, the relatives who could come under the First, Second, Fourth, and Fifth preferences of the 1965 Amendment Act would also be limited. The system favouring family reunification also after all became favorable only for those countries who had supplied big number of people already to the US and not for coming more Nepalese here.

Nepalese immigrants who came to the US prior to the late eighties are mostly highly educated and technically trained people, but the new lottery system of the US has brought relatively less educated Nepalese as well. In comparison to the immigrants of other Asian countries, Nepalese are still better educated. Because, in Nepal, very common and less educated people can not even get access to apply for lottery or regular visa applications. Nor can they meet the expenses for pre departure arrangement.

In the US, Nepalese immigrants are mainly centered around the, big cities and where renowned universities are located. States like CA, NY,

MD, IL, TX, MI, NJ, Metropolitan D.C. area, and VA have relatively big number of Nepalese Immigrant population.

Since only a few Nepalese Americans and permanent residents of the first generation are now close to their retirement age there is no existing evidence of circular and return immigration of the Nepalese yet. Still in consideration of Nepalese immigrants' psychology one may predict this to occur in the future. Second generation Nepalese Americans, pursuing higher education or are in the beginning stage of their professional fields do not in general consider returning to their ancestral home land. The reasons are: a. they are accustomed to the American way of life and material facilities; b. there is still no evidence of any growing infrastructure for economic development in Nepal that would attract such a sophisticated individuals born, educated, and trained in a technologically most advance country in the world.

### **Demographic Facts**

Even today Nepalese constitute only about five hundredths of one percent of the total Asian and about four tenth of one percent of total South Asian immigrants in the US. Nepal has not been included in any category as a separate Nation in the Year Book published every year by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service. The library's documentation center at the Bureau of the Census of the US Government does not have the most current statistics on Nepalese immigrants as the numbers are insignificant in comparison to the immigrants of other countries. Although there are more than 18000 Nepalese now living in the US, only 2433 of them are recorded as having been admitted to the US between 1952 and 1993 by the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the US as permanent residents. The ratio of Nepalese immigrants has been increased more steadily in the 1990s mainly because of the new lottery quota system executed by the US Government. In this lottery system the population giants of Asia like China and India have been excluded from illegible list of the countries and in place of them other countries' quota has been increased. Thus, at least a total number of 860 Nepalese have been admitted as permanent resident only between the period of 1990 and 1993. Therefore, including the assuming number of 1994 and 1995 by the same ratio of 1993 the total estimated number of the Nepalese immigrants now could be figured around 3000 or little more who are either in a permanent visa status or the naturalized citizen of the US. Among them, around 53% are male and 47% are female.

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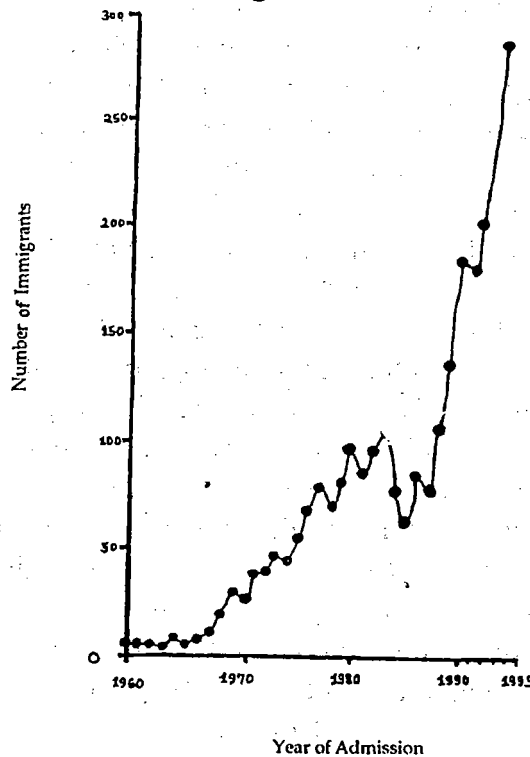
**Nepalese immigrants admitted to the United States from the beginning to the year 1993**

Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1952	1	1967	9	1980	95
1953-55	0	1968	19	1981	83
1956	1	1969	32	1982	97
1957	5	1970	25	1983	105
1958	0	1971	40	1984	75
1959	4	1972	39	1985	63
1960	4	1973	46	1986	86
1961	5	1974	43	1987	78
1962	5	1975	56	1988	106
1963	3	1976	68	1989	134
1964	7	1977	80	1990	184
1965	4	1978	68	1991	174
1966	8	1979	79	1992	206
				1993	296

Total number: 2433

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Computer file, ICPSR, 1993.

**Nepalese Immigration 1960-1993**



The Nepalese immigrants in the US are a composition of people from three different geographical regions and diverse ethnic origins, they can be categorized in five tentative sub groups such as Bahun-Chhetris, Newars, Tibeto-Mongoloid Himalayan people, Tarai or Madhese people, and others.

Bahun-Chhetris are the people originally from the middle hills of Nepal having Indo-Aryan Hindu origins. This is the largest group constituting about 45% of the total Nepalese Immigrant population in the US. The second largest group is the Newar community from the Kathmandu Valley. This constitutes about 40% of total Nepalese population in America. The Newars represent both Indo-Aryan Hindu and Buddhist communities of the Kathmandu Valley. Until late 1980s the third largest group comprised the people from Southern plains of Nepal, the Tarai or Madhese people. But in the 1990s, immigrants from the Himalayan highlands people of Bhotia origins have increased quite rapidly and have become the third largest Nepalese immigrant population, pushing the Tarai group down into a fourth category. The Himalayan Bhotia origin group now constitutes about 10% whereas the Terai's Madhese group constitutes only about 5% of the total Nepalese population in the US. The last group, under the title others, is the population of the low caste Hindus which in fact does not make any percent at all because the total number of this group is very small.

The mailing lists of different regional Nepalese communities in the US produced and distributed by different Nepalese Associations and organizations show that the Bahun-Chhetri group consists about eighty different family names popularly known as *thara* in Nepali. Similarly, The Newar, the Himalayan Bhotia, and the Tarai groups consist of about 40, 17, and 16 different *tharas* respectively. Among them, Thāpā, Pāṇde, Sharmā Upādhyāy, and Rānā from the Bahun-Chhetri group; Shreṣṭha, Pradhān, Rājbandāry, and Shākya from Newar group; Sherpā, Lāmā, and Gurung from the Himalayan group have the bigger size of population.

In terms of generation status, most Nepalese American families are still in their first generation, although a small number of second generation Nepalese are now surfacing. Since the major portion of Nepalese immigrants is first generation and their coming to the USA is a very recent phenomenon, the birth rate for Nepalese Americans, 1.5, will not contribute to population growth. But a considerable increase in the number of new immigrants has been recorded since 1968. In total, there were only .56 Nepalese immigrants prior to the year 1968. But, after the execution of new immigration amendments passed by the US Congress in 1965 phasing out the old quota system, the number of Nepalese to acquire permanent residency has increased from 19 in 1968 to 296 in 1993, cumulating at 2433 Nepalese immigrants. There is no separate yearly data available after

(covering the data of the years between 1956 and 1993 plus the rough estimate of the years 1994 and 1995), the average ratio of yearly admittance could be calculated as no less than 71 individuals.

In terms of spatial distribution the greater population of Nepalese have settled the states of NY, CA, MD, IL, TX, VA, MI, NJ, and FL. Surprisingly, the major portion of the Himalayan origin Nepalese have settled almost exclusively in big cities such as NY, San Francisco, and Seattle only.

Since the major portion of Nepalese in America is new comer and of first generation, by the age factor, Nepalese immigrants are relatively young. Most of the immigrants arrived in and after 1980s are still under the age of 50 and those who arrived before that time are also not older than the age of 70.

### **Language**

Although they belong to different ethnic, lingual, and cultural backgrounds Nepali is the primary language of communication within most of the Nepalese in the US. Most Nepalese whose native language is not Nepali, can still understand, speak, read, and write Nepali. Since most of them have at least a High School degree prior to their coming to the US, which requires a certain level of fluency in writing and reading Nepali. Nepali is the mother tongue of the Nepalese of middle hill origin people of Nepal whereas the native language of other Nepalese is different. For example, most of the Newars from Kathmandu valley speak Newari as their mother tongue and the Nepalese of Tarai origin speak either Maithili, Bhojpurī, Avadi or Thāru language as their mother tongue. Similarly, those of Himalayan Mongol origin people use different dialects of Tibetan origin like Sherpa (Tibetan?) Gurung, Tamang, Magar, Kirat (Rai and Limbu) etc.

Although they continue to use ethnic native languages, some of the Nepalese immigrants prefer to use English or to be bilingual and in some cases trilingual- using native, Nepali, and English languages. Most of the Nepalese Americans speak both Nepali and English fluently. Those Nepalese professionals educated in Western schools either in Nepal or else where use English as their primary language. Similarly, new generation of Nepalese American uses English as their first language and it is likely the Nepali language will become an occasional and that other ethnic languages may disappear in the time of subsequent generations. There are already a good number of Nepalese families who speak exclusively English from the time of their arrival in the US. In these cases it is possible that even Nepali fluency will disappear by the next generation. Nepalese Americans are developing a demeaning attitude toward Nepali and other native ethnic

languages of Nepal. Unlike other nationalities such as Latinos, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Indians, Nepalese immigrants in general do not feel pride in maintaining their languages. This is due to the smallness of Nepali community and the lack of professional and social utility for the Nepali and other ethnic languages of Nepal in the US. Unfortunately, no decisive programs have been developed to maintain and promote the Nepali and other ethnic languages of Nepal nor the Nepalese immigrants have established their own ethnic press. However, there are some Nepalese organizations planning to open Nepalese Cultural Centre and conduct Nepali language and cultural classes. A Nepali literary association - the International Nepali Literary Society has been established in the metropolitan Washington DC area with a humble goal of promoting Nepali language and literature which also publishes a bi-monthly literary journal called *Antardriṣhti*. Similarly, other publications like *Kurākānī* (ANFS Souvenir), *Chautārī* (SNSNY Newsletter), *Diyālo* (NCNC magazine) etc. include Nepali essays, poems, and other news and views in both Nepali and English.

### **Cultural Characteristics**

**Economy and Housing:** Because they are still in their first generation, Nepalese immigrants in the US have not established big businesses and industrial entrepreneurship yet. A major portion of early Nepalese immigrants hold white-collar jobs, technical, educational or other professional and semiprofessional positions. They are engineers, doctors, horticulturists, agroeconomists, geologists, geographers, professors-lecturers, lawyers, economists, and other semiprofessional junior technicians. Some established Nepalese individuals are able to run small scale businesses such as consultancy and engineering firms, health clinics, travel agencies, food stores, restaurants, oriental craft imports etc. Approximately, 80% of Nepalese immigrants who arrived prior to the mid 1980s have a comfortable life styles owning apartments, town houses or some time even mansion to live. In some cases, they also own and or have other properties and investments along with a considerable amount of bank balance.

However, unlike the earlier immigrants, the majority of Nepalese who arrived after mid 80s are not well educated or qualified to acquire professional occupations. More than 60% of late immigrants (as opposed to 20% of earlier arrivals) are unskilled workers who earn subsistence salaries. They either rent or own less expensive apartments or town houses. There are no records of homeless Nepalese within the US.



**Religion:** Hinduism and Buddhism are the dominant religions of Nepalese in America. Hinduism is the National religion of Nepal as about 90% of Nepalese are Hindu. In America, about 80% of Nepalese are Hindu Bahun-Chhetris and Newars. Most of the people from Nepalese Tarai also believe on Hinduism. A portion of Newar population and most of the Himalayan origin Tibeto-Mongolian origin Nepalese follow either Buddhism or Tibetan Bon type of shamanism. Of these, Sherpa, Tamang, Thakali, and Gurung people are the followers of Tibetan Buddhism or Bon tradition. Although there are some *theravādins*, majority of Buddhist Newars are the followers of *mahāyāna* Buddhism.

Nepalese Hindus in the US celebrate their religious festivals both collectively in group and separately at individual households. Although Nepalese communities in the US do not have their own Hindu temples, most of these frequently visit Hindu temples founded and run by different Indian communities. Nepalese in Americas under the leadership of Nepalese Cultural Council are planning to establish a cultural center and a Hindu temple somewhere in the Metropolitan Washington D.C. area. They have already raised a couple of hundred thousand dollars fund for this purpose. A Nepali Hindu religious association named Sanatana Dharma Sewa Samiti was established in New York City in 1992 which organizes events for some of the main religious pujas and festivals each year.

**World view:** Like in home, basically there are two different world views prevailed within the Nepalese communities in the US representing their Hindu and Buddhist order. The Hindus believe that universe is the undergoing an eternally repeated cycle of creation, protection, and destruction represented by their three major deities, Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshvara respectively. Hindus' universe comprises of three popular *lokas* (worlds), *svarga*, an immortal world which could be compared with heaven), *martya*, a mortal world (the earth), and *pātāla* or *naraka* which could be compared with hell. They believe that every human being according to his/her *karma* (action) of the mortal life on earth would either get a place in *svarga* or in *naraka* after the death. They also believe in *punarjanma* (rebirth) and *moksha* (salvation) from mortal life.

For the Buddhist people in general, this mortal world is the place of suffering but they also believe that such suffering can be transcended through attaining wisdom and good action. They also believe on the theory of karma (action) and countless world system. The Vajrayanists of Nepal believe the *ādibuddha vajradhara* (spiritual Buddha) as an absolute controller of the universe which includes thirteen kinds of worlds popularly known as *trayodasabhuvana*. The Mahayanists believe that every being on the world is

empty or devoid of self nature (*Sunyāta*) which always needs help from the Bodhisattva, a most compassionate or gracious form of Buddha especially to become enlightened to achieve *Bodhisattvahood* or *nirvāna* (emancipation) from the worldly sufferings.

**Marriage, Family, and Kinship:** In most cases, Nepalese immigrants were married in Nepal before their arrival or return to Nepal to get married. There is also a growing tendency among second generation Nepalese males, to return to Nepal to find appropriate partners. Because of this trend, the second generation Nepalese women may have difficulty obtaining a Nepalese husband. Consequently, there is also a growing tendency among young Nepalese women to marry Americans or other internationals. Usually, Nepalese male youths do not want to marry a Nepalese girl raised and educated in an American environment. In some cases, parents of such Nepalese women try to sponsor suitable men to come to the US to marry their daughters.

Nepalese society is bound with strong traditions of class hierarchy which has become a sensitive issue in Nepalese communities in America. Surprisingly, Nepalese are likely to accept international matrimonial relationships rather than an inter-caste marriage within their own Nepalese community. Dozens of Nepalese men have married American and other international women already.

In conclusion, because the Nepalese American community is small by its size, multiethnic in its origin, and still strongly bound by religion, the scenario of marriage practices among the Nepalese of second generation in America may become complex and problematic. Even so, because of these traditional factors the marriage life of Nepalese people is highly successful with a few unhappy incidents and less than 1 % of divorce.

As is common practice among Hindus and Buddhists, generally, a hierarchy based gender and seniority prevails in Nepalese society, the senior male member of a family having authority in family affairs. Family life is very important to the Nepalese and sense of mutual respect and understanding is very strong. Every member of family holds a special place and position with respect and recognition as Hindu and Buddhist family traditions guarantee that.

**Community Institutions, Organizations, Festivals, and Functions:** Nepalese in America are striving to maintain their best for their unity and by establishing Nepalese organizations uncovering the areas related to geographic regions, ethnicity, student affairs, religion, culture and literary development, academic activities, mutual friendships, politics and

development, and human rights etc. This trend was started in the early eighties and is getting popularity in the present decade of 1990s. There is also a Nepalese American Council (NAC) established in 1991 to meet the need of an umbrella organization to bring different Nepalese organizations together for common interests of the Nepalese in Americas. Other representing associations related to Nepal and the Nepalese are: Association of Nepalese in Americas (ANA), Association of Nepalese in Midwest America (ANMA), America-Nepal Society (ANS, DC.), America-Nepal Society of California, America-Nepal Friendship Society (ANFS, NY), Nepal Association of Northern California, Nepalese Association of Southeastern America (NASA), Florida-Nepal Association, Greater Boston Nepali Community, Association of Nepalese in Canada, Nepalese Community Network of Canada, International Nepali Literary Society (INLS, DC.), Nepal Forum at Columbia University, (NY), Society of Nepalese Students in New York (SNSNY), Nepalese Women's Association, (NY), Alliance for Democracy and Human Rights in Nepal (ADHaR, NY), United Sherpa Society, (NY), Nepalese and Friends Association, AZ, Nepā Pāsā Pucha Americaye, DC., Phoolbari Club, DC., Nepal Youth Organization-USA, DC., and Sanatana Dharma Sewa Samiti, NY.

Through these organizations Nepalese in America celebrate their social, cultural, religious, and even Nepali national festivals like *dasain*, *tihar shivaratri*, *teej*, Nepali New Year's day (*naya-varsha*), Newari *bhintuna*, and Sherpa and other Himalaya peoples' *lo-sar* etc. In some places they even celebrate Nepalese Democracy Day (*prajātantra divasa*) as their festival. To share common experience and ideas, they organize occasional conventions, seminars, meetings, talk and cultural programs, community picnics time to time. Through these organizations they also publish different souvenirs, newsletters, literary and other publications as well. The representing Nepalese publications are: *Kurākānī* (Souvenir of ANFS, NY), *Nepal Update*, (D.C.), *Viewpoints* (Newsletter, ANMA, OH), *ADHaR* (Newsletter, Alliance for Democracy, NY), *Sagarmāthā Times*, *Mt. Everest News*, (Missouri), *Namaste, Yati* (Newsletter, NASA, GA), *Dabu* (Newsletter, NPP), *Samjhana* (Newsletter, ANS, DC.), *Chautārī* (Newsletter, SNSNY, NY), *Samāchār-vichār* (joint publication of GBNC and NFB, Boston), *Diyālo* (Canada), *Lāligurāns* (Newsletter, NAC, Canada), *Antardrīṣṭi Literary* (D.C.) *Kshitij* (The Horizon), (Newsletter, Nyo-USA, D.C.). In addition, after the development of computer information superhighway through the internet, Nepalese in America have also become able to exploit this wonderful opportunity by developing their own information home pages and programs like the *Nepal Digest Foundation* and *Socio-culture Nepal* etc.

### **Social and Cultural Assimilation**

Although the Nepalese community is very small, there has been deliberate effort to participate in local and national political decision making process. Particularly the Nepalese Americans think that the changes in their birth place, Nepal will effect only their psyche, but the happening in the US will effect on the very foundation of their existence. But the identity of being a Nepalese seems to remain very strong among Nepalese although they have been attracted by the American culture and life styles. Thus, in reality and in anthropological definition, Nepalese migrants in America can also be defined by 'marginal people' who face a dilemma in their attempt to adopt to the social cultural norms of the host society.

Some researchers have also observed a Nepalese tendency of staying away from real American socio-cultural organizations and activities with a particular intention of preserving their original self identity. In contrary to this, may be because of their pre background of English language and being relatively a small community Nepalese can be observed as being able to mixing up fast especially with English speaking Americans. For example, some Nepalese immigrants have also been honored by the city governments for their active participation in the field of social work in the metropolitan cities like Boston.

Despite their parents' guidelines and tough instruction most of the Nepalese youths born and raised in the US are not so serious towards Nepalese ethnicity, language, religion, and culture. Therefore, this particular tendency of Nepalese youths is going to be a big challenge against the concept of preserving Nepalese distinct identity.

Inter-ethnic integration among the Nepalese seems more effective here in America than in Nepal. Different socio-cultural associations of Nepalese immigrants have served an important role for this. However some ethnic organizations are indirectly developing contrary situation to this broad ethnic assimilation process.

Because Nepalese Americans are few in number and scattered in residence, there have been only a few acts of violence against them. But in the 1990s anti-Asian and anti-South Asian feelings have surfaced particularly in many large cities. There has been a significant increase in hate crime against South Asians especially against Indians, Pakistanis and sometime even against Nepalese. There is also a deep feeling of discrimination among both the Nepalese educated elites and unskilled workers on the job and on the process of finding job. Nepalese immigrants have experienced taboos at work particularly from American co-workers, supervisors, or sometime from other senior employees. Main cause of such

'discrimination' according to the Nepalese respondents are: cultural, racial difference and bias feeling emerged from such differences.

### Calendar

**Nayā Varsha Holiday;** Nepalese New Year's day (1st day of the month of *Vaishākha* of *Vikrama era*, usually in the middle of April). America-Nepal Friendship Society of New York City celebrates this festival with a colorful program inviting every member of Nepalese community in and around New York City.

**Bhānu Jayanti:** Adikavi (pioneer poet of Nepali literature) Bhanubhakta Acharya's birth anniversary (29th day of the month of *Ashadha* of *Vikrama era*, in the middle of July). Some Nepalese community associations celebrate *Bhānu Jayanti* with various literary programs and speeches in the following weekend of his exact birth day if it is not in the weekend by regular calendar.

**Teej or Haritālīka:** A socio-religious festival especially of women. *Shravana shukta tritiya* (3rd day of light fortnight of the month of *Shrāvana* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in July or August. Nepalese women visit Hindu temples this day to worship gods and goddesses especially lord Shiva and remain fasting wishing for long life and good health of their husbands.

**Kriṣṇāṣṭamī:** A religious holiday, *vrata* and *pujā* in memory of birth anniversary of lord Kriṣṇa. *Bhādra kṛiṣṇa aṣṭhamī* (8th day of dark fortnight of the month of *Bhadra* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in August).

**Dashain:** The main socio-religious and national festival of Nepal and the Nepalese community in the US. *Āshvina shukla saptamī* to *Āshvina shukla chaturdashī* (7th to 14th day of light fortnight of the month of *Ashvina* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in September). Nepalese people in Nepal and in the US celebrate this week-long festival in memory of divine victory over evil spirits, demons with the help of female power, *mātrishakti Durgā Bhavānī Kālī*.

**Tihar or Dīpāvalī:** The second biggest socio-religious festival. *Kārtika kṛiṣṇa chaturdashī* to *Kārtika-shukla parevā* (14th day of dark fortnight to 1st day of light fortnight of the month of *Kartika* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in October but sometime it goes to November). In Nepal,

this is a festival of brothers and sisters, worship of goddess of wealth (*Laxmi*), cow, bullock, dog, and crow popularly, known as *Bhaitika*, *Laxmipuja*, *Gaitihār*, *Gorutihār* or *Govardhanapūja*, *Kukuratihār* and *Kagtihār* respectively. But, Nepalese in the US. celebrate only *Bhāitika* and *Laxmīpūja*.

**Bhintuna:** Newar community's New Year's day festival. *Kārtika Kṛishṇa aumshī* (15th day of dark fortnight or no moon day of the month of *Kārtika* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in October) but sometime in November). *Mhapūjā* or self soul worship is the main part of this festival. *Nepā: Pāsā Puchā*, a Washington D.C. based Newari community association plays an important role in organizing special programs in this festival.

**Nepalese King's birthday:** Nepalese present King Birendra's birthday. 14th day of the month of *Pausha* of *Vikrama* era, in December. Nepalese living in and around big cities like- New York, Washington D.C. etc. celebrate this occasion as a symbol of Nepalese unity day together with Nepalese Mission to the United Nations in New York City, Nepalese Embassy to the US in Washington D.C, and Nepalese Connections of other cities.

**Shreepañchamī:** *Sarasvatipuja* (worship of goddess of learning) *Māgha shukla pañchamī* (5th day of light fortnight of the month of *Magha* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in January). This festival is popular mainly among young students.

**Prajatantradivasa:** Nepalese democracy day. 14th day of the month of *Phālguna* of *Vikrama* era, in the middle of February. Nepalese community in the US celebrate this festival organizing formal meetings in memory of Nepalese peoples' victory over the Panchayat and Rana autocratic regimes in Nepal.

**Lo-sar:** Sherpa and other Himalayan origin peoples' New Year's festival. Nepalese Sherpa community in the US celebrate this festival usually in February. Originally this is a New Year's festival of Tibet and the Tibetan people. The *United Sherpa Society* of New York City is the leading Nepalese community association in celebrating this festival with a colorful cultural program and a dinner party.

**Mahashivaratri:** It is said that this is a religious festival celebrated in memory of the day of lord Shiva's marriage with goddess Pārvatī. *Phālguna krishṇa trayodashī* (13th day of dark fortnight of the month of *Phālguna* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in February. Alike Nepalese people at home, Nepalese in the US. assemble at lord Shiva's temples and worship the god. After special prayers and worship they enjoy eating *prasāda*, varieties of food offered to the deity.

#### Note

Summary of this article with a list of calendar of events has been published under entry no. 115 *Nepalese* in the *Encyclopedia of American Immigrant Cultures: Builders of a Nation*, New York: Macmillan Library Reference, 1997 pp. 645-652

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