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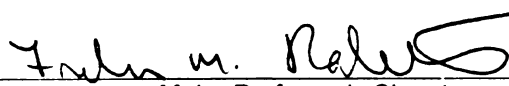
**MARGINAL PROFESSIONALS, PREDATORY NEPALESE ELITES,
AND EMIGRATION TO THE "DREAMLAND"**

presented by

Raju Tamot

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MARGINAL PROFESSIONALS, PREDATORY NEPALESE ELITES,
AND EMIGRATION TO THE “DREAMLAND”

By

Raju Tamot

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

MARGINAL PROFESSIONALS, PREDATORY NEPALESE ELITES, AND EMIGRATION TO THE “DREAMLAND”

By

Raju Tamot

This dissertation analyzes how the marginalization of Nepal’s professional cadre has contributed significantly to the high level of brain drain from that country to the United States. It argues that the brain drain is situated within the deeply rooted Nepalese ruling elite’s culture of marginalizing and excluding from the professional work settings and polity of Nepal those who are not *afno manches* (“one’s own people”). Specifically, it explores the Nepalese state’s indifference towards the positive externalities its professional cadre could generate for the society and country. This dissertation also examines the levels of comparative satisfaction the professional Nepalese cadre derive from their careers and overall life in Nepal as opposed to in the United States, as well as their perceptions of the ongoing leftist insurgency in Nepal. It details how these two factors influence their decisions to remain in the United States or return home.

This dissertation employs the anthropological concepts of “Self” and “Other” to understand the marginalized identity construction processes of the Nepalese professional cadre. It also employs the concept of identity, and the emerging conceptual frameworks of globalization and transnationalism to understand how immigrant Nepalis construct and strive to give continuity to their collective cultural identity in the United States, how their lives are anchored at multiple sites, and how these Nepalis attempt to influence outcomes

and political processes in Nepal despite the Nepalese state's intention to limit such involvements.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the people of Nepal who have needlessly suffered for so long.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

About nine years ago, we were returning home after a ten-day field trip from Nepal's mountainous far-western region, where I had been collecting baseline data on the capabilities of district (similar to a U.S. county) level government agencies. It was monsoon season, and we were driving along a mostly single lane mountain road, parts of which were carved out of mountainsides. The torrential rains had loosened the grip of the soil on the slopes, and at times, we had to play hide-and-seek with the occasional landslides of soccer-ball-sized boulders that rolled down ferociously from higher ground. To our horror, some of them fell just several feet ahead and behind our moving SUV, then bounced, rolled across the road, and then again, rolled down thunderously to lower grounds. All of us (my research assistant, the driver, and myself) were frantically nervous, and feared the single ominous boulder that could have crushed us to death. Despite the cool mountain breeze that came through the lowered windows of the SUV, we felt extremely hot and held our breaths. It was getting dark, and we decided to stop for the night at the next roadside settlement. After about an hour's nervous drive, we reached a small village at a juncture that led to another district headquarters situated just three miles away.

Moments before we reached this village, an eight-year old boy had fractured his skull when he fell into a ditch full of sharp boulders while playing. The boy lay unconscious on his helpless father's lap and blood oozed from his wound. The father was crying and covering his son's wound with a dirty shawl, trying to stop the bleeding, perhaps expecting that he would gain consciousness once the bleeding stopped. There weren't any doctors around or even an ambulance to take him to the nearest hospital.

Some of the villagers had gone to seek help at the local police station. Soon, a police jeep came, and the boy, his father, and two other acquaintances were taken to the district hospital where a doctor was said to be stationed.

I knew the boy would die, and I was devastated. Having lived most of my life in the relatively secure and comfortable capital city of Kathmandu, I had never before witnessed death so closely. Certainly, I had never experienced the tragic and in this case an avoidable death of a young child. I had visited several understaffed and poorly equipped district hospitals of Nepal and knew that the hospital where the boy was being taken would not be able to handle this type of situation, which called for an instant and complex surgical procedure by highly trained surgeons and neurologists. At most, the hospital would have about 20 beds, a rudimentary operating theatre, lab, a pharmacy with inadequate supplies, a general x-ray machine, and a doctor who could treat general medical cases and perform minor surgeries.¹ I did not sleep well that night. I wished that I could have done something to save the boy's life, like calling a chopper to airlift him to a better hospital in Kathmandu. But, this was well beyond my means. The innocent face of the unconscious child continuously flashed across my eyes. Finally, I became fatalistic and consoled myself with the thought that this was the child's destiny. There was not much I, or anybody, could do to save the boy's life

Three years later, I was a guest at a Nepali girl child's rice feeding ceremony in an affluent suburb of Detroit.² I was conducting pre-dissertation fieldwork, and my host was

¹ Most Nepalese doctors stationed in district hospitals are fresh medical graduates with an MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) degree. This is the basic degree of a physician in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. It is awarded after four years of successful medical training. Physicians holding this degree are capable of treating general medical cases and performing minor surgeries.

² Rice feeding ceremony (*annaprashan* in Nepali) literally means 'putting solid food or rice into a child's mouth for the first time'. The ceremony marks the beginning of a nursing child's additional solid food intake from the age of five or six months.

a Nepalese cardiologist working in a local hospital. To celebrate this occasion, he and his wife had invited almost all of the Nepalese professionals living and working in the Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Lansing areas. The house was like a mansion--luxuriously furnished, well maintained, had a beautiful garden and a neatly mowed lawn, and was amazingly clean-- even by normal American standards. Soon, the guests started to pour in, and by seven o'clock there were about 40 adults and 20 children, chatting, playing and enjoying each others' company, as well as the drinks and food ordered from a fashionable Indian restaurant in Detroit. I already knew some of the men and their wives and introduced myself to the others whom I met there for the first time. As I chatted with my hosts and fellow guests, I learned that all of the men and some of their wives were professionals. I also learned that there were eleven Nepalese doctors (with specialty trainings and who were known to this group) residing and practicing medicine in the Detroit area alone, though only six were present on this occasion. Never before had I encountered a gathering of such highly qualified Nepalese people in the United States.

I had experienced these two strikingly different events on opposite sides of the globe. Yet, they were closely and tragically related to each other. A boy in rural Nepal was about to lose his life just because trained professionals and the right public utilities were not available in a nearby town. Where were all the highly skilled professionals, like physicians, whose training abroad often had been underwritten by the Nepalese state? On the other side of the globe, in the United States, the very people who were supposed to be staffing hospitals and other public utilities delivery systems in Nepal were driving around in Lexuses and Volvos, taking luxurious cruise trips, and occasionally, spinning the wheels at the casinos of Las Vegas. Rather than offering their services to the people with

whom they were closely linked and who bore their professional training expenses, they were offering their expertise and services to people and entities that contributed very little to their initial professional development or were least related to them before. Most disturbing, the Nepalese state--the entity that is supposed to mobilize its highly skilled citizens for the overall development of the country-- does not seem to care about the long-term social, cultural, political and economic ramifications for the country that stem from this exodus.³

As I was driving home after the reception at Detroit, the face of the innocent and unfortunate child whom I met on that fateful night continuously flashed across my eyes. I was infuriated by Nepal's present as well as past state of affairs, particularly by the ruling elite's indifference towards the exodus to First World countries of the nation's highly skilled professionals. I was astonished that the image of the dying boy's face was so fresh and vivid in my memory even after three years. Had a team of competent doctors been stationed in the district hospital and had things been better organized with the help of its professional cadre, perhaps the lives of this boy and countless others who die prematurely every year in Nepal would have been saved.

The rice feeding ceremony described earlier was just one out of hundreds, or probably thousands, of social gatherings of Nepalese professionals living in the United

³ In a bizarre expression of their "compassionate commitment" to the well being of the Nepalese people, two of the nation's key political figures, Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba (representing the centre and former Prime Minister of Nepal) and Mr. Jhala Nath Khanal (representing the left and a former Minister of Nepal) attended the first international convention of Nepalese associations (almost all U.S. based) held in Atlanta in July 2000 and praised the Nepalese living abroad for their dedication, contribution, and enthusiasm towards the Nepalese social and cultural development and enhancement. Rather than urging the professionals and students gathered there to return to the country to offer their expertise and services, both wished for the continuing success of all Nepalese ventures in the foreign lands and also assured that they would support the dual citizenship/non-resident bill recommended by the convention. In another event in New York, Mr. Deuba took the seriousness of the issue so lightly that he remarked in public that the United States should issue more permanent resident visas to well-trained Nepalese nationals. (<http://www.nepal-america.org/atlconv/highlite.htm>) accessed 11/30/01

States. The fact that so many of Nepalese professionals are living and working in the United States and other developed countries on a long-term basis is indeed very disturbing. Obviously, this has severe implications for the overall well being of Nepal. Despite being the most serious challenge faced by Nepal today, this issue has rarely if ever appeared in the headlines of the national dailies nor has it ever been debated in the Nepalese parliament. Many scholars have explained Nepal's underdevelopment or its sorry state of affairs by viewing the country's socioeconomic woes from an internal or domestic perspective. No scholar previously has attempted to understand these issues by focusing on how they have been impacted by and viewed from the perspective of the large number of Nepalese professionals who reside in the United States and other developed nations. I contend that the disturbing internal dynamics of a Third World country like Nepal can also be captured and reflected by studying its citizens abroad, particularly its skilled professionals residing in a developed country. It is in these contexts--Nepal's indifference toward the increasing exodus of its skilled professionals and the horrifying conditions under which a majority of Nepalis live--that I have attempted to investigate the processes behind Nepal's brain drain to the United States and their impact on Nepal's present state of development—rather undevelopment.

“Brain Drain” or the Migration of Professionals from the Developing to the Developed Countries

The migration of skilled or highly skilled workers from developing countries to the developed countries is a major component of contemporary world migration streams. Unlike the pre 1965 isolated cases of movement of scientists from one region to another to escape persecution and conflict (Vas-Zoltan 1976: 16; Iredale 2001: 7), contemporary

migration of the skilled and highly skilled is emerging as a mass phenomenon with a definite orientation; it is growing rapidly and contributing to the polarization of skilled manpower resources. Zlotnik (2001: 227) observes that the growth of international migration relative to global population has remained small. However, recent global developments have greatly changed its composition and direction (Appleyard 2001: 8). In the eighties, professional and managerial workers comprised 85 percent of the work permit recipients in the United Kingdom and about two-thirds of all the employed immigrants in the European Community (Salt, 1989:450-1). Similarly, 140,000 people with the highest levels of skill, entrepreneurship and investment money annually immigrate to the United States (Iredale 1999: 96). The UNDP (2001) estimates that about 100,000 professionals, primarily in the computer industry, emigrate to the United States each year from India alone. The United States, Canada, and Britain were the traditional skilled manpower receiving countries with favorable immigration policies since the mid-sixties. However, this new emigration is also directed towards newly emerging destinations in continental Europe (Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Denmark), Australasia (Australia, New Zealand), East Asia (Japan, Republic of Korea), and South-East Asia (Singapore, Malaysia) (Khadria, 2001: 45).

“Brain drain” or the movement of skilled and highly skilled people primarily from less developed countries to the developed countries takes many forms in the contemporary migration streams. Some call it “reverse transfer of technology” (Anon 1978: 16; Violante and Barros 1981: 317); others relate the phenomenon to the globalization process (Cheng and Yang 1998: 629; Meyer 2001: 91; Xiang 2001: 73), and Khadria (2001: 45) prefers to call it “globalization of human capital.” Some suggest that

brain drain is giving way to “brain exchange” or “brain circulation” (Saxenian 1999:1; Wickware 1999: 179-80). Findlay (1995) prefers to call these highly skilled persons who move internationally on short-term assignments before returning to their place of origin or transferring to another international location “skilled transients.” In addition to these wide varieties of highly trained workers, this exodus also comprises of students - the semi-finished human capital - who migrate to pursue higher education in the universities of the developed countries (Oommen 1989: 413; Khadria 2001: 45).

The "Brain Drain" Debate: A Brief History

The issue of "brain drain" stimulated a great deal of debate in the 1960s, especially in terms of unsustainable and permanent loss of highly skilled workers by developing countries to developed countries (Iredale and Appleyard 2001: 3; Pellegrino 2001: 111). It was a decade when the countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa were disillusioned by the failure of the “development” promise. The injection of technical and financial resources, creation and staffing of training centers and the education of developing countries’ scholars in developed countries had failed to trigger the much anticipated economic growth. The economic growth rate of developed countries outpaced that of less developed countries, and international gaps were widening further.

By the late 1960’s, writers and officials from developing countries complained that the education in developed countries of their professionals-intended as a form of technical assistance given by industrialized countries to developing countries-had become an instrument to raid talent (Glaser 1978: 2). The first debate began in 1967 at the 32nd General Assembly of the United Nations, with a Jordanian Draft resolution that called upon the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to conduct

a feasibility study for establishment of an international mechanism to transfer resources from developed countries—which admitted skilled migrants-- to the countries that lost such manpower (Violante and Barros, 1981: 318). They argued that the increasing enticement of Third World professionals to richer countries represented gain of large manpower stocks for industrialized countries while it represented a significant loss of cadres and educational investment for developing societies, which ultimately hampered their growth. Faced with an increasing loss of their professional cadre, developing countries introduced resolutions that demanded that richer members – and particularly the United States—change their migration policies, encourage foreign students to learn the skills needed at home and return after completing their studies, and compensate the developing countries for losses incurred (Glaser, 1978: 2).

At UNCTAD IV, resolution 87's section on the brain drain recommended that all developed countries consider measures necessary to deal with the problem of migration of trained personnel from developing countries and assist in making arrangements to encourage qualified people to remain in the developing countries, thereby strengthening their technological capacity and reducing their technological dependence. However, UNCTAD was unable to agree on the feasibility of either measuring the value of the international flow of skilled persons or establishing some mechanism to compensate less developed countries for the emigration of skilled people (Violante and Barros 1981: 318-9). Similarly, the G-77 (a forum for countries classified by UNCTAD as developing countries), in its meeting at Arusha in 1979, issued a relatively safe statement on reverse transfer of technology by skirting the issue of compensating developing countries for their brain drain losses (Violante and Barros 1981: 319).

Thereafter, the brain drain debate fizzled out on the UN floor and soon reverted to newspaper recriminations and scholarly analysis. Over time, immigration policies of receiving countries were relaxed further to facilitate entry of skilled and highly skilled migrants, and the developed countries have acknowledged their preference for the professional, as against unskilled immigration not only merely in policy actions, but also in their official pronouncements (Bhagawati 1976: 694). Then Secretary of State Dean Rusk expressed the American view: 'we are in the international market for brains' (The United States House Report, 1974-as Quoted in Bhagawati, 1976: 694), while Canada's then Minister of Manpower and Immigration, Jean Marchand explained his country's view: 'The cost of training professional and skilled people -engineers, doctors, skilled technicians, etc. – is a measure of the benefit derived upon (their) arrival in Canada ...Other countries are in competition with us for immigrants' (Quoted in Bhagawati, 1976: 694).

Even three decades after these pronouncements were made, the policies of professional immigrant receiving societies - rather than encouraging foreign students to learn skills needed at home and return - have escalated further and taken a more institutionalized pattern (Iredale 1999: 89; Mahroum 2001: 27; Houtum and Pijpers 2007). For example, the American Competitiveness in the Twenty-First Century Act (2000) increased the annual number of H1-B visa recipients from 140,000 to 195,000 in October 2000 for the following three years⁴. In fact, immigration of the skilled and highly skilled people has become an inseparable segment of national technology and economic development policies of developed countries. The transition of the developed countries

⁴ <http://www.usavisanow.com/h1bs2045insfaq.html>

from an industrial (secondary) to a tertiary (information technology management, management of multinational corporations) economy has induced a huge demand for people with highly specialized sets of skills and competencies. For example, the US had about 346,000 unfilled Information Technology (IT) related jobs in 1999, and early projection showed that it would need 3.47 million IT workers by 2008. The European Union countries had a total IT labor shortage of 500,000 in 1998, which was expected to escalate to 1.6 million by 2002 (Xiang, 2001: 74). In other words, the demand is far higher than what the developed countries can effectively produce. Thus, an unfettered supply of highly skilled people becomes a vital component in the development and growth of a tertiary economy or advanced capitalism. And to attract and maintain a sufficient flow of highly skilled labor, developed countries often compete fiercely among themselves (Khadria 2001: 53; Mahroum 2001: 27; Xiang 2001: 73).

Theories and Contending Positions

Studying the migration of professionals and other skilled migrants is a daunting task. Official data from both the receiving and sending countries invariably refer to gross flows and do not take into account migrants who return home after graduation or with better qualifications (Bhagawati, 1976: 693; Anon, 1978: 17; Maddox, 1984: 581), nor does it take into account those students who graduate and continue to stay on in their host countries. It is further complicated by the fact that data on professional immigrants are not comparable across major developed countries, due to their various definitions and different classification systems. Some countries classify them by their last permanent residence rather than by nationality and qualification (Bhagawati 1976: 693; Anon 1978:

17), whereas others classify them by the purpose of their entry or by their by their occupation prior to entry. Furthermore, official data from the receiving countries do not take into account professionals who move between different developed and developing countries (Anon 1978: 17) or had adjusted their status from temporary to permanent (Kramer 1996:4). Such practices underestimate and distort the actual figures of professional immigrants from developing to developed countries and help make the official data poor, inconsistent, out of date, and difficult for objective analysis (Bhagawati, 1976: 693; Anon, 1978: 17; Gish and Godfrey, 1979: 1; Violante and Borros, 1981: 318; Sukhatme and Mahadevan, 1988: 1285; Iredale, 1999: 89; Pellegrino, 2001:114). Despite these difficulties, scholars from all over the globe have attempted to explain this exodus. In this section, I will review and critique some of the theories and models employed by scholars to explain this phenomenon.

Like the official data from the receiving nations that are largely incomparable and do not easily lend themselves to any objective analysis, much of the scholarly analysis of brain drain is also plagued by various shortcomings. As such, no single attempt is satisfactory, and most of the authors have simply listed the “causes” of brain drain rather than analyzing the issue using a standard theoretical framework. Iredale (2001: 7) admits that the present state of theory in relation to highly skilled migration is inadequate to explain what is transpiring at the high skill end of the migration spectrum. Nevertheless, the theoretical approaches employed so far can be divided into three broad categories: the human capital theory or the internationalist model of analysis; the structuralist neo-Marxist macro level approach or the nationalist model of analysis; and the new structuration approach.

Most of the literature on brain drain that emerged in the 60s and 70s gravitated towards either the nationalist or the internationalist model of analysis. The internationalists argued for “free” international migration of high-level manpower (Johnson, 1965; 1968; Grubel and Scott, 1967; Grubel, 1968). This human capital theory held that people moved in search of employment and remuneration that best suited their formal education and training. Johnson (1965) argued that a man was justified in going where he could earn the highest return and suggested that the migration of professionals only reflected the operation of an international market for specialized human capital. The model considered the transfer of talent as mutually advantageous to both the sending and the host countries, and insisted that a laissez-faire policy on migration should be followed.

The internationalists saw positive effects on the development of the sending countries by migration of professionals. They argued that a country that lost professionals would gain if the individual professional found better environment for exercising his professional skills and contributed more to mankind by doing so. And, if the emigrant choose to remit part of his extra earnings home to his family, the world and those left behind were better off. Grubel and Scott (1977:42) maintained that the loss of potential leaders from emigration was not serious in the country of origin if it could produce replacements. Rather, they argued that emigration might have provided a safety valve for the discontented. Contemporary internationalists who advocate the connectionist approach argue that highly skilled expatriate networks could link the Diaspora members with their countries of origin and become agents of knowledge and technology transfer (Meyer, 2001:91; UNDP, 2001; Saxenian, 1999: Chapter 5; Brown, Undated: 3). They

argue that their presence should be seen as an asset that could be mobilized rather than as a loss to the country.

This pre-connectionist micro level approach of the internationalists placed more importance on the 'effective demand' of the economy and emphasized more the economic motives of the migrants and did not take account the role of institutional factors, discrimination and other factors contributing to the imperfections in the labor market (Iredale, 2001). The standard conclusion of the internationalists, that the transfer of talent is mutually advantageous to both the sending as well as the host countries, holds true only in isolated cases. When emigration of the highly skilled is a mass phenomenon, an irrefutable loss definitely occurs. Another major drawback of the internationalist argument is that it derives its conclusions from responses of individuals who reacted to the market signals and does not take into account the influences of the international political economy, national social structure, and the influence of individual orientations on individual decisions. It has been argued that a sizable segment of academic opinion and writing originating in the developed countries does not share the view that the brain drain phenomenon is also a problem Bhagawati (1976). Bhagawati attributes this viewpoint mainly to the way in which the welfare consequences of the brain drain are viewed by the analyst and partly to the fact that most academics belong to that class of professionals who move across countries and are therefore more prone to see the advantages of scientific mobility rather than the handicaps that it may impose on the countries of emigration in achieving their economic, social, and political objectives.

The nationalist camp on the other hand mostly used the structuralist neo-Marxist macro level approach and argued that the "free" flow of high-level manpower was

depriving the developing countries of the very skills necessary for successful development (Zanartu, 1963; Hope, 1976; Bhagawati, 1976). Professor Don Patinkin (1968) held that a man should go where he belonged. The nationalists emphasized the detrimental effects of such movement on the underdeveloped economy (Thomas, 1961; 1967; 1968; Muir, 1969; Azumegar, 1968; Godfrey, 1970; Vas-Zoltan, 1976, Gish and Godfrey, 1979). They regarded human capital, or at least a minimum level of human capital, as indispensable to a country's economic development and argued that the loss of skilled personnel would retard economic development of the home country and jeopardize development programs.

The dependency theorists incorporated the push and pull factors in their analysis in the 1970s and viewed brain drain as a consequence of international inequality and the dependency of the less developed countries on the developed countries (Portes, 1976). Using a world system framework, Ong, Cheng, and Evans (1992) have attempted to link the migration of professionals to broader global processes such as the global articulation of higher education and unequal development on a global scale. Similarly, Cheng and Yang (1998) developed a global integration framework to explain the cross-national variation in the size of professional migrants. They argued that the level of interaction and inequality between developed and developing nations was the strongest determinant of this size. These approaches took account of the impact of gender, race and class, as well as of the impact of differences between rich core and peripheral nations, but did not take into account institutional factors such as ethnic networks or the role of professional unions. They also placed more importance on the society's 'human needs' and

undermined the rights of individuals to move freely from one country to another as guaranteed by a civil society.

A third body of theory with recent origins, the structuration approach, incorporates individuals' structural and institutional (structuration) elements. Proponents of this theory argue that both private capital and the state are actively engaged in the recruitment of professionals to fill labor needs (Goss and Lindquist, 1995; Iredale, 1999; 2001; Xiang, 2001), and there are important individual and organizational agents who recruit workers themselves and exercise indirect control over recruitment by setting qualifications for employment. The basic premise of this theory is that the emergence of internet/e-commerce technologies has made "deterritorialized" production and management technologically practical, and e-commerce is leading to a "tariff-free" economy. With the use of information technology, global capital and markets expanded at an unprecedented pace, and the IT industry itself became a major arena where global capital concentrated and new global capital was generated in the 1990s (Xiang, 2001: 75-76).

Most of the literatures on international migration of the highly skilled originate in Western academia, and a large number of researchers have emphasized the immigrant's views of the advantages of immigrating to the receiving countries to provide answers to this complex web of factors associated with this movement. The desire of the migrants to enhance their careers as well as pursue "better" lives in the developed countries is often viewed by scholars as the most important contributing factor. Portes and Rumbaut (1996:19) point out that professional immigrants do not come to the United States to escape poverty, but to improve their careers. Most of the literature indicates that non-

monetary considerations were important instigators among well-educated international migrants. As such, the aspirations for better education and training and career considerations were undoubtedly of paramount importance for most of the professional emigrants (Ghosh 1979; Rao 1979; Bodhoo and Baksh 1981; Orleans 1988; Oommen 1989; Winchie and Carment 1989; Chang 1992). For example, Winchie and Carments' (1989) survey among potential emigrants in India showed that a majority of the immigration visa applicants at the Canadian High Commission mentioned lack of opportunity for advancement in job (72.7%) as the primary reason for wanting to emigrate to Canada. Overwhelmingly, a majority of the respondents (64.1%) expected career-related advantages by immigrating to Canada.

Similarly, in a study of Chinese students in America, Orleans (1988) argues that career considerations were extremely important for Chinese scientists and engineers who found greater professional satisfaction in the U.S., especially in sub-fields in which China lagged behind world levels. Universities in China were considered to be too authoritarian, too focused on seniority, and too inflexible to let young researchers pursue unproved but potentially innovative ideas. Things have changed a lot in Taiwan now, but the National Youth Survey carried out in 1979 among 765 Taiwanese students and scholars revealed that about 45 percent of those abroad did not plan to return home at that time (Chang, 1992: 3). The reasons they cited most frequently were inadequate research facilities, few opportunities for career advancement, and poor intellectual atmosphere. These studies reveal that professionals as well as students are attracted to developed countries more by the opportunities to advance in their career than the economic benefits of migration. Other explanations put forward to explain this phenomenon are the income differential

between a developed country and a developing country (Guha 1977; Gosh 1979; Orleans 1988; Oommen 1989; Winchie and Carment 1989), personal and social factors (Portes 1976; Glaser 1978; Bodhoo and Baksh 1981; Chia and Hwang 1986; Winchie and Carment 1989), and political and discriminatory factors (Chang 1992; Zweig and Changgui 1995; Simanovsky et al. 1996; Gold 1995; Torbat 2002; Moe 2006), the asymmetry between the capacity of nations to produce highly trained personnel and their capacity to absorb them (Oldham 1968; Portes 1976; Guha 1977; Gosh 1979; Gish and Godfrey, 1979; Oommen 1989; Khadria, 2001), and economic and educational interactions between sending and receiving countries (Cheng and Yang 1998).

Many scholars have centered their attention on the analysis of the immigration policies of the receiving countries and see them as powerful catalysts for the movement of professional migrants. It is the primary mechanism through which industrialized countries lure and admit professionals from the developing countries to meet their skilled labor shortages. By such legislative actions, receiving countries greatly decrease the time and cost of producing highly skilled workers. It is argued that, with the exception of Israel, attracting highly skilled migrants is one of the major aims of the immigration policies of the permanent entry offering countries – the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Iredale 1999; Pellegrino 2001; Houtum and Pijpers 2007). Much of the focus has been on how governments of traditional receiving countries as well as new receiving countries in Europe have relaxed their immigration policies to facilitate and speed up the entry of skilled workers (Freeman and Jupp 1992; Iredale 1999, 2001; Mahroum 2001; Appleyard 2001; Zhang 2003; Shachar 2006). For example, in the European continent, the 1998 French law on immigration created a special status for

scientists and scholars, and a new draft law presented by the German Interior Minister reflected the country's need of foreign workers (Mahroum, 2001: 31-2). The demand for IT workers in the United Kingdom became so strong that the British government had to relax its long-standing work permit rules in order to remain competitive in Europe (Appleyard, 2001: 15). In addition to easing immigration rules, developed countries often provide other benefits to professional immigrants. Denmark offers tax reductions, and the Irish government has introduced one of the most liberal work permit regimes in the western world⁵. Prospective employees who have been offered a job by any bona fide Irish company could obtain work permit from any Irish consulate. Despite some minor variations, the immigration policies of most of the developed countries are remarkably similar. Regardless of the permanent/temporary entry provisions, their policies now lay down the red carpet for migrants who are highly qualified, highly educated, and who have investment money (Aplleyard, 2001:14; Iredale, 2001:96).

The demand for professional workers in some of these permanent entry offering countries has been so strongly felt that some have gone as far as to identifying certain developing countries as promising sources of highly skilled manpower (Mahroum, 2001), and some corporations in the US are urging their government with slogans like "get the Indians here before Germany grabs them" (Xiang, 2001: 74). Scholars have documented how fiercely the industrialized countries compete with each other by focusing on their recruitment practices in the source countries and assert that the new sets of entry categories/visa programs that have been introduced to ease the selection and entry processes testify to this competition among receiving countries (Iredale 1997, 1999; Iredale and Appleyard 2001, Mahroum 2001). For example, Khadria (2001) notes that in

⁵ <http://www.workpermit.com/ireland/ireland.htm> accessed 10/25/02

October and November of 2000, the representatives of the US, Germany, New Zealand, Britain, Canada, and France held “educational fairs” in India to market their respective countries as educational destinations for Indian students. The German Academic Exchange Service in New Delhi offered tuition-free education to Indian students in Germany. The Deputy High Commissioner of New Zealand in New Delhi claimed citizenship opportunities for successful Indian students as well as the promise of quality education backed by all the infrastructure of a developed country. Similarly, Britain launched new scholarship schemes for Indian students and planned to double their intake per annum from the existing 4000. The arrival of Indian students in the US in 2000 outstripped that of Koreans, and both Canada and France reported increases in the arrival of Indian students in their respective countries (Khadria 2001: 53).

In addition to these industrialized government sponsored initiatives to recruit the high quality manpower at its source, multi-national corporations have also lobbied their governments to minimize immigration restrictions as well as grant them independent rights to choose their own employees (Iredale, 2001:20). Iredale asserts that to a large extent, this has taken the assessment/accreditation/migration processes outside the scope of individual governments. Xiang’s (2001) ethnographic study of Indian IT professionals shows that the key players are a series of recruitment agents who move their clients globally through “body shopping” practice. As such, they form “agent chains” where they depend on each other and assume different functions in dealing with the market, the state and the workers. Agents closely follow market trends and technology developments. Big agents combine training and placement to ensure that trained workers meet potential demands. To a large extent, “body shops” rely on ethnic networks, and Xiang argues that

this practice has led to the emergence of a flexible international labor supply system that benefits some IT professionals but also imposes costs. But at the same time, these very corporations that scour the globe for the manpower of their choice prefer a highly flexible workforce whom they can dispose of at anytime to escape complex regulations and liabilities. And, they have started to hire this flexible international workforce through placement agents, who virtually free their clients from all paper work and obligations (Xiang, 2001: 78).

In sum, the increasing concentration of advanced labor as well as capital and technology in the industrialized countries reflect the intricate workings of late capitalism. Industrialized countries see the immigration of skilled immigrants as a means of facilitating their own economic growth, and, as such, the contemporary mass migration of highly skilled labor from the developing to the highly developed countries is not much different from earlier forms of mass migrations--transportation of slaves primarily from Africa, and when this was exhausted, that of indentured labor from the Asian continent. The most striking differences are the quality of immigrants and their freedom to stay or leave at will, unparalleled incentives, and relaxed immigration policies that have given way to brute force and contract of the employer. Being an inherently exploitative arrangement, brain drain ranks as one of the major political-economic issue in the arena of international relations (Toh, 1977: 25; Meyer, 2001: 91). Iredale (1999: 94-5) holds that the subject is treated with such extreme caution and scrutiny because of its long-term social, cultural, political and economic ramifications. Therefore, it is not surprising at all to note the absence of any meaningful dialogue and cooperation between immigrant receiving and sending countries regarding the migration of the highly skilled. What is

surprising is that it is not considered or explicitly mentioned in much academic and official discussion of the highly developed country's relationships with the developing countries despite the fact that the highly developed receiving countries have made significant gains from Third World brain drain.

Although many of the factors that encourage the emigration of professionals from the developing to the developed countries have been well documented, there are few in-depth explorations and analyses of the underlying reasons for this exodus from a developing country. For example, a marginalized identity construction of the "Self" by the professional cadre in opposition to an entrenched and negative elite "Other" and its impact on this ongoing exodus have not been extensively investigated. The existing literature provides little empirical evidence and few theoretical explanations for the possibility that a marginalized identity construction of the professional "Self" in opposition to an entrenched and negative elite "Other" could be one of the primary reason for the former's emigration to the highly developed countries. Yet, a significant number of the consultants whom I interviewed and met during my 2001 pilot study had left Nepal in the middle of their careers or even when having secure jobs in Nepal that were well suited to their qualifications. Even while working in Nepal, most of them had already earned advanced degrees from Western universities. But, many of them had decided to emigrate to the U.S. after working in Nepal in a professional capacity for several years. In other words, my pilot study suggested that the factors most emphasized by other scholars were less important in the Nepalese case of brain drain. This dissertation research was undertaken primarily to extend my pilot study and provide insight into the effect of a marginalized identity construction of the professional "Self" on emigration.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

My pilot study findings suggested that individual experiences as well as perceptions of marginalization in Nepal's professional work force influence the migrant's decision on migration. The exact extent of these influences was not yet known. However, past exposures to life and work in the United States for those who had been here before, and the daily exposure of the aspiring migrants to images and stories of life, work, and the associated affluence for a professional in the United States through the media, internet, friends and relatives may also have been equally influential in intensifying their desire to migrate to the "dreamland."⁶ Similarly, having close friends and relatives or immediate family members in the United States and their advice and initial support may also have been equally influential. Furthermore, the emigration of professionals to developed countries is undoubtedly influenced by other established influences like their personal aspirations and ambitions, the increasing demand for their skills in the developed countries, and the selective immigration policies the receiving countries have pursued to facilitate their entry.

Based on and following upon my preliminary research, it was hypothesized that a marginalized identity construction of the professional "Self" in opposition to an entrenched and negative elite "Other" in Nepal's professional workforce play the key role in the decision of many Nepalese professionals to emigrate and not return to Nepal⁷. In addition, I also hypothesized that the ongoing and rapidly escalating leftist insurgency

⁶ The 30 May-14 June, 2002 issue of the *Himal* magazine (a Nepali bimonthly) featured an article entitled "The Craze for America." The article began by saying "America or the dreamland," and discussed the middle class Nepalese youths' intense desire to pursue higher education as well as professional careers in the United States. It also showed four cartoon figures of Nepali youths (one sporting "I Love USA" T shirt, with the "I" written in the Nepali script) - standing and sitting on a dollar bill - that was flying above a U.S. city. The word dreamland, I believe, appropriately represents the United States in the psyche of aspiring Nepalese youths.

⁷ The idea of "Self" and "Other" was implicit in my original hypothesis.

that had engulfed the entire country, as well as notions of comparative satisfaction with one's career and overall life in Nepal and the United States, also played an important role in this decision.

Migration of Nepalese in General and Professionals to Western Countries

Nepal has a long history of foreign labor migration. For around 200 years, Nepali labor migrants abroad have been bringing or sending some of their earnings as remittances back to their families. Nepali men traveled to Lahore to join the army of the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh well before the British East India Company started to recruit them in their "Gurkha" army in 1815 (Seddon et al. 2002). The Khan Khelat of Baluchistan had bodyguards from Nepal (Tuker 1957), and the Gurkhas serving the British East India Company in India during the heydays of British colonialism were instrumental in suppressing the Indian Mutiny of 1857. They were used as regular front line battalions (Mishra 1987), and during the First World War, some 100,000 Gurkhas enlisted in regiments of the Gurkha Brigade and fought (and died) in France, Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, Gallipoli, Palestine and Salonika.⁸ In the Second World War, there were no fewer than forty Gurkha battalions (some 112,000 men), and they fought side-by-side with the British and Commonwealth troops in Syria, the Western Desert, Italy, Greece, North Malaya, Singapore, Thailand, and Burma. At present, the number of Gurkhas serving in the British army has been reduced to 3,400. But the Indian government has been continuously recruiting Nepali men for its army after armed conflicts with China (1962)

⁸ http://www.army.mod.uk/brigade_of_gurkhas/ (accessed 8/2/04). However, Bishop (1952) and Mishra (1987) put this figure at 200,000. Mishra (1987) suggests that approximately the same number participated in the Second World War as well.

and Pakistan (1965 and 1971) (Gurung 2003). As of 1991, more than 100,000 Gurkhas were serving in over forty Indian infantry battalions and elsewhere in the Indian Army.

Besides actively recruiting Gurkhas, the British also encouraged Nepalis to migrate eastwards along the *Duars* (the strip of plains below the hills of Darjeeling and Bhutan) to the Assam valley, and the far-eastern hills from present-day Arunachal Pradesh (of India) all the way to northern Burma in the mid-1800s to help them open up forest lands for lumbering, settlement and tea plantations (Dixit 1997). The number of Nepali migrants to Sikkim alone increased five fold between 1891 and 1931 (Mishra 1987). At present, working class Nepali migrants are spread across the length and breadth of India and serve as security guards, kitchen helpers, and seasonal laborers.

There has been very little social scientific research on Nepali migrants abroad, and it has been impossible to precisely spell out their number (Mishra 1987; Paudel 1990; Subedi 2003; Himal 2004). The 2001 population census of Nepal recorded that from a total population of 23.2 million, there were 762,000 absentees from the country for six months or more⁹. Almost seventy seven percent were reported to be in India and four out of five absentees were reported to have gone for reasons of personal and institutional service. It also recorded that there were about ten thousand Nepalis in the United States, Canada and Mexico, another ten thousand in Japan, Korea, and Singapore, and seven thousand in the United Kingdom. However, the Department of Labor of Nepal--the entity that issues permits to individuals and the contracting agencies for foreign labor migration--estimated that more than three hundred thousand Nepali laborers were working in West Asia and reported that over one hundred and four thousand young adults

⁹ <http://www.cbs.gov.np/> (accessed 8/6/04). (Table# 12 : Population Absent from Household and Destination Abroad by Country of Destination and Sex)

left the country for wage work in an organized manner during the fiscal year 2001/2002 alone (Subedi 2003). However, the Department's figures do not reflect those who left to India and other destinations on their own without notifying the Nepalese authorities.

Seddon et al. (2002) "guesstimate" that there are well over 1 million Nepalis abroad and characterize Nepal as a "remittance economy." The Himal magazine (2003 March 15-30), on the other hand, estimates that there are about 2.5 million Nepalis working in India alone, and another 600,000 in the rest of the world. It bases its analysis on the remittances that come into the country, the activities of Nepalis abroad, and the insights of those involved in the remittance business and members of Nepali organizations abroad. The combined pay and pensions from the British and Indian armies, along with the remittances sent by other Nepalis abroad, represent a significant contribution to the Nepalese economy. Himal magazine estimates that they annually pump US\$ 1.5 billion into Nepal's economy, which had a total GDP of U.S. \$ 5.7 billion in 2003.

Nepalis started to migrate to the West in 1951, when their country opened up to the rest of the world. Initially, most of them traveled to the United Kingdom, and later to other European countries and the United States to pursue higher education. Since 1952, more than 350 Nepali students, post-doctorate scholars, and travel grantees have come to the U.S. under the Fulbright Scholarship program. Many more migrated on their own, and in 2002 alone, more than 1,500 Nepali students came to the United States, a quarter of them to pursue post-graduate degrees.¹⁰ Shrestha (1995) notes that the first Nepali to become a permanent resident in the United States did so in 1952 and the second in 1956. By 1990, there were 1,749 Nepalese residing in the United States as permanent residents.

¹⁰ Nepali Times, # 149, 13-19 June, 2003.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, 7,858 persons reported Nepali/Nepalese as their race in the 2000 Census¹¹. Over the past few years, around 13,000 Nepalis have annually received non-immigrant visas to the U.S., and unofficial counts place the number of Nepalis in the U.S. to be at 100,000.

Previous Studies on Nepali Migrants

Although the migration of people in general as well as that of professionals from the developing to the developed countries, have been studied extensively in other parts of the world, the migration of Nepalese remains under examined and that of professional Nepalese has almost never been studied. A benchmark study of the first generation of Nepali emigrants in India was carried out by two Nepali scholars (Dahal and Mishra) in 1987. Over three hundred Nepalese emigrant households in four areas of Northern India were interviewed, and the authors concluded that these emigrants were tied to a number of social processes central to the politics, economics, and culture of India and Nepal at the state, regional, community, and familial levels.

A Swiss anthropologist (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1993) has noted that a remote district of Nepal (*Bajhang*) survives on the basis of remittances from the southern Indian city of Bangalore where the Nepalis from this district have established a well-organized labor monopoly for themselves. Pfaff-Czarnecka found that out-migration was a survival strategy carried out in response to the inability to eke out a subsistence living by adapting to the existing social relations of production in their district, or to their inability of many residents of *Bajhang* to revolt against the existing socio-economic order. In contrast, members of the dominant class of *Bajhang* had several alternatives and did not have to

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, special tabulations.

migrate. Similarly, Upreti (2002) studied Nepali migrants from the far western hill region of Nepal to the neighboring Indian city of Pithoragarh. The migrants were found to be involved in casual labor work and reported that they were constrained to migrate for a certain period of time of a year due to the inadequacy of subsistence agriculture and non-availability of other means of livelihood.

Upadhyay (1995) studied Nepalese immigrants in the United States and explored different aspects of their social relations. A majority of them were employed in professional/technical/managerial positions. Almost two-thirds of them were residents of Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, prior to moving to the United States, and all were from relatively well-to-do caste and ethnic groups. Upadhyay examined issues like with whom they associated more, their voluntary participation in organizations and contributions to U.S. society at large, and their adaptation to American ways of life. Upadhyay noted that they were not structurally assimilated into the American society. They had not changed their larger ethnic allegiance either, and were making efforts to preserve their languages and traditions and transmit them to their offspring.

It is well-known that the British and, later, the Indian armies produced a culture of emigration and remittance economy in the rural hills of Nepal. Yamanaka (2000) studied Nepalese labor migrants to Japan and observed that, although the 1990s marked a decline in the recruitment of Nepali 'global warriors,' their 'culture of emigration' continued today and produced massive numbers of 'global workers' in response to the Asian and Middle Eastern demand for labor. These Nepalese migrants (largely from ethnic minorities, particularly those labeled 'martial races' by the British) who still lack political clout in mainstream Nepali politics relied on foreign employment for their livelihoods.

These migrants actively mobilized individual, family and community resources and have developed extensive social and informational networks that link migrants in the receiving country with one another and with their kinsmen in Nepal.

Seddon et al. (2002) focused their analysis on the contribution of Nepali foreign labor migrants to the flow of remittances into the local, regional and national economy of Nepal. Despite the indifference exhibited by Nepalese policy makers or researchers, Seddon et al. point out that the Nepali labor migrants' remittances constitute anywhere from 15 to 20 percent of the gross domestic product and over 25 percent of the total household income to nearly a quarter of all rural households. The results of the Nepal Living Standard Survey (1996) substantially supported this assertion.

The Impetus for Studying Professional Nepalese Immigrants

When I came to the U.S. in 1999 as a graduate student, I had an open mind regarding the topic of my future dissertation research. However, deep inside me, I knew that it would have to be something related to Nepal's development. While I was in Nepal, I was aware that an increasing number of the top-ranking students of our elite schools traveled abroad for their higher education in the U.S. and other Western countries, and only a few returned after graduation. Some of my own friends who came to the U.S. to pursue their undergraduate education also never returned home after graduation. Most of my high school and junior level college friends also went to neighboring countries to pursue their professional training on Nepalese government scholarships. After completing their studies, most of them returned home and joined the civil service. However, after a few years of civil service, many of them also emigrated to the U.S. to pursue further studies, but ended up staying and working there on a long-term basis. I thought that the

desire among my friends to emigrate to the U.S. in pursuit of further education and better jobs was an elite-school-educated syndrome.

On my way to begin my graduate studies in the U.S., I stopped in Thailand to visit members of my family for a week and was amazed by the number of Nepalese professionals working there, mostly for multinational organizations. Some were my friends, but a lot of them were new to me. When I finally arrived in the U.S., I was taken aback on meeting so many Nepalese professionals as well as graduate students--most of whom I had never met or heard of before--living, studying, and working here without any intention of returning home. The magnitude was unbelievably bigger than the elite-school-educated syndrome, which I thought was the case. This disturbing experience, the relevant courses and independent studies I took at Michigan State University on international migration, and the initial findings from my 2001 pilot study led me to conclude that the emigration of Nepalese professionals is a process largely triggered by Nepal's social, political, economic, and cultural circumstances.

The results of my 2001 pilot study really intrigued me. What was really bizarre was that many of my research subjects hailed from well-to-do families, had secure and prestigious jobs in Nepal, and quite a few of them had even acquired professional degrees from First World countries and had returned to their jobs in Nepal. Yet, many of them had emigrated permanently to the United States after the 1991 restoration of multi-party polity in Nepal. Almost all of those who had professional work experience in Nepal attributed their decisions to leave the country to the impossible attitude of the Nepalese ruling elites. This revelation led me to reflect on my own personal experiences as a member of Nepal's professional cadre, and this research is heavily influenced by this

background and my research interests. In fact, my personal background and research interests were instrumental in the selection of my dissertation research topic. Had I not been a member of the professional Nepalese cadre or had I not lived in Nepal during the post 1990 era, I believe my research interest would have been something totally different. I have used my personal experiences extensively to build my ethnography, and are apparent from my personal narratives in Chapter Four.

The migration of the skilled and highly skilled from the developing to the developing countries is emerging as a mass phenomenon and constitutes a major component of contemporary world migration streams. A recent United Nations report (UNDP 2001) claims that many South Asian countries are suffering a severe brain drain of skilled professionals. Thousands in the fields of medicine, computers and management are opting to take their skills abroad, often at the expense of the tax-payers who had footed the bill for their education and training. Nepal isn't any exception, and the current social indicators of Nepal mirror the country's deplorable situation. It has one of the world's lowest per capita incomes, and eighty percent of the population depends on agriculture. It also has one of the lowest life expectancies at birth and one of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates. Forty two percent of the people live below the absolute poverty line, almost 60 percent of the adult population is illiterate, and 72 percent are without access to adequate sanitation. For the fiscal year 2001/02, there were only about 1300 doctors and 7000 hospital beds for a total population of over 23 million. Nepal simply cannot afford to lose its professionals to developed countries.

Anthropological and sociological studies by both native and Western scholars on pragmatic problems that perplex many Nepalis are very rare. Most of the Western

anthropologists who studied Nepali society and culture were interested in subjects that are—from the Nepalese perspective—marginal—as illustrated by the titles (of their books) like “Tantric Healing in the Kathmandu Valley” and “Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters, and Social Change in Nepal.” Quite a few of them were inspired by theoretical models generated in Western academia, and Nepal was simply a field site where they were tested or reproduced. To list a few, the works of Lionel Caplan (1970), Patricia Caplan (1972), Frederick M. Gaige (1975), Alan McFarlane (1976), Sherry Ortner (1978), James Fisher (1986), Robert I. Levy (1990), Stan Royal Mumford (1990), David Holmberg (1992), and Laura M. Ahearn (2001) all fall in this category. Many of the problems faced by Nepalis were hardly addressed. My study is a complete departure from this approach. Though conducted exclusively in a Western field setting, it addresses and sheds light on a core development problem that has perplexed many Nepalis in the recent past.

Even though the ongoing political conflict and the associated state of uncertainty have overshadowed this exodus of Nepal’s highly skilled citizens to Western countries, I felt that six factors made this study an ideal topic for investigating the effects of a marginalized identity construction of the professional “Self” in opposition to an entrenched and negative elite “Other” and the former’s migration to the developed world:

- 1) The established power structure had maintained its economic preeminence through exploitative forms of land tenure, and more recently from foreign aid and corruption. It had ruled Nepal since the country’s political unification in 1769 and continued to exert immense influence in the state of affairs of Nepal. The members of Nepalese elites had continuously competed with each other for power regardless of the disastrous political

and economic consequences for the country, 2) the leftist Maoist insurgency had escalated and had become more violent throughout the kingdom. There was general unrest, a strong sense of insecurity, and a desire to get out of the country among the general populace of Nepal. Rural Nepalis were migrating to India by the thousands every day to avoid the armed conflict, and the educated and well-to-do Nepalis were migrating to the Western countries, 3) the number of highly skilled Nepalese professionals in the United States had soared, 4) Nepal was one of the few developing countries that largely underwrote the cost of its public educational system, including that for professionals. It was also a beneficiary of the Colombo Plan¹², and hundreds of Nepali students went to neighboring countries each year to pursue degrees in engineering and medicine. In addition, a host of international institutions/organizations, agencies of other countries that were involved in development assistance to Nepal, as well as individual governments and universities, awarded scholarships to competent Nepalese professionals and students to pursue advanced degrees abroad. Furthermore, many Nepalese went to the neighboring and other developed countries at their own expenses, 5) Nepal did not have an emigration management policy, and the Nepalese authorities had not exhibited any interest in containing or reversing this exodus, and 6) despite their strong allegiance to their ethnicity (Upadhyay 1995)¹³, the professional Nepalese immigrants residing in the

¹² The Colombo Plan is a regional organization that focuses on social development. It is based in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and was created in a cooperative attempt to strengthen the economic and social development of the nations of Southeast Asia and the Pacific. It has 24 members (5 are non-Asian, including the U.S.) and one provisional member, Mongolia. Member nations emphasize cooperation on agriculture, transportation, health, communication, and education. Assistance is given in the form of educational and health aid, training programs, loans, food supplies, equipment, and technical aid; arrangements for assistance are made directly between a donor and a recipient country.

¹³ Several Nepalese associations exist in the United States, and the biggest one (Association of Nepalese in the Americas) organizes annual conventions. Several thousand expatriate Nepalese show up on these events, raise money for building Nepalese temples in the United States, organize cultural events, discuss

United States had low levels of return visits, contributed the least to Nepal's remittance economy, and--even after going through the ups and downs of the American economy in recent years--were the least interested in returning to Nepal permanently. Thus the effect of a marginalized identity construction of the professional "Self" in opposition to an entrenched and negative elite "Other"--with its unique Nepali attributes--was an excellent topic to be investigated in relation to the increasing emigration of its highly skilled citizens to the United States. Though overlooked and ignored by the Nepalese state apparatus and scholars in Nepal, this expanding and often irreversible phenomenon deserved an extensive investigation, and the dissertation research I undertook was an endeavor towards understanding this exodus.

By focusing on the identity construction process of the professional "Self," this study provides valuable data on the relationship between marginalization and migration. This study provides a rich combination of ethnographic and survey data that has brought together the individual, social, and cultural factors that are involved in encouraging this exodus. Because of the similar nature and attitudes of the elites of the "emerging nations" (Rahnama 1997), the results of this study could be extrapolated to other developing countries where the elites have effective control over the state apparatus. In addition, this study has practical significance for Nepal's political leadership, scholars, high ranking government employees, and agencies that are involved in development assistance to Nepal. My study sheds light on a previously unexplored facet of the development problem of Nepal. By understanding the dynamics that lead to the emigration of its professionals, individuals and agencies who are seriously committed to the well being of

ways to make the Nepali community and give continuity to their language and culture. (See Chapter Seven for a detailed discussion).

the Nepalese masses might pressure the Nepalese government to reorganize and reorient itself to secure a better future for the whole country.

Theoretical Concerns of the Dissertation

International migration of professionals from the developing to the developed countries is a complex phenomenon and is affected by a large number of interrelated variables. However, in this dissertation study, I am concerned mostly with the dynamic relationship between the “Self” and “Other,” or more specifically, the cultural construction of the marginalized-professional “Self” in terms of an opposition to the negative elite “Other” in a Third-World setting, and how this construction of the marginalized-professional Self encourages the former’s emigration to developed countries like the United States. In addition, I am also interested in how these marginalized professional selves, who later become transnational citizens, attempt to forge their cultural identity in their adopted land as well as make their membership “thick” in the affairs of the nation-state they had ostensibly left behind, but still consider it as their own. In order to address these multiple, but intricately related issues, this dissertation employs the concepts of the “Self” and “Other” (Basso 1979; Hess 1993), cultural identity (Hall 1990; 1991; 1996; Bauman 1996), and the frameworks of globalization and transnationalism (Jameson 1984; Harvey 1989; Basch et al. 1994; Schiller et al. 1995; Kearney 1995; Featherstone 1996; Appadurai 1996; 2001; Hall 1991; 1994; Schiller and Fouron 2001; Sassen 2001).

Self and Other, and Identity

The concepts of the Self and Other are key constructs in anthropology, and are integral to the understanding of identities. Clifford (1986:23) asserts that there is a construction of the “Self” in every version of an “Other.” To understand the former, one must consider the latter, and the Other becomes a symbol of what the Self is not (Basso 1979:64). Hoffman (1998: 326) defines the Self as a “culturally patterned way of relating to others; to the material, natural, and spiritual worlds; and to time and space, including notions of agency, mind, person, being, and spirit.” The Other is essentially what the Self is not, and the Self would be fundamentally different if it were not situated in direct opposition to the Other. Studies of the Self and Other reflect a shift within anthropology, and Clifford (op. cit.) maintains that it discards the parochial approach of fixing cultures in time. Instead, it seeks out to encounter “others in relation to itself, while seeing itself as others.”

In this dissertation research, I use the concepts of the Self and Other (Basso 1979; Hess 1993) to consider how the marginalized professional self constructs its identity in opposition to a negative elite Other. In his book about boundaries that approaches culture from the inside, Hess demonstrates how the Self is constructed dialogically, or through relationship with Others and through the relationship of *not* being the Other. This approach emphasizes how different competing groups (New Agers, skeptics, and parapsychologists) construct the Other in similar ways by drawing on the repertoire of the dominant cultural heritage, locating the Other in a different space and time of “there and then” as opposed to the “here and now” of the Self, assigning negative attributes like greedy, materialistic, egocentric, and sometimes disorderly and pathological, and

portraying them as irrational. At the same time, the Self is constructed as inherently different from the Other, imagined as pioneers blazing the trail, forward-looking, open-minded, rational, and not motivated by greed or material gain.

The relationship between the marginalized professional Self and the negative elite Other is a relationship of power. In this dissertation, I extend the concepts of Self and Other by examining how the professional Selves in a Third-World setting experience marginalization within bureaucratic, social, and political fields of power. As the professional marginalized selves gradually become aware of the irrational cultural *habitus* of the negative elite Other, they construct their own as well as that of the negative elite Other's identities. Since identity constructions are always in a process, constructed within a discourse, and narrated from the position of the Other (Hall 1991: 49; 1996: 4), doing so not only constructs a marginalized or dominated identity of the Self, but also becomes a tool for assuming strategic positions to using "the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being" (Hall 1996: 4).

While discussing the politics of racism and identity in Britain, Stuart Hall (1991: 52) notes that the identity politics of young British Black men and women of Caribbean ancestry had to do with the "constitution of some defensive collective identity against the practices of racist society." According to Hall, people with Caribbean ancestry were compelled to find some other roots to stand, because they were being blocked out of and refused an identity and identification within the majority nation. Since people were denied access to an English or British identity, they had to try to discover who they were. In this study, I am mostly concerned with the identity construction of the professional marginalized Self, whose identity as a professional Self was also effectively blocked by

an entrenched and negative elite Other. More importantly, those who considered themselves to be marginalized professionals constituted a sizable portion of my research subject pool, and were the most important category of people in their society.

Alcoff (2003:3) maintains that “identities are often created in the crucible of colonialism, racial and sexual subordination, and national conflicts, but also in the specificity of group histories and structural position.” Approaches to the study of identity over the last 50 years have shifted from the essentialist to analysis of identity as being processual. Stuart Hall (1990: 223-6) argues that there are two kinds of identities; identity as being, and identity of becoming. While the former offers a sense of unity, shared historical experiences and cultural codes, and stable frames of reference and meaning, the latter shows that identity is always in a mode of production and positioned between the individual and other determining structures and institutions. It recognizes the many points of similarities, but also exposes discontinuities in identity formation. Hall argues that identities have histories, are subject to continuous ‘play’ of history, culture, and power rather than being eternally fixed in some essentialised past. According to Hall, “identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.”

Globalization and Transnationalism

This study is informed by literatures on identity, international migration, globalization, and transnationalism that span anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies. Individuals, communities, and entire nation-states are influenced by the emerging and rapidly progressing postmodern era of globalization as well as transnational

practices, and Sassen (2001: 261) notes that the immigrant workers are emblematic subjects in the domain of the global economic, transnational corporations, and financial markets. In this study, I draw heavily upon the literatures on globalization and transnationalism to analyze how new immigrants construct, and attempt to give continuity to their cultural identity in the racialized society of the United States, as well as how they attempt to “thicken” their membership in the nation-state they left behind by engaging with democratizing tendencies.

Kellner (1998: 25-6) holds that globalization is a theoretical construct and multivalently describes it as “highly complex and multidimensional processes in the economy, polity, culture, and everyday life.” As a process, it refers to the development and proliferation of complex, and interdependent connections across existing geographical and political boundaries through the movement of capital, technology, natural resources, information, culture, ideas, and people. In *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1984), Jameson discusses postmodernism as a cultural dominant: a cultural conception which allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate features. Jameson argues that it is indicative of late capitalism or ‘present-day multinational capitalism,’ and asserts that capitalism has entered a multinational stage (succeeding industrialism and imperialism). According to Jameson, postmodernism is the cultural space of multinational capitalism that has homogenized the world to an extent far greater than any of its predecessors. Similarly, Harvey (1989) uses the notion of “time-space compression” to describe the changing images of time and space. According to him, Fordism has been displaced by “flexible accumulation,” which is characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of

production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation. All of these, along with the advances made in communication, transportation, and information technologies that allow simultaneity and instantaneousness, and restructuring of the global financial system, according to Harvey, have allowed capitalism to constantly deterritorialize and reterritorialize, resulting in the concentration of immense wealth and power in the hands of a few.

Unlike Jameson and Harvey who advocate a postmodern discontinuation with history, and the homogenization and reconfiguration of the post-Fordism world, many scholars argue that the contemporary world is more distinguished by significant overlaps and interactions (Hall 1991; Kearney 1995; Featherstone 1996; Appadurai 1996; Tsing 2000; Sassen 2001). For example, the process of invoking the global turn for Tsing (2002) is to “call attention to the speed and density of interconnections among people and places,” and she portrays globalization as an imagined aggregation of “hit-and-miss” convergences rather than a “single claimant as a world-making system.” Similarly, Featherstone (1996) sees problems in theorizing globalization, because it does not affect or make everyone conscious of it to the same extent. He points out that theorists of globalization often adopt a totalizing logic in assuming the world becoming a more unified and homogenous space, and miss ‘the cultural variability of non-Western nation-states and civilizations.’ Instead, he argues that the globalization process should be regarded as ‘opening up the sense that now the world is a single place with increased, even unavoidable contact,’ and this, according to him, has resulted in much cultural complexity and confusion, and has provoked “localism.” He asserts that it is only when

the locality becomes locked in power struggles and elimination contests with its neighbors' that the local cultural identity is formed, and become sharpened and well-defined. Featherstone cautions that "globalization" should not be taken to imply that there is, or will be, a unified world society or culture-something akin to the social structure of a nation-state and its national culture. He points out the problem of the location of the globalization theorists who write from a particular location, tradition of discourse, and differential power to speak and be listened to, and agrees with Anthony King's remark that all "globalizing theories are self-representations of the dominant particular." As members of "the rest" come increasingly to reside in the West and are able to make their voices heard, Featherstone predicts that there will be many more accounts challenging globalization theories.

Cultural theorists like Stuart Hall and Arjun Appadurai are such members of "the rest" who reside in the West, are able to make their voices heard, and challenge globalization theories. Stuart Hall (1991) considers the contemporary global processes a new kind of globalization, and argues that it is American rather than English. In cultural terms, Hall asserts that it has to do with global mass culture, and that the powerhouse of global mass culture, i.e., Western technology, concentration of capital, techniques, and advanced labor remain centered in the West. And this mass culture, which is homogeneous according to Hall, always speaks English as an international, invaded, and hegemonizing language. He equates this global mass culture with a form of capital that "rule through other local capitals, rule alongside and in partnership with other economic and political elites. It does not attempt to obliterate them, it operates through them" (p. 28). Similarly, Appadurai (2001:4) sees globalization being intricately related with the

current workings of capital on a global basis, and argues that it extends the earlier logic of empire, trade, and political domination in many parts of the globe. He considers himself to be one of those analysts “inclined to see globalization as a definite marker of a new crisis for the sovereignty of the nation-states,” and accuses Western academia, (especially the US) of finding an object in globalization, around which, they could conduct their special internal quarrels on issues like representation, recognition, the “end” of history, the specters of capital and so on (p. 2). He suggests that the parochial quality of the globalization debate and the estrangement of the poor and their advocates from discourses and debates concerning them have given rise to a series of social forms that contest, interrogate, and attempt to reverse these developments as well as practices that proceed unconstrained from the actions of corporate capital and nation-states. Appadurai characterizes these social forms as “globalization from below” and holds that they rely on strategies, visions, and horizons for globalization on behalf of the poor (p.3).

The conceptual framework of transnationalism, on the other hand, from which I also draw heavily, argues that the compression of time-space has led to the growth of populations that behave in significantly different ways than their predecessors. For example, Bash et al. (1994) observe that most immigrants experience incorporation into U.S. society as workers, but most often, “they articulate their identities in terms of entirely different sets of references—those of nation of origin, race, and ethnicity.” Similarly, Portes et al. (1999) point to the various “socio-cultural enterprises” of the transmigrants that are oriented towards the “reinforcement of a national identity abroad or the collective enjoyment of cultural events and goods.” Proponents of this framework hold that these populations are socially, culturally, and physically anchored “at multiple

sites" and view migration as a multi-level process that involves various links between two or more settings. Accordingly, they emphasize the experiences of immigrants and focus their analysis on ways immigrants construct and reconstitute their simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society and the immigrant-established "social fields that cross geographical, cultural, and political borders" (Schiller et al. 1992: ix; 1995: 48). Schiller and Fouron (2001) further argue that transmigrants actually live their lives within a "transnational social field" which extends into countries throughout the globe where family members or compatriots have settled. The collectivities of these immigrants, according to transnational scholars, are transmigrants, whose cumulative activities create unique autonomous social and cultural spaces. Guarnizo (2003) argues that transnational practices shape and are shaped by migrants' economic activities, their sociocultural impacts, the state, and global economic processes.

As such, transnationalism overlaps globalization, but has a more limited purview (Kearney 1995: 548). While global processes take place in a global space and transnational corporations operate worldwide (Kearney, Op. cit.), transnational processes are anchored in and transcend one or more nation-states (Schiller et al. 1994: 5-10). The recent phenomenon of globalization has intensified world-wide social relations that link distant localities in such a way that happenings/events in one locality are shaped and influenced by the other. The previous notion of locality and localism, generally associated with a particular space with strong kinship ties and collective memories (forming a distinctive community), does not always hold true in the present globalized-world context (Featherstone 1996). The transnational links and cultures are considered essential features of transnationalism and are thought to be gathering momentum in the

contemporary world of migrants (Schiller et al. 1992; Mahler 1998; Guarnizo and Smith 1999).

Despite the scholarship that has led to a more theoretically complex understanding of the concepts of the Self and Other, Identity, and frameworks of globalization and transnationalism, there has been a lack of an ethnography that examines the emigration of the highly skilled from the developing to the developed countries by employing these concepts and frameworks. Furthermore, ethnographic accounts of identity construction using the concepts of the professional marginalized Self and the negative elite Other are almost non-existent. This study is an attempt to fill these gaps by expanding our theoretical understanding of the emigration of the highly skilled from the developing to the developed countries through an ethnographic analysis of the identity construction and transnational practices of the professional Nepalis who consider themselves to be marginalized in their country. It is also an attempt by what Clifford (1986: 9) calls “a new figure” or the indigenous ethnographer, to study his own culture, with the expectation that it will offer “new angles of vision and depths of understanding.”

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into eight chapters. The first two chapters provide the context and setting for the study. In this current chapter, I have provided background information on the study and reviewed pertinent literature. In Chapter Two, I explore the research setting (the kingdom of Nepal, its elites, and its contemporary politics) and describe the methodology I used to collect and analyze the data. The next three chapters describe the contexts for the emigration or non-return of the highly educated Nepalis from and to Nepal. Chapter Four describes the marginalization experienced by members

of Nepal's professional cadre in Nepal's professional work setting, as well as discusses the prevailing indifferent attitude of the Nepalese ruling elites towards its professional cadre living and working in the United States. Chapter Six explores the different facets of immigrant lives and discusses how the professional Nepalese are settling down in the United States. Chapter seven examines the transnational lives of the Nepalese, discusses how the Non-Resident Nepali (NRN) community is emerging as an organized and assertive force in the United States, and how the collectivity of transnationals is attempting to influence political outcomes and help the poverty stricken population in Nepal. In Chapter Eight, I conclude the dissertation by offering reflections on the study and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: NEPAL: RESEARCH SETTING AND METHODS

Previous studies on Nepali migrants have hardly analyzed Nepal's tumultuous political history, especially the role of the state and the elites in triggering and perpetuating the emigration of its citizens. Therefore, in the first three sections of this chapter, I will attempt to describe the evolution of Nepalese society, the rise of its elites, and summarize the historical, political, economic, and cultural forces that I deem responsible for continuing this exodus for over two centuries. In the rest of the sections, I will describe how the data for this dissertation were collected and analyzed.

Nepal: A Brief Political History (1743-1951)

The modern history of Nepal begins in the year 1743, when a young Shah king of the small principality of Gorkha, Prithvi Narayan Shah, initiates the process of unifying Nepal. By 1769, he conquers the three small kingdoms of the Kathmandu valley as well as numerous other perennially warring principalities. Amidst internal political turmoil, his heirs and courtiers continue the expansionary movement. However, this territorial ambition is effectively checked by the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814 to 1816. Nepal loses the war, cedes one third of its territories to imperial Britain's East India Company (parts of which were returned in 1860), but retains its former territorial integrity and independence. Nepalese history after the political unification of the country and before the advent of Rana rule in 1846 is characterized by intense power struggles amongst its royal courtiers. It brings about rounds of political assassinations, exiles, and severely destabilizes and weakens the Nepalese royal court. In 1846, a very ambitious royal

courtier, Jung Bahadur Rana, orchestrates a very volatile and fluid situation amidst this instability, and with the help of his brothers, massacres all of his rival royal courtiers and seizes power. Jung Bahadur Rana and his brothers reduce the Nepalese monarch to a titular figurehead, introduce a totalitarian regime, entrench themselves through hereditary prime ministers, maintain close ties with the British (who, in turn, support their regime), and pursues a highly centralized autocracy that isolates Nepal from external influences. In 1951, king Tribhuvan, a direct descendant of king Prithvi Narayan Shah and grandfather of the present king of Nepal, overthrows the Ranas with the help of the Nepali Congress Party and regains power.

The Rise of Nepalese Elites and the Culture of Exclusion

The 1769 unification of the country helped Nepal maintain its territorial integrity amidst British colonial expansions occurring in the rest of South Asia at that time. But, it brought several powerful and extremely self-centered elite families to Nepal's political center stage (Acharya 1998). Since then, these elites and their descendants have largely governed Nepal by claiming control of the royal court. A significant number of studies attribute the sorry state of Nepal as well as the post 1951 chain of events (that are described in the following section) to the self-serving actions of the Nepalese ruling elites (Blaikie et al. 1981; Shaha 1982; Mishra and Sharma 1983; Bista 1991; Baral 1995; Bhattachan 1997; Pandey 1998; Dahal 2000; Kramer 2004; Kernot 2007).

Mishra (1995) asserts that Nepal's elite is characterized by an alliance of four components: the royal family, the army, the religious establishment, and the vested interest groups who have been the beneficiaries of authoritarian rule of any kind.

Throughout its history, a very small number of the latter three components mentioned above have always maintained close ties with the royal palace or the Rana¹⁴ courts and were often palace or Rana courtiers themselves. They were called *bhardars* and were the primary beneficiaries of royal and Rana favors--which often resulted in land grants¹⁵. They continuously fought with each other to claim control of the court and left behind a history of extremely violent intrigues and a culture of “decapitation”¹⁶ and political exclusion.

After the political unification of the country in 1769, Nepal started to take shape as a feudal state. Large tracts of state land were granted on a tax-exempt basis (which later on became inheritable too) to “members of ruling house, high state--including military--officials, ecclesiastes (sic), local functionaries as well as local “big men” in lieu of their emoluments (Regmi 1976; Mishra 1987). The earlier communal modes of production that had sustained its citizens slowly disintegrated (Mishra 1987). Though the elites were granted lands in different parts of the country, they usually resided in the capital and controlled the lands as absentee landlords. They sustained themselves as well

¹⁴ The Ranas were a clan of the *kshatriyas* (warriors). Jung Bahadur Rana, a courtier, usurped power from Nepal's King after massacring his rival courtiers in the royal court in 1846. He established a totalitarian regime, and the country was ruled by a line of hereditary prime ministers (most of whom were his own brothers who aided him in the court massacre and their male offspring) who entrenched themselves and reduced the monarch to a titular figurehead. The Rana regime was a tightly centralized autocracy and pursued a policy of isolating Nepal from external influences. This policy helped Nepal maintain its national independence during the colonial era, but it also impeded the country's economic development. A revolution led by the Nepali Congress Party and the King overthrew them in 1951.

¹⁵ Land was and still is the principal source of production as well as a prime source of wealth, prestige, and power in Nepal. Up to 1951, and to some extent during the reign of king Mahendra, land was regularly granted by the state to individuals. The state, in turn, extended its political and administrative arms across the country through these beneficiaries.

¹⁶ Between 1769 and 1951, members of one faction of the courtiers murdered members of other faction/s at the first opportune moment. Entire clans, factions, and even a King, Crown Princes, and Prime Ministers were murdered. The factions were so powerful that at times Kings and Queens were imprisoned, forced to go into exile, and Crown Princes were poisoned to death. Courtiers who needed to be eliminated from any particular courtier faction's point of view were referred to as “*katnai parne*” or those who must be decapitated.

as built their wealth by renting their land at exorbitant rates to share-croppers or peasants. Most of them always placed their own welfare before that of the state and opposed everything that had the potential to jeopardize their privileges and positions of authority. When king Tribhuvan went into exile in India to lead the revolution against Rana autocracy in 1951, the *bhardars* or the elites of that period called for his abdication to perpetuate Rana rule (Gurung 1998). After the formation of the first democratically elected government, the elites felt threatened by its radical views and intentions, and systematically opposed the Nepali Congress government's programs and actions to perpetuate their existing privileges (Pradhan 1973). Even the supposedly democratic Nepali Congress inherited the culture of political exclusion and banned the Communist parties for some time to consolidate their hold on power (Gyawali 2002). Within the *Panchayat*¹⁷ system, the elites effectively filtered out political undesirables and even sabotaged king Mahendra's efforts to reform the existing exploitative forms of land tenure systems in the mid sixties.

The geopolitical rivalry between the United States and the former Soviet Union after the Second World War, and the ensuing cold war heralded the era of foreign aid and the idea of development. In addition to the cold war rivals, regional powers also competed with each other to influence the domestic politics and foreign policy of Nepal. As a result, Nepal received foreign aid from countries promoting diverse ideologies. For their part, the post 1951 elites and successive governments vigorously pursued various

¹⁷ The *Panchayat* system was a four-tiered pyramidal structure progressing from village assemblies to a *Rastriya Panchayat* (National Parliament). It enshrined the absolute power of the monarchy and kept the King as head of state with sole authority over all governmental institutions, including the Cabinet (Council of Ministers) and the Parliament. The lowest three tiers (village assemblies, village *panchayat*, and district *panchayat*) of this system had few real powers. Real power came from the king's secretariat, and in the countryside influence rested in the offices of zonal commissioners and their official staffs or the parallel system of development officers.

foreign aid promoted and foreign aid driven paths to development rather than harnessing the country's existing resources. During the *Panchayat* era, they even advised the then king Birendra to embark on international "begging-state-visits" to solicit further foreign aid¹⁸. Instead of enhancing the country's productivity, foreign aid during the *Panchayat* era helped enhance the position of the upper social classes or the elites who benefited from the maintenance of the existing system of political and economic power (Mishra and Sharma 1983). Furthermore, the country was burdened with outstanding external debts of over one billion dollars by December 1988 (Khadka 1991). The elites exerted their political and bureaucratic power to control the allocation of the funds and resources available through foreign aid and used them to strengthen private networks, enrich their own purses, and dispense patronage to the rural elites on whom they depended for support (Khadka 1991). When a majority of the educated and politically conscious people supported the movement for the reinstitution of multiparty democracy in 1990, the national elites sought help from their rural counterparts (rural elites and landlords) to garner support from the rural population for the continuation of the *Panchayat* system (Khadka 1991). Even after the reinstitution of multiparty democracy and while the 1990 Constitution of Nepal was being drafted, the elites (by virtue of having some of their members in the royal palace bureaucracy) proposed a draft constitution that fundamentally differed from the revised draft submitted by the Council of Ministers who represented the interim government (Hutt 1991).

The Nepalese social structure was (and is still to some extent) based on the hierarchical principles of Hinduism that grants certain castes superior status. In the past,

¹⁸ Almost every year during the *Panchayat* era, the king embarked on state visits, primarily to Western countries. In his address to the nation after such state visits, the king used to inform his subjects about the "gains" the country made.

such power was derived from martial authority (*Kshatriyas*) and priestly status (*Brahmins*). Elitism was sanctified by the *Muluki Ain*,¹⁹ whose signatories were overwhelmingly hill *Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas* (Hofer 1979; Gurung 1998). Moreover, Nepal's ruling elites from the country's unification in 1769 to the present have drawn their members only from the above mentioned two groups of people: the hill *Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas*. These are the only groups that possess what Gaige (1975) calls "all four prerequisites for successful participation in Nepalese national politics: control of economic resources, high-caste status, identification with hill culture, and (more recently) a high level of educational attainment²⁰." It was only quite recently that by virtue of being largely an urban community, the *Newars*²¹ became the third powerful ethnic group in Nepal's power structure. Even in the last days of the *Panchayat* in 1990, most of the elites had family ties and connection with the royal palace (Shaha 1982; Dahal 2000), which in turn, always maintained its coterie of army generals and advisers to protect its self-interest (Dahal 2000). Royal favor, rather than mass-derived political strength and

¹⁹ The *Muluki Ain*, or the country code of 1854, was promulgated by the first Rana prime minister Jung Bahadur Rana, who wrested power from the Shah rulers in 1846. As a legal document, it helped preserve the socio-cultural order as defined by the Hindu elite rulers of Kathmandu. It legally validated the caste system that differentially conferred rights and privileges on Nepalis. In essence, it preserved the privileges of the court of councilors that signed the document into existence and consisted of nobles, high-ranking officers, the royal preceptor, and priests.

²⁰ By "high level of educational attainment," Gaige is referring to the Nepalese context. A bachelor's degree used to be granted in Nepal in the humanities and social sciences, management, science, agriculture, and forestry after fourteen years of formal education. It is moderate by international standards, but used to be considered "high" in Nepal. If an individual obtained such a degree, it was sufficient educational achievement for him/her to join the civil service of Nepal as an officer. Once in the bureaucracy, a person could reach higher positions without adding any academic qualification to his or her credit. Similarly, the Nepalese army used to and still requires only twelve years of formal education (Intermediate degree) to join its officer corps. Most of the *Panchayat* era elites having connections with the royal palace as well as the post-1990 elites who have connections with the upper echelons of the political parties have this academic background to their credit. A great majority of those who successfully completed fourteen years of formal education in Nepal can be characterized as semi-educated, for this background largely failed to make them capable of working independently--without orders from their superiors.

²¹ An autochthonous group that is linguistically and culturally different from the Brahmin-Kshatriyas. They were one of the first groups to settle down in the Kathmandu valley, the capital of Nepal.

support, was generally regarded as the most important prerequisite for reaching power positions during the *Panchayat* era (Baral 1982).

By virtue of their proximity to the royal palace, the central level non-royal *Panchayat* era elites wielded immense power. They were the palace secretaries, *Aides-de-Camps* to the royal family, chiefs of the army staff, military advisors to the king, palace tutors, some central level *Panchayat* politicians, and a few were members of indirectly elected national committees and councils. Excluding the palace tutors, members of the national planning commission, and some politicians, almost all others had reached their positions of power with the semi-educated backgrounds discussed above. In spite of the handicaps associated with their semi-education, they were the country's *de facto* policy-and-decision makers, and political processes operated through informal groups and cliques surrounding these people. It has been argued that they determined, in collusion with the donors, both the content and channel of foreign aid inflow (and the associated development programs) into Nepal (Mishra and Sharma 1983)²². They also influenced actions and decisions of the formal organs of government, as well as the trends of discussion in the national legislature (Shah 1982). Power was vested in these personalities rather than in institutions, and informal contacts preceded formal procedures. The palace secretariat was the ultimate source of power, and the palace secretaries were more powerful than government ministers or secretaries. It was noted that when there was a palace secretary from *Palpa*,²³ all *Palpalis* had a better chance to

²² From 1951 onwards, foreign aid and loans funded many of Nepal's development programs. Despite the infusion of millions of dollars per annum and five decades of development practice, none of the models introduced succeeded in raising the living standard of the masses. It is striking that the country's Auditor General shocked many in 2001 when he said that the Office of the Auditor General of Nepal did not know the exact amount Nepal owed to multilateral lending agencies, nor was it aware of an amortization schedule.

²³ An administrative district in Western Nepal.

be employed in the Kathmandu valley (mostly in government services and parastatal organizations) irrespective of their qualifications (Dahal 2000). High ranking government officials and professionals not having any connections with the royal palace (but with similar caste-social backgrounds²⁴) found themselves frustrated even in the exercise of their legitimate authority (Shah 1982). All of these trends continued even after the reinstatement of a multi-party polity in 1990. Access to power as well as proximity to the source of power, once again, determined one's elite status. A few elected politicians and personalities with similar backgrounds and having close relationships with the key political leaders continued to act as the country's *de facto* policy-and-decision makers.

Empirical research conducted (while the *Panchayat* system of governance was in place) by the Center for Economic Development and Administration (a research wing of the Tribhuvan University) revealed that eighty percent of the positions of power and profit in Nepal were held by the hill *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas* and *Newars*, who represent a minority of the total population of Nepal (Shaha 1978). The recruitment systems of both the civil service and army officers were designed to obstruct the entry of non *Brahmin-Kshatriya* groups (Mishra 1995). Even during the post-1990 era, hill *Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas* continued to dominate parliamentary politics (Gurung 1998). The distribution of the electoral candidates of the major political parties in the 1991, 1994, and 1999 parliamentary elections revealed that the new elites in various parties were not different from the past elites. For example, in the 1994 general elections, over 60 percent of the candidates of both the Nepali Congress and the United Marxist-Leninist parties came from the same two group that had ruled Nepal for over two centuries (Baral 1995).

²⁴ A great majority of Nepal's highly educated come from the three dominant groups: the *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, and *Newars*.

What is most remarkable about Nepalese politics is that even when the center of power changes, only one cultural and social elite has always remained as the sole beneficiary of power (Hoftun 1994; Mishra 1995; Dahal 2000) and it continues to practice the politics of exclusion²⁵ (Gyawali 2002, Thapa and Sijapati 2004). Baral (1982) has characterized Nepal's political elite as a "cohesive group of system maintainers." After the political unification of Nepal, the royal palace was the center of power. But, it was mostly the hill *Kshatriyas*, and to a lesser extent, the *Brahmins* who exercised power and authority. During the autocratic rule of the Ranas, the center of power shifted to the Rana courts, which were composed of *Kshatriyas*. The people in positions of power and authority during the *Panchayat* era also essentially had the same backgrounds, and Mishra (1995) characterized it as a "disguised Rana rule." According to a prominent Nepali social scientist (Shaha 1982), seventeen powerful people having direct connections with the royal palace ruled Nepal during the *Panchayat* regime. Though considerable power shifted from the royal palace to the political parties after the people's movement of 1990, a few leaders with similar family backgrounds continued to dominate politics, and the political parties acted according to their interests and preferences rather than that of the people (Dahal 2000).

25 The larger parties (which primarily drafted and finalized the 1990 constitution) introduced article 113(2) in the 1990 constitution of Nepal. This article stipulated that political parties should garner at least three percent of the electoral votes in the general elections to achieve "national" stature. This provision barred smaller parties from national status as well as from the entitlement to an election symbol. The present day Maoists were inside the ambit of parliamentary democracy until Nepal's Election Commission as well as the Supreme Court excluded them from national status. They even had an elected majority in the district government of *Rolpa*, a remote district in far-western Nepal, until 1994. The Nepali Congress government under the premiership of Koirala hounded the Maoists with brutal police action on trumped up charges, and left them without any official space to express their grievances. Similarly, the government of Prime Minister Deuba (NCD) refused to grant extension to all the local government bodies in 2002 (even when that was the best and widely expected option) to give continuity to democratic processes amidst Maoist violence at the grass roots level. The only logical reason was that a great majority of the local representatives represented the United Marxist Leninist party and were elected when their party managed the local elections five years ago.

Recruitment of members of the intelligentsia for elite positions in Nepal began only after the political change of 1951. They were usually the offspring of merchants, bureaucrats, religious priests²⁶ and professional people (Shaha 1982), most of whom did not belong to the traditional elite families, but who, like the elites, also hailed overwhelmingly from the same *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, and *Newar* caste/ethnic groups. Most of the bureaucratic, professional, and technocratic elite in Nepal during the *Panchayat* years to the present were fairly well educated, widely traveled, and linguistically skilled. Despite the democratic set up after the people's movement of 1990 (that lasted until October 2002), proper family ties and kinship in appropriate places continued to play a dominant role in one's social position (Dahal 2000). As with the *Panchayat* years, education played an effective role only when it was systematically associated with proper family ties or was accompanied by recourse to sycophancy (Shaha 1982; Bista 1991; Dahal 2000). For example, the over a dozen governments that came into office after 1990 almost immediately assigned key bureaucratic positions to the relatives of central level political leaders or their devoted followers. On many occasions, such positions were assigned regardless of the latter's educational backgrounds and technical skills. Such outright malpractice, corruption, and disregard for merit, diligence, and efficiency by the *Panchayat* elites, as well as by the "new Ranas,"²⁷ have left the professional middle class alienated (Shaha 1982).

While examining the cultural and social organization aspects of Nepali society, Dor Bahadur Bista, the first West-educated Nepali anthropologist characterized Nepalis

²⁶ By religious priests, Shah is referring to the local Hindu temple priests. These priests were usually well educated in the Sanskrit language. Most of them acquired their knowledge of Sanskrit and the associated priestly ritual education at Varanasi, India, the center for Hindu studies.

²⁷ Dahal (2000).

as collectivists (1991: 4). However, this characterization was not meant to imply that the Nepali collectivists worked as hard as their Japanese counterparts, and were equally successful in their endeavors. Instead, he noted that Nepali collectivism was manifested in the critical Nepali social institution of *afno manchhe*. Literally, *afno manchhe* means ‘one’s own people,’ and Bista used this term to designate one’s inner circle of associates, and refers to those who could be approached whenever the need arises (p. 98). The strength or weakness of an individual is measured by the quality and quantity of his or her circles of *afno manchhe*. As a social institution, Bista contended that *afno manchhe* had the potential to be constructively used as a natural form of social organization. But, it could also be readily subverted to pursue and accomplish negative ends. It was in this subverted context that members gained privileges while non-members were excluded even from cooperative actions. To illustrate this institutionalized practice, he provided an example of a bank teller who makes extra effort to expedite the check-cashing process of “one’s own people,” whereas a common man has to wait longer to get his cash (p. 98). The need to serve the personal interests of members of one’s own circle supersedes that of maintaining the reputation of the bank, and Bista argued that the same logic held true in all Nepalese government offices.

Such practices are so pervasive that Nepalese satirical artists and cartoonists routinely mock the negative aspects of this institution in their works. Recently, a cartoonist ridiculed a female government minister who had managed to arrange jobs for many of her relatives in the ministry she led.²⁸ The major drawback of this institution in a

²⁸ The cartoon portrayed the minister sitting on her office chair and telling her assistant: “Can you ask my aunt who is in the accounts section, my nephew in the administration, another nephew in the technology department, my sister-in-law in the computer section, and my son-in-law at the registration section to come

resource poor country like Nepal is that it perpetuates an unjust society where only a few benefit, like the relatives of the minister. A great majority are left behind, including those with the best knowledge and expertise. In essence, the institution of *afno manchhe* is characterized by exclusionary tendencies, factionalism, failures in cooperation, and corruption in various forms leading to malfunctioning of the administration and dissatisfaction at every level (Bista 1991: 4).

It is only in the institutionalized context of *afno manchhe* and pervasive corrupt practices that “marginalization” and “indifference” can be understood in the Nepalese professional work setting. “Marginalization” and “indifference” in the Nepal are something like “racism” in the United States. Despite the enshrinement of core democratic values, racism is still in the air of the United States. Similarly, Nepal’s many constitutions also enshrined democratic values, and there weren’t and aren’t any specific policies or government directives to marginalize or treat poorly those who are not members of one’s inner circle of associates.

In addition to the satirical work of artists and cartoonists, reports on politicians unduly favoring their kinsmen or close associates frequently appear in the Nepalese press. But, cases of marginalization and ill-treatment of professionals are rarely reported, and probably, have never been challenged and contested in a court of law. However, they are routinely practiced within Nepalese society, bureaucracy, and polity. Common Nepalis and members of the Nepalese professional cadre who do not have personal or familial access to the ruling elite experience marginalization and indifference in a manner similar to what people of color experience racism in the United States.

over here? We have a meeting.” Cartoon by Rajesh KC, 3/13/08. Accessed 3/16/08
<http://www.rajeshkc.com/cartoons/>

What is really striking about this peculiar Nepali institution at the national level is that, every new government resorts to it to consolidate its hold on power. Within days after assuming office, the prime minister and other government ministers routinely transfer senior level bureaucrats appointed by earlier governments (but who are still occupying important positions in influential and fund-rich departments) to inferior departments, or ask for their resignations, or orchestrate an early retirement for them. They are promptly replaced with loyal ones or those who pledge unquestionable loyalty, who in no time, run their respective departments as fiefdoms. Employees who are 'one's own people' of the ruling elite are transferred to favorable positions, assigned key responsibilities, sent to study abroad on government scholarships and so on irrespective of their aptitude, expertise, and professional commitment. For example, upon assuming the prime ministership of the country after the 1991 general elections of Nepal, Girija Prasad Koirala orchestrated an early retirement for over a dozen *Panchayat* era Supreme Court judges, and promoted junior ones in their places. The judges challenged this action at the Supreme Court, won their case several years later, and the Nepalese government was ordered to reinstate all of them. But the damage had been done, the trend had been set, and the judges turned down the government's offer to reinstate them. Why do housecleaning practices that disregard administrative procedures and personnel management regulations occur? The only logical explanation for this orchestrated, involuntary, and early retirement of the judges is that the *Panchayat* era judges were construed by the new rulers as non-members of their inner circle of associates, and that they might obstruct the new elite's and their associates' pursuit of personal ambitions and aspirations. In his three year tenure as Nepal's first democratically elected prime minister

in the post-1990 era, Koirala assigned almost all important bureaucratic and political positions to his relatives, friends, and devout followers. Even though Koirala had democratic credentials, his actions were reminiscent of the autocratic Rana regime, when all key government positions were assigned to their closest relatives with the sole objective of perpetuating their hold on power. The high levels of dissatisfaction and feelings of disenfranchisement expressed by my research subjects in chapters three and four are a result of such practices.

Devendra Raj Pandey, a prominent Nepali civil society leader, has noted that a symbiotic relationship exists between politicians and corruption in Nepal (2001: 7). He also notes that Nepal's political parties--which have repeatedly formed many so-called democratic governments--do not keep books of accounts themselves, and do not have a system to get them audited (p.9). During the last three decades in Nepal, Pandey asserts that corruption thrived with the influx of foreign aid, assumed an unmanageable scale, and foreign aid was seen as free money to augment the consumption and wealth of the ruling classes (p. 12). What is really striking, Pandey notes (p. 18), is that the Nepali political leaders as well as the common people continue to be influenced more by the authoritarian traditions and a system of relations that are inherited from the past than by the values and norms of democracy, and that the external support the country receives has reinforced these adverse historical tendencies. The Nepali ruling elite's insatiable quest for power and wealth, and the associated violation of the law of the land to pursue its collective ambition is what marginalizes and frustrates a great majority of Nepali professionals.

Contemporary Nepalese Politics: Exclusion, Fragmentation, “Unholy Alliances,” and Opaque motives

In 1951, Nepal emerged as a democratic country after a century of autocratic and extremely feudal family rule by the Ranas. The period between 1951-1958 was one of political uncertainty. However, the first democratic constitution was promulgated, and a referendum for a national assembly was held in 1959. The Nepali Congress party won a majority of the seats in the new parliament. But the constitution mandated that half of the upper house members (18) be the king's appointees (most were from the nobility). They opposed every reform program and action proposed by the Nepali Congress government. After eighteen months of Nepali Congress rule under the premiership of B. P. Koirala, the then King Mahendra dismissed the Koirala government saying that the parliamentary model of the West was not suited for the country and promulgated a new constitution. Prominent Congress Party leaders were imprisoned, and political parties were banned. Two years later, King Mahendra established the “partyless” *Panchayat* (councils) system that he considered to be a democratic form of government closer to Nepalese traditions. Under this system, the king wielded absolute power and governed through a largely rubber-stamp government and a national assembly, whose members were forbidden to identify themselves with any party or ideology (Khadka 1991). Political opposition to this system was suppressed by a host of measures, the most important being the employment of the relatively well-educated and potentially dissident young men in the bureaucracy (Blaikie et al. 1981). In addition, the political disunity among various oppositional political entities and the rivalry between India and China after the 1962 Indo-China war to influence Nepalese politics (Dharmadasini 1993; Khadka 1997) also gave continuity to

the *Panchayat* system for almost thirty years. However, the economic situation of the country deteriorated despite large volumes of foreign aid provided by a multitude of donors during this period²⁹ (Blaikie et al. 1981; Khadka 1991).

Despite being the absolute rulers of Nepal, both king Mahendra and later his son king Birendra attempted to modernize Nepal's economy during the *Panchayat* era. Quite significant progress was made in the infrastructural and social service sectors. However, the improvements in the infrastructures and social services neither addressed Nepal's basic economic problems nor did they act as prime movers in the nation's economic development (Mihaly 1965; Khadka 1991). An attempt to radically reform the existing exploitative land tenure systems was sabotaged by the vested interests of the people in the upper rungs of Nepalese bureaucracy who were entrusted to implement the reform. "Foreign aid" and the idea of "development" had totally captivated the minds and actions of the Nepalese elite (Shrestha 1993). A lot of energy was spent on attracting huge amounts of aid to finance development projects, and the Nepalese Ministry of Finance even prepared reports with grim statistics to justify requests for more aid from the donors. Foreign aid and loans from donor governments and international institutions poured in, the number of development projects proliferated, but without any institutional reforms, they failed to alleviate the poverty of the majority of the population (Mishra and Sharma 1983; Khadka 1991).

In 1989, the Indian government headed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi imposed a trade embargo on Nepal after the two countries failed to renew their trade and transit treaties. Though the official Nepalese explanation was that Nepal favored two separate

²⁹ Nepal's average reliance on foreign aid at the close of the *Panchayat* era was about 47 percent of the total national budget. (Khadka 1991).

treaties on trade and transit, and India favored a single treaty on trade and transit, many educated Nepalis attributed this failure to the personality clash between Nepal's king Birendra (and his wife Aishwarya) and the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (and his wife Sonia Gandhi). The result was immense hardship and suffering for the Nepalese people, who were already fed up with the inefficiencies of the *Panchayat* system. They rose to support the mass movement against the *Panchayat* system being organized and headed by the outlawed Nepali Congress party with the full cooperation of the Communist parties. This movement drew people from all walks of life and was even openly supported by some prominent Indian leaders. In the ensuing months, detention, torture and violent clashes left about 50 people dead. Finally, king Birendra dissolved the *Panchayat* Parliament, legalized political parties and invited the opposition to form an interim government.

The interim government framed the 1990 constitution of Nepal that guaranteed wide civil rights and vested the sovereignty for the first time in the Nepali people. It also held a general election in 1991; the Nepali Congress and the United Marxist-Leninist parties emerged as the two major political forces in the country. Having won a majority of the seats in the parliament, the Nepali Congress formed a government under the Prime Minister G. P. Koirala. However, in 1994, he resigned and advised the king to dissolve the House and set a date for a mid-term poll after 36 dissident parliamentarians of his own party abstained from voting on a usually routine motion of thanks for the royal address to the joint session of the Parliament (Baral 1995). In the mid-term polls that followed, the United Marxist-Leninist party and the Nepali Congress respectively secured

87 and 85 seats out of 205--prohibiting both of them from forming a majority government.

Instead, the Rashtriya Prajantra Party (a rightist party of the ex-*Panchayat* politicians) fared well and secured the key votes (20 seats) necessary to form a coalition government. The following years saw the most “unholy alliances”³⁰ between the centrist, leftist, and rightist parties in Nepalese politics. Between 1994 and 2000, Nepal witnessed the formation of 7 governments, and almost all of them were brought down by intra- and inter-party conflicts. There were splits among the three major political parties. The leftist United Marxist-Leninist and the rightist Rashtriya Prajatantra Party reunited later on, but the centrist Nepali Congress still remains divided. Rather than differences in ideology and policy issues, these unholy alliances and party break-ups exhibited the critical role of personal ambitions of political leaders in Nepalese politics (Thapa and Roka 1997; Rose 1998). For example, the 1997 coalition government of Lokendra Bahadur Chand was ousted when the parliamentarians of his own party switched sides and supported his intra-party rival Surya Bahadur Thapa for premiership. Chand deplored the actions of his own colleagues and termed them “Mice abandoning a sinking ship”.

Another routine general election was held in 1999. The United Marxist-Leninist party was divided into two camps at this time, and the Nepali Congress, which was still united, benefited immensely from this division. The Nepali Congress managed to secure 111 out of the 205 seats,³¹ and its septuagenarian leader headed a majority government. Due to intense power struggles among its leaders, Nepal saw three governments during three years of the Nepali Congress rule.

³⁰ Hachhethu, Krishna (1990)

³¹ The Nepali Congress garnered 36.3 percent of the votes cast, whereas the combined figure for the United Marxist-Leninist Party and its splinter party Marxist-Lenninnist was 37.1 percent.

On June 1, 2001, Nepal witnessed the most traumatic disaster in its political history, when the entire immediate family of king Birendra was wiped out in a massacre. According to the official version of the tragic events, Crown Prince Dipendra turned a gun on his family before turning it onto himself. King Birendra's younger brother Prince Gyanendra was crowned the King and immediately indicated that he would be more assertive and active in alleviating the difficulties of his subjects.

After the royal palace massacre, the Maoists (who had been waging a "people's war" in Nepal's hinterland since 1996 to abolish the monarchy and establish a republican state) stepped up their violent campaign by attacking army garrisons in different parts of the country. The third Nepali Congress government since 1999 (headed by Sher Bahadur Deuba) managed to make peace with the rebels, and a truce lasted for five months--after which the rebels launched coordinated attacks on army barracks and police posts. The Nepalese government declared a state of emergency in November 2001, after more than 100 people were killed in four days of violence, and suspended all fundamental civil rights. More violence followed and in May 2002--after six months in a state of emergency and still heading a majority government--Prime Minister Deuba failed to secure approval of the parliament to extend the state of emergency. This prompted him to recommend that the king dissolve the parliament and announce fresh elections.

The parliament was dissolved, a date for the elections was set (November 13, 2002), Deuba headed a caretaker government, and the state of emergency was renewed through ordinance. This action infuriated the Nepali Congress party president G. P. Koirala. The central working committee of the Nepali Congress dominated by his loyalists (most of the members of this committee were elected when G. P. Koirala was

the party president and Prime Minister) expelled Sher Bahadur Deuba from its general membership. They argued that Deuba had prematurely recommended to the king the dissolution of the parliament (i.e., despite the possibility of forming another majority government of the Nepali Congress). This led Deuba to break away from the Nepali Congress, and he formed his own party (Nepali Congress Democratic). About half of the ex-Nepali Congress parliamentarians joined Deuba.

Meanwhile, violence continued and in October 2002, citing security reasons, Prime Minister Deuba asked the king to put off elections for a year. King Gyanendra promptly dismissed Prime Minister Deuba and accused him of being inept and incompetent to hold the general elections by the specified date. The king then asked each political party to suggest two representatives within five days to form an all-party council of ministers. He also added that they should be untainted nominees and should not be electoral candidates. Instead, the five parties having representatives in the previous parliament demanded a joint audience with the King to put forward their own candidate for prime minister, who would then decide on the cabinet. The king refused to meet them, and the political parties did not furnish the King with the names of their nominees by the specified date. After this, King Gyanendra appointed a pro-monarchist rightist leader (Lokendra Bahadur Chand) as the new Prime Minister and instructed him to form a multi-party government, make necessary arrangements to hold the general elections, and initiate a dialogue with the rebels.

This action was labeled “regression” by the Nepali Congress, the United Marxist-Leninist Front, Nepali Congress Democratic as well as three other smaller parties that had representatives in the parliament. These parties began to agitate to “correct” it. The new

Prime Minister succeeded in making peace with the rebels and bringing them to the negotiating table. However, the political parties refused to cooperate with him and he finally resigned in May 2003.

Before Prime Minister Chand's resignation, the king directly went to the people via the media and reiterated his firm support for constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy. He accused the political parties of disregarding the national interest. After Prime Minister Chand's resignation, the king approached the political parties again, and this time he asked them to come up with a consensus candidate for the next Prime Minister. The political parties proposed a single candidate, Madhav Kumar Nepal, the general secretary of the UML as the next Prime Minister. In one of his most opaque moves, the King ignored the parties' consensus candidate and appointed another conservative politician, Surya Bahadur Thapa, as the next Prime Minister. Like his predecessor, Thapa failed to garner support from the political parties, and the peace talks with the rebels broke down in August 2003. Clashes between the Maoist rebels and government forces continued, and more than 1,000 people were killed by late October. The five political parties continued their street agitation against "regression," and the second rightist Prime Minister finally resigned in May 2004. King Gyanendra then reappointed Sher Bahadur Deuba--whom he had sacked earlier in October 2002--as the next Prime Minister.

After assuming office, Deuba and his party (Nepali Congress Democratic) declared that the "regression" was over and invited other political parties to help him form a multi-party government. The United Marxist-Leninist party pulled out of the five-party street agitation against "regression" and joined the Deuba led government.

Fragmentations and alliances like these have characterized much of Nepalese politics after the restoration of multi party democracy in Nepal in 1990 as well as epitomized the political leadership's complete disregard for its own as well as its respective party's ideological moorings. Central level leaders and parliamentarians were uncertain about each others' roles, and, at times, parliamentarians representing the same political party had to be "locked up" together in luxurious hotels and transported to the parliament in tightly guarded buses to vote on key issues that determined the survival of the incumbent governments. These practices, the unholy alliances and sometimes the King's unpredictable and opaque motives contributed to the continued political uncertainty. Prior to the February first takeover by the king, two major parties had formed a coalition government, three were in the streets protesting "regression," and the Maoist rebels who control much of the countryside continued the killings and destruction of public property that contradict their expressed people-oriented ideals.

On February 1, 2005, the king seized power and plunged Nepal into further uncertainty. In his address to the nation, he claimed that it was necessary to tackle Nepal's Maoist insurgency and widespread corruption, and also promised to restore democracy within three years. My fieldwork and survey were conducted when the fundamental rights of Nepalis had been suspended, the press effectively muzzled, the country was being run by a council of handpicked ministers and administrators who were loyal to the king, a few key political leaders were still in detention (many were detained briefly), the Maoists had renewed their violence and attacked several army garrisons, and the political parties were trying to build a coalition to continue their countrywide agitation to press the king to restore democracy.

The previous and current marginal status of the professional cadre in Nepal's work force has largely been forged by the historical forces and contemporary practices described above. Serving as a domestic and commercial underclass in the Indian cities or the oil-rich Gulf states *en masse* or as a professional class in Western countries is a completely new phenomenon and is not something that has been inherited from past generations of Nepalis. The contemporary exodus of Nepali professionals to highly developed countries is not unusual from the global perspective. There are ample employment opportunities in the receiving countries and their immigration policies are becoming more and more favorable, and there is always the intense desire on the part of the immigrant to acquire the best education and utilize his/her skills in a meaningful way. However, the Nepali professional immigration experience is fundamentally different from that of other sending countries in several aspects. First of all, the contemporary ruling elites of Nepal are not very much concerned about this exodus and its long-term consequences for the overall wellbeing of the country. This is in striking contrast to the experiences of other countries that also had experienced brain drain, but had successfully managed to reverse it.

For example, South Korea was a war-devastated country in the mid 1950s. But in the 1960s, the South Korean government initiated a reverse brain drain (RBD) project and created conducive domestic environment to encourage its expatriates to return home (Yoon, 1992: 5). The South Korean government and its agencies concentrated their activities in the recruitment of high level scientists/engineers of Korean origin residing in developed countries. In addition to encouraging its expatriates to return, it also initiated strategic research and development institution building processes backed up by legal and

administrative reforms. State involvement went beyond "promotion" to "directive" in orientation. The Park regime empowered returnees by guaranteeing research autonomy and providing exceptionally good material benefits. Yoon (1992) asserts that the Korean RBD is without precedence in the world and has been highly successful. The results were spectacular. It is now the leading country in the semiconductor industry and its economy grew (in constant 1996 U.S. dollars) from \$91 billion in 1975 to \$597 billion in 1999 (Johnson, 2002: 128). By 1980s, up to two thirds of its professionals returned compared to 16% in 1960's (UNDP, 2001: E-5-1). Out of nearly 2,000 Ph. D. recipients between 1994 and 1995 from U.S. universities in science and engineering, only 23 percent were still employed in the U.S. in 1996. Furthermore, this figure fell to only 15 percent in 1999 (Johnson, 2002: 127-8).

Similarly, Taiwan's reverse brain drain project is also marked by active state involvement. Minister K.T. Li developed the Hsinchu Science-Based Industrial Park in Taiwan and even located Taiwanese government offices in the Silicon Valley in the 1980s, long before any other country did to attract their expatriate entrepreneurs back into the country (Saxenian, 2000: 3). The minister invited overseas Taiwanese investors to set up local venture capital operations and to invest in Taiwanese companies. In addition, several government agencies actively recruited overseas engineers by offering them senior positions in the government or academia. Those who wished to return permanently were even paid for the airfare. These concerted efforts of the Taiwanese government coupled with investments in research and education eventually paid off, and Taiwan now boasts one of the world's largest and most sophisticated venture capital industries. The Silicon Valley returnees started more than half of the companies in the Hsinchu Park, and

they account for roughly 10 percent of Taiwan's gross national product³². Its economy grew (in constant 1996 U.S. dollars) from \$52 billion in 1975 to \$324 billion in 2000 (Johnson, 2002: 130). Out of nearly 2,300 Taiwanese Ph. D. recipients between 1994 and 1995 from U.S. universities in science and engineering, only 42 percent were still employed in the U.S. in 1996 (Johnson, 2002: 129-30). Much of the economic miracle of Taiwan is attributed to the government's success in encouraging professionals to return home (Iredale and Appleyard, 2001: 5-6; Johnson, 2002: 130).

Following Taiwan and South Korea's lead, the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) of Thailand established within itself its Reverse Brain Drain (RBD) project in January 1997 with the sole objective of promoting and facilitating the return of Thai professionals residing overseas to participate in mission-oriented projects within the government agencies or in the private sector³³. More recently, both China and India (including the private sector) have launched ambitious programs to reverse their brain drains (Schlatter 2005; Zweig 2006; Ahmed 2006; Vaswani 2007). In striking contrast to the initiatives of these Asian countries, Nepal's ruling elites continue to marginalize the country's highly skilled citizens, both living in Nepal and abroad, and are indifferent to their exodus to the highly developed countries. What is really intriguing is that even those professional Nepalis (West based) who offer their professional expertise and financial resources for the betterment of the country are routinely marginalized. And this is being done in the supposedly democratic post 1990 era by none other than Nepal's political leaders with democratic credentials, many of whom had repeatedly pledged to uplift the Nepalese masses out of abject poverty.

³² <http://www.spectrum.ieee.org/WEBONLY/resource/oct01/speak2.html>

³³ http://rbd.nstda.or.th/html/body_about_rbd.html (accessed 11/1/2002)

Secondly, a great majority of Nepalis emigrate to Western countries as students. Unlike emigrants who leave oppressive regimes like Burma, Iran, and Cuba on a one way ticket, a great majority of Nepalis emigrate to Western countries with a firm determination to return home after completing their academic programs. However, as they stay on, an overwhelming majority of them change their minds and decide to stay on. What is remarkable is that, more than the countless opportunities offered by their host countries, they are more inclined to stay because of strong perceptions of being marginalized in the professional workforce of Nepal. Finally, despite being physically located in First world countries and, in many cases, assuming their host country's citizenships, the professional Nepali emigrants continue to consider the problems of their homeland as unfinished businesses of their own. They collectively strive to remedy many of them, and also attempt to maintain an assertive role in the democratizing process of the country. This dissertation is a study of this alienated and marginalized professional middle class--many of whom have settled in the United States and call it their new home.

Data and Methods

The study population for this dissertation research were primarily Nepalese graduate students pursuing graduate studies in US universities and Nepalese professionals (including Nepalese Americans) currently residing and working in the United States. The data I have drawn upon in my analyses were collected during eight months of fieldwork in the Dallas, Boston, New York, Washington DC, East Lansing, and Ann Arbor areas between May 2005 and December 2005, a survey that was administered to 231 individuals in May 2006, and over six years (2000-2005) of monitoring the Internet. Multiple complementary techniques, namely, tape-recorded life-history interviews, a

mailed survey, participant observation, and archival research were utilized to examine the influence of experienced and perceived marginalization by Nepalese professionals in Nepal's professional workforce on their migration decisions. Using intensive, tape-recorded life history interviews, I gathered qualitative ethnographic information about their felt experiences or perceptions of potential marginalization in Nepal's professional work force, the influence of the ongoing leftist insurgency and general unrest, and their notions of comparative satisfaction with their careers and overall lives in Nepal and in the United States. Special emphasis was placed on obtaining information about the interviewee's perceptions of marginalization and their interpretations of it. This primarily qualitative data was supplemented and complemented by quantitative data collected from the mailed survey. For the interviews and mailed survey, only those individuals who had emigrated to the United States with a professional degree and had some job experience in Nepal, or those who had emigrated to the U.S. as students, and after completion of studies, had opted to work and live here were selected. Specifically, this dissertation draws upon 46 interviews, 132 returned survey questionnaires, about a dozen participant observation of different events, and much pertinent information and news that were posted on the Internet for over six years. All of the interviews were tape-recorded, and all of the quotations offered in this dissertation are verbatim transcriptions of the interviews.

I also examined the countervailing forces—those factors that could have worked against the decision to migrate or continue remaining in the United States. For example, during the interviews, I asked all of my consultants who indicated that they might return home with the question: “Would you tell me what factors attract you the most? What do you consider are the three important factors that work against your staying in the United

States?” Similarly, the survey participants who indicated or indicated the possibility of returning home, were offered 43 contextual statements (to which they could agree or disagree at various levels) that could have worked against the decision to continue remaining in the United States. Some of the statements included were: “You feel that Nepal needs your service and expertise,” “Your family is in Nepal and you want to be with them,” “Your spouse wants to return to Nepal,” “You sometimes feel that you will never be a part of U.S. society and culture,” “You feel that you will not have any difficulty adjusting with the professional work environment in Nepal,” “You feel that your contributions to the welfare of the country will be duly recognized by your immediate superiors and the political leadership” and so on.

Interviews

During my fieldwork, I interviewed my consultants in the Boston, New York, Washington D. C., and Ann Arbor areas. Quite a few of my high school and college friends lived in Boston, New York and Washington D. C. areas, and some of them had agreed to host me as well as be my gatekeepers during my fieldwork in their respective areas. Though I had cultivated contacts with some of my interview consultants during the 2005 annual convention of the Association of Nepalese in the Americas (held in Dallas), as soon as I was in these areas, I requested my hosts to provide me with some basic information of all the Nepalese graduate students and professionals whom were known to them and were living in their respective areas. Specifically, I was interested in their fields of expertise, their previous work experiences in Nepal, the number of years they had been in the US, gender, age group, and their family and class backgrounds in Nepal. Once a sample pool was created in each site, quota sampling was used to select representatives

from the above mentioned sectors and categories. Almost all of my sampled consultants agreed to be interviewed, and those who refused to participate or those who could not come up with a time that worked for me as well were replaced with other individuals who approximated the nonparticipants with respect to the relevant variables. To avoid systematic bias as a result of working initially through my friendship network, I employed snowball sampling technique at the later stages to interview other participants who were even not known to some of my hosts.

Table 2.1 Interview Locations and Number

Interview Location	Number of Interviews
Boston	18
New York	14
Washington D. C.	12
Ann Arbor	2
Total	46

Semi-structured, face-to-face, and tape-recorded life history interviews were conducted with 46 interview consultants at locations and times of their choosing. I elicited information from each consultant about the economic, political, social, and cultural contexts in Nepal that encouraged their emigration or that discouraged their eventual return. Whenever the interview consultants raised points that were outside the pre-set questions, those points were probed to the extent they were relevant. The

availability of a moderate sized sample from the professional Nepalese immigrant community enabled me to analyze the data according to specific contexts, allowing an evaluation of their effects on emigration or non-return. Table 2.1 details the interview locations and the number of interviews I conducted during my fieldwork.

Participant Observation

In addition to the interviews, I also closely observed the frequent get-togethers of my research subjects, attended one of their annual conventions, and a few private, public, and special events to collect information on their ways of life in the US as well as on their perceptions and reactions to the political developments in Nepal. Since there isn't any spatially organized Nepali community in the United States, most of my fieldwork was based on visiting my hosts, being their guest, and capitalizing on their personal networks as well as any event that were planned in that locality. I conducted most of the interviews and participant observations during the weekends (except the New York City Protest Rally; see Chapter Seven: Protest at Dag Hammarskjold Park). I kept a journal in which I recorded the events and conversations of the day. I also attended the New York City protest program and the Washington DC workshop for Nepali political parties (See Chapters Four and Seven) as an observer and participant observer, and took detailed notes on visual observations as the events unfolded in front of me. Whenever there were speeches or deliberations, I made detailed notes on them as well as on the pertinent conversations I had with other participants.

Mailed Survey

In May 2006, I mailed a twenty-page survey questionnaire to 231 individuals (throughout the United States) who had agreed to participate in my survey. Earlier, at the end of each interview session, I had requested all the interviewees to provide me names, mailing addresses, approximate ages, and areas of expertise of at least ten other Nepali professionals or graduate students whom they knew personally. Many had hectic lives, were quite reluctant to go through their address books after an about an hour of interview, and most of them said that they would let me know later. However, only a few of them provided me the names and contact information of other professional Nepalis and graduate students, and they then were contacted to ascertain whether they would be interested to participate in my survey. Only those individuals who answered affirmatively were included in the survey population. In addition to my pre-established contacts and the list of other Nepali professionals and graduate students that were provided by the interviewees, I also contacted the different expatriate Nepali organizations in the US and asked them to send me a copy of their publicly available brochures/booklets that contained the names and contact information of their members. Unfortunately, only a few of them answered my request. Since the many US based Nepali organizations had their own websites, and many had the names and email addresses of their members listed there, I emailed almost everybody whose emails I could find, and asked them if they would be interested to participate in my research project. Surprisingly, many of them responded affirmatively, and were duly included in the survey population. Initially, I had hoped to have about one thousand names in my survey population and expected to mail my survey questionnaires to about 350-400 individuals. However, by the end of April, I

had only 259 names. Using the simple random sampling method, I selected 231 (80%) names, and mailed them the survey questionnaire along with a postage paid return envelope. By the end of August, 132 (57%) of the individuals returned my survey questionnaire.

The survey was a mixed item self-report measure in which the respondents were asked to answer mostly closed questions and rate items on a 5-point Likert-type scale about the circumstances that encouraged their immigration to the U.S., their possible felt experiences or perceptions of potential marginalization in Nepal's professional work force, the influence of the ongoing leftist insurgency and general unrest, and their notions of comparative satisfaction with their careers and overall life in Nepal and in the United States. It was estimated to take approximately 30-40 minutes to complete this survey, and based on their past experiences in Nepal and their future plans about staying in the US or returning to Nepal, respondents could skip many items that were not pertinent to their individual experiences and circumstances.

Archival Research

The collection, review, and analysis of secondary data were also an equally important element of this dissertation work. Since 2000, I have been proactively collecting information on the ongoing political processes in Nepal, the increasing migration of Nepalis, as well as on the many events, movements, and processes the immigrant Nepalis communities were initiating throughout the world. The sources of these information include Nepalese and international news web portals, Internet articles, Nepalese community web portals, documents and brochures I collected during the 2005 annual convention of the Association of Nepalese in the Americas, the New York City

protest rally, the Washington D.C. workshop, and documents and newsletters mailed to me by some members of the immigrant Nepali communities in the United States.

Data Analysis

After returning from the field, I transcribed all of my interviews, and transferred them as well as my fieldnotes in N-Vivo (QSR 1999) text management program. I coded each of the interviews thematically, both inductively and deductively. In the end, a detailed coding and classification system emerged, and a nested classification strategy was used for filing and cross-referencing all interview data. When all the qualitative data was entered and coded, I generated node reports. These reports revealed the commonalities and trends among multiple respondents, and were used to write substantive chapters of this dissertation. Some examples of the themes I coded deductively were the descriptions of strong desires to pursue higher education in the US, the irresistible influence of siblings, relatives, and friends who were already in the US in increasing this desire, the absence of opportunities to enhance one's skills and careers in Nepal, the experienced and perceived marginalization in Nepal's professional workforce, descriptions of being more satisfied with one's careers and overall life in the US, and the constant insistence by parents of many of my interview consultants to not to return to Nepal. Examples of themes that emerged during the data analysis process are those surrounding the transition period after completing studies in the United States and reversing their earlier intention of returning home, the many opportunities available in the US, and the presence of a wide circle of relatives and friends in the US. Very few themes that contradicted my hypotheses also emerged, and were duly coded. These themes revolved around racism in the United States, nostalgic feelings about Nepal and parents,

and the perceptions that the Maoist insurgency would fade away, and the existence of immense possibilities in the private sector in Nepal.

The survey data complemented the ethnographic data and the respondents were asked to answer mostly closed questions and rate items about the circumstances that encouraged their immigration to the U.S., their felt experiences or perceptions of potential marginalization in Nepal's professional work force, the influence of the ongoing leftist insurgency and general unrest, and their notions of comparative satisfaction with their career and overall life in Nepal and in the United States. The responses to the survey questionnaires were coded and analyzed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). Since I did not have enough and balanced respondents at different levels of sample stratification (for example, there were only 36 graduate students as opposed to 86 working professional; 29 women and 101 men; 19 Nepalese civil servants, 24 University teachers; 11 who worked for the donor community in Nepal, and 20 others) as expected earlier, the data at hand did not provide good power for statistical analysis. However, I ran cross tabulations to identify relations between the cross tabulated variables, and the significant ones were used to complement the ethnographic data. One example of the variables I cross tabulated was the survey respondents' previous work experiences in Nepal and their responses to statements like "You felt that training in the U.S. would be more satisfying to you than training in Nepal or elsewhere," "Your friends and relatives told you that there were better career prospects in the U.S. and advised you to emigrate," and "You feel that Nepal is your *janmabhumi* (place of birth) and the U.S. your *karmabhumi* (place of work)."

CHAPTER THREE: UNITED STATES: THE ULTIMATE “DREAMLAND”

This chapter provides an overview of the research subjects as well as the social contexts that influenced their decisions to emigrate to the United States. I explore how their individual knowledge about the United States, educational aspirations, and presence of siblings, relatives, and friends shaped their outlook and plans for the future. This chapter is not explicitly informed by the theoretical constructs that dominate the rest of this work. However, I present, analyze, and interpret both qualitative and quantitative data that are essential for understanding the rest of the dissertation.

Nepalese Graduate Students and Professionals in the United States: An Introduction

One of the most striking character trait of my research subjects was that a great majority of them were the children of highly educated Nepalese professionals--who also held or had held (before retirement) important positions in the Nepalese bureaucracy or higher education system. A great majority of them were from upper or middle class family backgrounds³⁴, had privileged life while they were in Nepal, had attended leading private high schools in Kathmandu³⁵, and came from Kathmandu or other relatively

³⁴ See Appendix I for discussion on the class structure of Nepal.

³⁵ In general, there are two types of schools in Nepal: public and private. Education at the public schools is almost free and they constitute about 80% of the schools in Nepal. They are owned, managed and operated by Nepal's Ministry of Education and Sports. Though they receive regular government grants and all of their teachers are salaried employees of the Nepalese government, the buildings are usually in dilapidated conditions and they do not have adequate furniture and educational equipments. In these schools, a standardized curriculum is taught throughout the country and the education culminates with the students taking the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exams at the end of the tenth grade. In contrast to the public schools, private schools collect a hefty fee from their students and are managed and operated by private

better off parts of the country. While they were still in Nepal, a significant number of them reported that they already had a sibling, or relatives or close friends in the United States. A great majority of my research subjects were males, were in the 20-39 age group, and an overwhelming majority of them came from Nepal's three elite socio-cultural groups (*Brahmin*, *Chhetri*, and *Newar*), and the remainder came from the country's numerous, but less privileged and underrepresented *Terai* and other ethnic groups. Their ethnic profiles reflected the inequality that existed and still exists in Nepalese society.

My interview consultants whose parents were school teachers or farmers had really struggled for their education, and had attended poorly-staffed, poorly-equipped and poorly-run government high schools. Almost all of the interview consultants from these family backgrounds had taken up odd jobs to support themselves while they attended

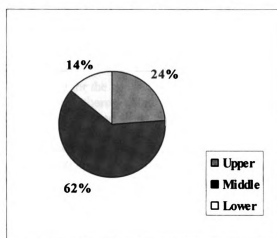


Fig. 3.1 Class Background: Interview Consultants

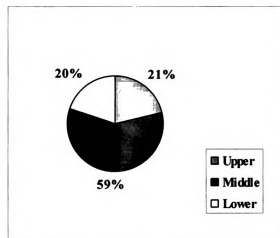


Fig. 3.2 Class Background: Survey Participants

citizens as a non-profit trust or as a company and they do not receive any government grants. Though they can introduce limited advanced curriculums, build modern labs, sports facilities or add educational equipments, they too are required to teach the same standard curriculum taught in government-run schools and their students also have to sit for the government administered SLC exams. The SLC system was designed to 'test' the rote-memory skills of the students rather than providing them with practical life skills. Only 20% of the students from government-run schools make it thorough the SLC exams, and as a result, millions of high school graduates end up with abilities to read newspapers, but without much aptitude to think independently or pursue meaningful careers (Dixit 2002). Nevertheless, the quality of education in the private schools that are concentrated mostly in urban areas are considered better than in public schools and despite their high tuition fees, they are where parents generally prefer to send their children to.

college in Nepal³⁶. One of my pilot study consultants had told me earlier that he had acquired his education by *pappad pelera*³⁷ when I had asked him about his academic history after high school. However, they usually talked about being constantly encouraged by their parents to study and acquire the highest possible academic degree.

Almost all of the interview consultants were exceptionally bright students. They had either secured admission in Nepal's leading medical and engineering schools, or were awarded full scholarships by the Nepalese government or other South Asian countries, or had been offered full or significant amount of scholarships by high-quality US schools like Harvard, Davidson, Swarthmore, Ohio Wesleyan, and Beria to pursue their undergraduate education. As stated earlier, about 28% of the interview consultants had pursued their undergraduate education in the US and a great majority of them had never returned to Nepal to work in a professional capacity. A majority of my research

³⁶ Schooling for the general population of Nepal began only after the fall of the autocratic Rana regime in 1951. In 1951, there were two colleges, about 300 schools, and about ten thousand students in Nepal, by 2004 the country had about forty two thousand schools (including higher secondary), 473 colleges, five universities and two academies of higher studies (<http://www.moe.gov.np/Educational%20Statistics/download%20pdf/Nepal%20in%20Educational%20Figures,%202005.pdf> accessed: 12/1/06). Unfortunately, management, quality, relevance, and access to education remain critical issues of education in Nepal despite the impressive numerical growths in institutions. Disparities based on gender, ethnicity, location, and economic class still determine access to quality education and education *per se*. Higher education in Nepal consists of intermediate, bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. levels. The intermediate level takes two years to complete and depending upon the stream and subject, the duration of a bachelor's level program may vary from three to five years. It generally takes two years to complete a master's program, and the Ph.D. is mostly a dissertation based program (Formal course work for Ph. D. students are not offered in any of the universities and a doctoral degree is awarded after a candidate successfully defends his/her dissertation). Tuition, and room and board fees in the public colleges and universities are nominal. But, they have limited capacities for room and board and most of the students end up renting private rooms and cooking their own meals. Students from rural areas-who are usually poor-and who could not get college/university accommodation, often have to work to pay for their living expenses.

³⁷ Literally, it means, by rolling *pappad*. A pappad is a thin South Asian sun dried wafer, typically made from lentil, chickpea, black gram or rice flour. The dough is shaped into a tortilla-like round and when thoroughly dried, can be cooked by deep-frying, roasting over an open flame, toasting, or microwaving. Pappads are typically served as an accompaniment to a meal, an appetizer or a snack and eaten topped with salsa or other dips. Though delicious to eat, making pappad is a tedious work and people usually roll pappad when they fail to find any alternative source of livelihood. What my consultant meant by the term was that he really had to struggle to support his education.

subjects had some professional work experience in Nepal and only a few reported that they had returned to Nepal after acquiring a professional degree in a developed country. During the time of the fieldwork, a great majority of my research subjects were working in their respective professional fields³⁸. (For a discussion of the survey results on this issue, see Appendix II, section 3.1)

Media, Early Dreams, and Intense Educational Aspirations

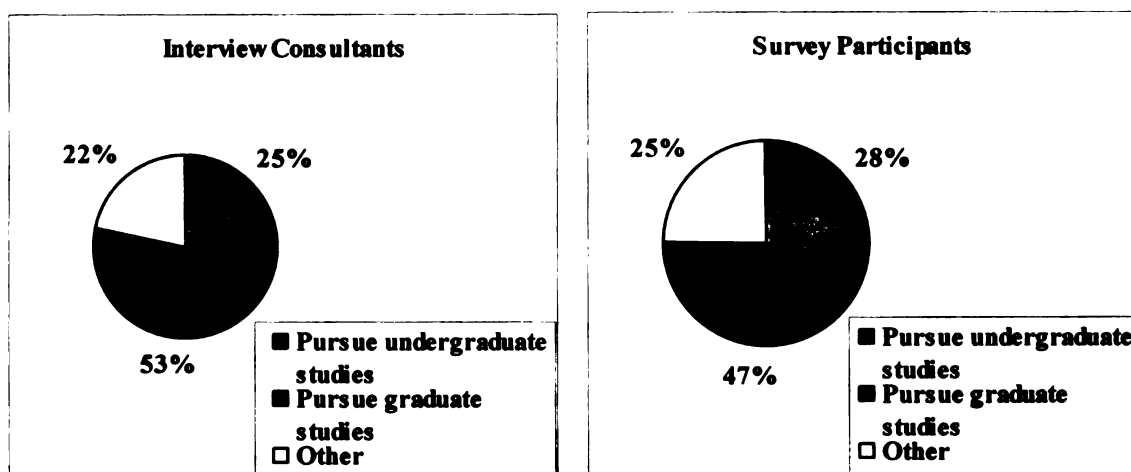
Due to its economic, industrial, and military might, the United States was very much in the Nepalese media during the 60s and 70s. Almost all of my male subjects had a romantic vision about the US and were influenced by the hype. Many of the older consultants were teenagers when the US was locked in a cold war with the former USSR and was desperately trying to prevent independent Third World nations from falling under the sphere of Soviet influence. Along with the former USSR and China, the US also attempted to influence the perceptions of the Nepalese masses about itself, most notably, *vis-à-vis* the Soviets. In addition to the many aid projects the US had in Nepal, it also published a colorful magazine called “The Free World” in the Nepali language about three or four times a year. I was very young then and I also saw some of these magazines that contained colorful pictures and stories that demonstrated how technologically advanced the US was, and also how good life was in the US. In addition to these, documentaries about the US were also routinely screened in Nepalese towns. One of my consultants, Dr. Gautam fondly recalled watching one of them in the town where he was living as a boy. It showed Neil Armstrong setting his foot on the moon for the very first time and this had left a lasting impression on him. He told me that from then onwards, he

³⁸ A great majority of them were in the fields of engineering, medicine and related natural sciences.

looked at the US as a place that he must visit one day. He conceded that he was so much influenced by the psychology of power that whenever he saw a White person in his town, he would go and ask if he or she were an American. Once, a White man turned out to be a Russian and he laughed heartily when he recalled how mad that Russian had been with him.

In the sixties and seventies, it was obviously natural for people like Dr. Gautam who were growing up in the larger towns of Nepal as a boy to be aware of the United States and be influenced by its power. In the mid-eighties, television was introduced in the urban areas of Nepal and the Nepalese masses were seeing visual images of the US, and other countries most of them probably had never heard about before. In addition to world news, Western detective television serials were routinely aired on Nepal television. Soon afterwards, video cassette recorders became widely available and video rental stores renting pirated Western and Hindi movies cropped up like mushrooms in the Nepalese capital. By the early nineties, satellite dishes had made their way in the Nepalese media space and American channels like CNN, Discovery, NBC Sports, and MTV were widely watched by the Nepalese urbanites. One of my high school friend who was visiting home in the early nineties for the first time after finishing his undergraduate studies in the US was totally shocked when he discovered that his siblings regularly watched MTV on the family television. American media and music had become a part of everyday life of the urban youths in Nepal. In an interesting revelation, 46% of my survey participants reported that they were exposed to the life, work, and the associated affluence for a professional in the US through various means and were attracted by them, and that it was important or very important in their decision to come to the US. The figures for the

survey participants who were from the upper and middle class families--families that obviously had more access to various media sources--checking important or very important to this statement were 58 and 52 percents respectively.



Figs. 3.3 and 3.4. Original Purpose of coming to the US

Despite the differences in their family backgrounds and the stage in their life-phases when they realized that they should pursue further education in the US, most of my consultants were very much determined to come to the US. One of the interesting and common feelings many of my consultants had was that they had dreamt about coming to the US long before they actually started to work on their US college/university applications. During the course of the interviews, it became apparent to me that most of the consultants were extremely ambitious, intelligent, as well as diligent individuals. About 90% of the men and 50% of the women said that they came to the US to pursue further education. Similarly, about 75% of the survey participants also reported that their original purpose of coming to the US was to pursue further education. About 25% of my interview consultants and about 28% of my survey participants came to the US to pursue their undergraduate education at a tender age. Even then, my consultants mentioned that

they knew what they really wanted to do in life and also had realized that the opportunities to follow their passion in Nepal or other South Asian countries were either non-existent or very limited. Similarly, 77% of the survey participants who came to the US to pursue graduate studies and 88% of those who were university teachers in Nepal attributed the absence of possibilities to enhance their knowledge and skills in their particular areas of interest and the inadequacy of resources to pursue their passions as one of the reasons that prompted them to come to the US. About 80% of all the survey respondents stated that the desire to learn the latest developments in their fields of interest were important or very important in their decision to come to the US. Almost all of my consultants who were in the field of engineering said that they came to the US with the intention of exploring and learning cutting-edge technology and 80% of those who came to pursue graduate studies stated that they wanted to learn the latest developments in their field or area of interest.

About half of both the interview consultants and survey participants stated that they came to the US to pursue graduate degrees. About 67% of my interview consultants who had acquired their undergraduate degrees outside US were involved in professional work in Nepal and about half of them stated that they had felt that the academic credentials and skills they had at hand were not sufficient to work effectively, and that it also hindered their overall professional performance, obstructed professional development and opportunities for promotions. Almost all of them knew and strongly felt that if they were to make any meaningful contribution in their respective fields or to reach the major decision making positions, they needed to pursue further education abroad. However, some admitted that they were so naïve that they had even taken

additional courses in their undergraduate studies in Nepal and later, had joined the Nepalese civil service and the university system with the one and only expectation that doing so would make things easier for them to come to the US.

Eighty percent of my survey participants felt that training in the US would be more satisfying for them than training in Nepal or elsewhere. Ninety percent of those who came to the US as undergraduate students indicated that this perception of satisfaction in their professional training was important or very important in their decision to come to the US. Seventy five percent of all the survey participants felt that there was more prestige attached to US training and that they would have a wide choice of fields in the US than in any other country. The perception of having more prestige attached to US training was particularly high among those who came from lower class family backgrounds (88%). About 80% of the survey respondents stated that the desire to pursue the highest possible degree was important or very important in bringing them to the US. This desire was particularly strong among those who came to pursue graduate studies (91%) and those who were university teachers in Nepal (91%). Over 60% of my survey participants who had earned their doctorate degrees (n=8) in other countries also felt that training in the US would be more satisfying than elsewhere, that there was more prestige attached to US training, that they would have a wide choice of fields in the US than in any other country, and wanted to learn the latest developments in their field or areas of interest.

The “Demonstration Effect:” Presence of Siblings, Relatives, and Friends in the United States and the Availability of Scholarships/Assistantships

When I myself was preparing to come to the US, I frequently visited the library of the United States Educational Foundation in Nepal (USEF/N). Using the internet was still a very expensive affair back then and the USEF/N had almost all the information an aspiring student would need to apply for undergraduate or graduate studies in the US. On one particular day, I was working late and all other visitors had already left the library. The last office staff member was preparing to close the facility and I found myself alone chatting with the educational advisor. Just as the door of the building was about to be closed, a young college girl in her twenties rushed in and asked for the “email address” of Stanford University. Almost frantically, she said that one of her closest friends had been offered undergraduate admission with full scholarship at Stanford and she wanted to apply there too. The educational advisor and I looked at each other in disbelief, and both of us literally wanted to roar with laughter. Nevertheless, we suppressed our feelings and he politely told the girl that she needs to do some serious homework before she applies to Stanford or any other school, and told her to come some other day for advice as the library was about to be closed down.

Most of my interview consultants probably did not experience such an adrenaline gushing moment like that girl did. But, almost all of them reported that the influence of peers, siblings, and relatives who were already in the United States among my consultants was just immense. My older consultants talked about being influenced by their teachers or seniors who were pursuing graduate studies in the US. Consultants who had acquired their undergraduate education in other South Asian countries reported

noticing that most of their teachers had studied in the US. From this exposure, they had learned that the US had one of the best educational programs in the world. Those who had mostly studied in Nepal and were working in a professional capacity reported that they were influenced by their colleagues who had acquired higher education in the US or other developed countries. Siblings, relatives, friends, teachers and colleagues who had studied in the US were looked on as role models. Consultants whose parent/s had studied or worked or had been on visits to the US or other developed countries reported that they were relentlessly encouraged by them to pursue their higher education in the US.

Almost all of the younger consultants who came to the US to pursue their undergraduate education reported that the presence of their siblings, relatives, and friends in the US or other developed countries increased their desire to come to the US for their own higher education. Those who already had their siblings in the US reported that they viewed coming to the US as the next stepping stone in their academic trajectories.

Twenty percent of my survey participants reported that the presence of most of their immediate family members and relatives was important or very important in their decision to come to the US. And it was very common for my interview consultants to mention having a brother in Pittsburgh, a sister in Atlanta, and a couple of cousins in the East and West coasts. Emigration to the US had become a collective experience to a significant portion of my research subjects. Furthermore, the smartness, the logic they had in their arguments, and the length and breadth of knowledge their siblings, relatives, and friends demonstrated when they were on visits to Nepal made them even more determined to come to the US. In addition, their presence in the US and their visits to Nepal made pertinent information readily available.

Besides these, the availability of scholarships at the undergraduate level and mostly assistantships and limited scholarships at the graduate level were also reported to be one of the major reasons that made the US so alluring. In general, it is impossible for a Nepali middle-class family to send its children to US colleges at its own expense. In fact, almost all of my research subjects would not have been able to emigrate to the US had they not been awarded scholarships and assistantships. Sixty percent of my interview consultants and 57% of the survey participants who came to pursue their undergraduate education were awarded almost full scholarships by US colleges and universities. The level of support extended by US universities to those who came to pursue graduate degrees was even higher. Seventy seven percent of both the interview consultants and survey participants were offered graduate assistantships or scholarships by the universities they attended or were still attending. When asked to indicate how important were the scholarships awarded by the US government or work/study opportunities offered by US universities in their decision to come to the US, 70% of all the survey participants who answered that question indicated that it was important or very important. The figures for graduate students, those who came from lower class family backgrounds, and those who were in the university service in Nepal checking important or very important in response to this statement were even higher. They were 86, 82, and 86 percents respectively.

Visa Issues

Even though I did not have a single question regarding visa issues of my interview consultants, about 30% of them mentioned about the visas that were issued to them prior to coming to the US. Those who came to the US as permanent residents (7%),

or on J-1 or H-1 visas (7%), or business/tourist visas (22%) were upfront about the visas they had before they left Nepal. However, as the interviews progressed and when they started talking about how they came to the US, it became apparent that 65% of them had entered the US on student visas. Out of forty six interview consultants, only one mentioned that his visa application was initially rejected by the US consulate in Kathmandu. Approximately 12% of my survey participants reported that being selected as permanent residents by the US government was important or very important in their decisions to come to the US. However, only 22% of my survey participants indicated that the ease with which they were issued their work or student visas was important or very important in their decisions to come to the US. It is quite interesting to note that the more education or skills they had before leaving Nepal, the more likely were they to report that they acquired their visas relatively easily. The figures for those who came to the US as undergraduate students, graduate students, to work, and other category were 52, 55, 67, and 39 percents respectively.

Conclusions

The data I have presented in the sections above illustrates the various contexts that were reported to have encouraged the emigration of my research subjects to the United States. An overwhelming majority of them came to the US to pursue further education and remained after completing their academic programs. In general, my research subjects were extremely intelligent, diligent, as well as ambitious individuals, and a great majority of them were working professionals. While they were still in Nepal, various media sources, friends, and family members who had been to the US or who were still in the US had exposed them to the life, work, and the associated affluence for a

professional in the United States and they were attracted by them. The presence of siblings, relatives, friends, colleagues and teachers had further reinforced their desires to come to the US. The desire to pursue the highest possible degree was particularly intense among those who were from lower class families, were university teachers in Nepal, and were employees of the donor community in Nepal.

CHAPTER FOUR: MARGINALITY AND STATE INDIFFERENCE

From the pleasant surroundings of my school in Nepal's very remote district of Dolpa, I have been trying to develop myself for nearly 10 years, constantly dreaming of doing something good for my society and country. But however hard I try, neither progress nor prosperity is in sight. From junior classes, I used to weave a lot of dreams. I was enchanted by all those descriptions of high-rise buildings, hospitals, telephones, computers, buses and railways in the textbooks. "Why doesn't our village and school have those facilities?" I used to ask my teacher. "One day your dream will come true," he would say with a smile. "All these things are, after all, the creation of human beings." The assurance that these basic human necessities available in other parts of the world would one day reach my remote locality was uplifting.

However, I somehow feel that the wait is going to be far too long. Therefore, I begin to think again. "If only my wishes came true, how nice it would be!" Sometimes, I reach the capital - Kathmandu - in my dream - sometimes I travel in the bus and sometimes in an aero plane. I also dream of using the computer and the internet, and sometimes I even find myself having a stroll on the Moon. But when I wake up in the morning and find myself in bed, I feel sad. Will all those modern amenities remain only in the books for me? No, it does not have to be that way. Like the world's scientists and scholars, I, too, want to create. More so because Graham Bell's telephone, James Watt's railway, the Wright Brothers' aero plane and all those other modern creations could never ever become the whole world's. Yet at a time when we need to compete with the world in such constructive areas, we are unwittingly engaged in violence and confrontation.

If only my wishes came true, I would uproot the entire cause of violence and consign it to death forever. Then joining our hands in friendship and unity, we would proceed ahead in the path of equitable development. The cars monopolized by the streets of Kathmandu and Pokhara would then start running on smooth roads in Dolpa. Why only helicopters and Twin Otters (a 16 seated twin-engine aero plane manufactured in Canada) Avros (MacDonald Douglas DC-3) and jets would then land on the beautiful fields of my village. And then in internet chats, I would describe Dolpa to my friend, Mr Jones, studying in some college in Britain. Anyone living in any corner of the world should be able to experience the beauty of Caravan [a film featuring Dolpa, which was nominated for an Oscar in 2000]. These hills and peaks, river banks and plains should be connected with cable cars and contain modern facilities. The Edmund Hillaries and Sherpa Tenzings would then travel through the fields of Dolpa and its underground rail before climbing Everest. If my wishes were to come true, my country should truly be known as "Shangri-La"³⁹.

After the fall of the *Rana* regime in 1951, the idea of a modern state was introduced in Nepal (Goodall 1975: 892). Accordingly, a central secretariat was established in the former residence of the hereditary *Rana* prime ministers. Ministries

³⁹ This essay was written by a 16 year old boy, Ankalal Chalaune, and was entitled "If only my wishes came true..." Ankalal had not left his remote village in north-west Nepal until a recent essay won a prize in a competition organized by the BBC Nepali service. He had not seen a bicycle, a car, or a telephone until he traveled to the region's main town, Nepalgunj to record his essay for a radio program. (Translated by Rabindra Mishra, BBC Nepali service January 31, 2007)

were introduced, and under them, departments responsible for executive action were installed. In addition, the country's first budgets were prepared, cabinets appointed, civil service rules promulgated, and economic development plans were announced (Ibid). The Ministries were and still are the country's policy making bodies, and the more than three dozen departments operating under them are the lead organizations for implementation of the policies. For example, improving access to potable water of all Nepalese citizens was, and still is, an objective of the department where I once was an employee. Accordingly, the Nepalese Ministry of Housing and Physical Works makes plans and policies to meet this objective. Then, it instructs and provides the necessary funds to the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage to execute this plan. The department, in turn, mobilizes its equipment and engineers to construct the system that will deliver potable water to the target population, or oversee the construction work if it has been assigned to a private contractor.

It is in this chain of events--planning, construction, maintenance, and delivery of services--that Nepalese civil servants are supposed to play a key role. As such, Nepalese civil servants are the duty-bearers of the nation, and are expected, at least in theory, both by the Nepalese government and Nepalese citizens to bring about social and economic changes, speed up the modernization process, and provide expert advice to government ministers in policy making by being politically neutral and adhering to the prevalent rules and regulations of the country (Ojha 2007). As Ojha (2007), a Nepalese civil servant himself, puts it, "Civil Service in Nepal is the process by which objectives are defined, plans and policies formulated, institutions are created and managed, human energies mobilized, resources utilized and changes are brought about." In addition, civil servants

are also the *key individuals* who provide essential services like health care, veterinary medicine, agricultural input, construct essential infrastructures and maintain them, advise and facilitate the development of cottage and small scale industries in the country and so on. Due to the absence of a strong private sector in the country, Nepalese civil servants are usually the only service providers in many parts of the country. For example, if someone gets sick or has to undergo surgery, the government hospitals where the doctors (civil servant) work are the only facilities where a patient can get health care⁴⁰. The same holds true for animal health care, agriculture, electricity, water supply, educational and other services. In essence, civil servants are the individuals who cater to the needs and aspirations of the country and its citizens like Ankalal Chalaune, whose essay I have quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Due to their unparalleled importance in Nepalese society, I am mostly devoting this chapter to the discussion of data provided by research subjects who were ex-civil servants of Nepal.

The Nepalese civil service has been, and still remains the largest employer of the nation's highly skilled citizens. By 1990, it had 9,430 offices and 100,638 civil servants⁴¹ (HMG 1991). However, it is plagued by a lack of long-term political vision, unnecessary political interference, slow decision-making processes, exclusion of socially disadvantaged people, rampant corruption, low morale, and the stagnant knowledge base of its employees (Ojha 2007). Furthermore, the institutions of *chakari* and *afno manche*, which are deeply rooted Nepalese social values, are also highly institutionalized in the

⁴⁰ There are limited private health clinics in Kathmandu and other small towns, but they are beyond the reach of an average Nepali citizen.

⁴¹ This figure also includes the clerical staff.

Nepalese administrative system⁴² (Bista: 1991). *Chakari* refers to institutionalized sycophancy. It is an essential concept within Hinduism and means to wait upon, to serve, to appease, or to seek favor from god. It was officially introduced during the Rana period, mainly as a form of control designed to keep potential rivals or opponents away from belligerent activities. The potential rivals of the Ranas were required to spend time generally in attendance at the Rana palaces, where at certain hours, the Ranas would be able to see them and know that they were not fomenting trouble somewhere else. The hours set aside for this purpose were also known as *chakari*, and were usually done in the afternoons in a very formal manner (Ibid).

With the fall of the Ranas, *chakari* was formally abolished. However, it had firmly planted itself as an integral feature of Nepali society, and is evident at all levels of the government (Bista 1991:89-90). *Chakari* is usually performed at the house of the person (who is usually a political leader in power or high-level government functionary) from whom personally beneficial favors (like a promotion or a job or a transfer to another department) are being sought. In addition to being physically present and offering honorific greetings, *chakari* also includes offering gifts, either material or services or assurances of reciprocal favors (Ibid). For example, by resorting to the institutions of *chakari* and *afno manche*, it is possible for an entry level engineer to be posted in an office of his choice and be assigned to manage a donor-driven multi-million dollar project, or be sent on a government scholarship to study abroad even if there are legitimate and more competent candidates, or get speedy promotions. Ironically, this is what usually happens and those who do not visit the houses of political and bureaucratic

⁴² The Nepalese civil service is the major component of Nepalese administrative system. The other major administrative system is that of the numerous parastatal organizations.

stalwarts of the country to appease them, i.e., refrain from resorting to the social institutions of *chakari* and *afno manche*, are essentially left out or excluded from any meaningful participation even if they are qualified to do so. Similarly, a politician or a high level bureaucrat with a big circle of *afno manche* can divert a significant amount of state resources for the sole benefit of his/her constituency or village or even his own street. As two Nepali scholars note (Shaha 1982; Dangal 2005), access to power as well as proximity to the sources of power have been the most important prerequisites for reaching higher administrative positions, and informal sources (like *chakari* and *afno manche*), rather than formal rules usually influence administrative decisions.

As discussed in chapter two, Nepal has a tragic history of extremely violent intrigues, a culture of decapitation, and political exclusion. Decimating one's opponents and assigning key government positions to one's own family members and confidantes were the norm. After the autocratic Rana rule came to an end in 1951, major political protagonists and parties (except the Maoists in recent years) largely exuviated the practice of slaughtering their opponents. However, the culture of political exclusion and assigning important government positions to one's own family members, confidantes, and government functionaries who pledged loyalty to political parties (Upadhyaya: 2004) remained a fundamental defining characteristic of Nepalese politics and administration, even during the ostensibly democratic era of the 1990s.

In this chapter, I will use the anthropological concepts of the "Self" and "Other" to illustrate how my research subjects and myself (as a one-time member of Nepal's professional cadre) construct an identity of a marginalized-professional "Self" in opposition to the entrenched and negative elite "Other" in the professional work setting

of Nepal, and how this construction of the marginalized-professional Self was primarily responsible for encouraging the former's and my own emigration to the United States. Specifically, I will build this chapter on the works of Basso (1979) and Hess (1993), and argue that one of the fundamental reasons why many Nepali professionals leave Nepal is that they are unwilling to work under Nepal's ruling elites whom they portray as the major problem of the country. One of the defining character traits of my research subjects who were members of Nepal's professional cadre earlier was that many identified themselves as marginalized selves while they were in Nepal. In particular, they felt that they were not allowed to assume a constructive role in the country's development process by the country's ruling elites, whose work culture they found immoral and often irrational. The Nepalese elite Other is a symbol of what the immigrant ex-professional Nepali cadre is not. It is in these contexts that I am building on the works of Basso (1979) and Hess (1993) and using the dialogical concept of Self/Other to understand the identity construction processes of the immigrant professional Nepalese cadre. I hope to demonstrate that by analyzing the marginalized identity construction process of the Nepalese professional Self, we can better understand a complex human "problem" -- Nepal's ruling elites and why Nepal continues to be one of the least developed countries of the world.

In his book "Portraits of "the Whiteman," Basso (1979) describes and analyzes Cibecue Apache joking incidents in which an abstract and uniformalized "Whiteman" representing Caucasian Americans are imitated, and through these imitations, significant cultural messages are communicated. According to Basso, 'the Whiteman' is a social category and a cultural symbol (p.4), and serves as a conspicuous vehicle for conceptions

that define what ‘the Indian’ is not (p. 5). In these animated representations, a performer adopts the role of “the Whiteman,” usually a physician, or an official of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or a school teacher, and parodies the typical “Whiteman’s” approaches to one of his Apache peers. Apaches find the approaches of “the Whiteman” puzzling, disturbing, and culturally wrong, and the performers portray Anglo-Americans as insincere, self-centered, arrogant, and ignorant. The filtered messages the Indian Selves derive from the performances: the Other or “the Whiteman” is a “problem.” Similarly, Hess (1993) shows that competing groups (New Agers, skeptics, and parapsychologists) represent themselves as fundamentally different from their Others (p. 43). Specifically, the Other is constructed as a negative, located in a distant space and past, mechanistic, possessing less knowledge, having an outdated and non-holistic view of science, irrational, complex, disorderly, pathological, commercial, material and so on. In striking contrast, the Self is represented as a future-oriented explorer, scientific, untainted by material interests and irrational needs, underdogs working against great odds, pioneers blazing the trail towards new forms of knowledge, optimistic, open-minded, rational, and so on.

As stated earlier, many of my interview consultants who were once members of Nepal’s professional cadre, constructed their identities as marginalized selves in opposition to an entrenched and negative elite Other. The attributes they used to characterize themselves and Nepal’s elite Other were remarkably similar to those used by the Cibecue Apache Indians (Basso 1979) and the New Agers, skeptics, and parapsychologists (Hess 1993). In this context, I believe that the dialogical concept of Self/Other relationships is the most effective framework for understanding why many of

my research subjects who were Nepali professionals, were so unhappy, frustrated, and felt excluded and marginalized in Nepal, and why they eventually decided to emigrate to or settle down in the United States after a temporary visit. However, the concepts of Self/Other should be used with caution to analyze the identity construction processes, because human groups often are inclined to regard their Others as inferior, insignificant, incorrect, and dangerous. Furthermore, 'identity is always a temporary and unstable effect of relations which define identities by marking differences' (Grossberg 1996: 89). The concepts of Self/Other are one out of many ways in which we construct the reality of ourselves and others, and the world around us. For example, both Basso and Hess do not totally accept the accuracy of the Self constructions of the "heroes" of their narratives. Basso makes it clear that the Western Apache jokers follow principles like exaggeration and essentializing to construct their "Self," and in the process, distort the versions of the "Others" in key ways. Furthermore, he acknowledges that jokes often occur in a context of drinking and only between persons having a "soft" relationship, i.e. persons with whom they can risk sharing them. Similarly, Hess shows that the three competing groups: New Agers, skeptics, and parapsychologists all claim cultural authority of science in support of their respective positions. Each community achieves its socially and culturally constructed definition of the "Self" by representing itself as more scientific and rational than the two ideologically opposed and less scientific and irrational "Others." As Hall (1991: 21) puts it: 'Identity is a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself.' In other words, the discourses of the Self and Other are not necessarily totally accurate representations of the Self or Other.

The current chapter provides an in-depth account of marginality, and state indifference as I myself have observed as well as those experienced by some of these *key individuals*--who were also essentially spectators of the Nepalese bureaucratic culture. First, I provide a detailed analysis of my research subject's perspectives on their professional work in Nepal. Then, I complement this analysis by Personal Narrative I, which is a reflection on my previous "job" as an official sociologist of the Nepalese government. Personal Narrative II is my observation of the Nepali political processes since 1990 as well as an account of the country's grounded realities. These personal narratives provide essential background information for understanding the narratives (of my interview consultants) that will follow. Then, I provide representative narratives of three consultants who came to the US to continue their studies firmly determined to return home as soon as their studies were completed, but ended up settling down in their host country. Next, I move on to describe the culture of indifference exhibited by Nepal's prominent political figures--several of whom happened to be in New York and Washington DC during the time of my fieldwork. The last section of this chapter provides an account of the indifference Nepalese university and social service officials displayed toward a well-established consultant when he offered his professional expertise and other resources to help the country. In the discussion section, quantitative data gathered from the survey will also be presented and analyzed. I will conclude the chapter with a discussion of how the construction of a marginalized identity in the professional Nepalese work force provides the impetus for remaining in the United States.

Low Job Satisfaction and High System Dissatisfaction

As stated earlier, about 60% of my interview consultants had work experience in the professional workforce of Nepal. Out of this, 60% of them expressed low satisfaction with their respective jobs. Excluding those who were in the medical field (22%) and the university system (11%), being assigned hodge-podge work or direct work that had little to do with their earlier professional training, and lack of work that were worthwhile, challenging, exciting, and encouraging were what my consultants had experienced in the Nepalese bureaucracy, parastatal organizations, as well as in the United Nations office in Kathmandu. According to them, almost nothing was designed and run based on their decisions, nor were they involved in creating any visions. One of my consultants who had joined the Nepalese bureaucracy with much excitement immediately after finishing his bachelor's degree in civil engineering conceded that professional satisfaction declined from the moment he was given his first assignment. Another summarized his work experience at the state-owned Nepal Television as: "... there wasn't any work that kept us busy and we just waited for the clock to strike five ... we just passed time there, drank tea, and talked."

Two of my interview consultants who had returned to Nepal with a "Let's go, do a lot of work" mood after acquiring their undergraduate degrees in the US reported that they were extremely disappointed when their sincere, but naïve ambitions did not materialize as they had expected. Within days at work, both of them reported that they understood the extent of productive work they could do in Nepal. They reported that they realized the limited scope for productive work, and the extremely low productivity of the organizations they were in, which in turn, also stymied their productivity. And, this was

the primary source of their overall dissatisfaction. It was not only the Nepalese bureaucracy and its other sister organizations that were reported to be very bureaucratic and inefficient, but three of my consultants who had work experiences with the United Nations office in Kathmandu also reported that things were mismanaged, and the system was bureaucratic, and inefficient there too. Similar to the construction of the Other by the New Agers, skeptics, and parapsychologists (Hess 1993), my research subjects also constructed the system managed and run by the Nepalese government, and by implication, the elite Other as disorderly, illogical, inefficient, and unscientific.

Similarly, about 40% of the survey participants reported that dissatisfaction with their jobs or prospective jobs was important or very important in their decisions to come to the US. Another 56% of them also reported that their jobs or prospective jobs did not offer the level of professional challenge they desired. The figures for the men, those who were employed in the Nepalese bureaucracy or the donor community checking important or very important in response to this statement were even higher. They were 60 (women: 46%), 68, and 73 percents respectively. My survey participants who were Nepalese civil servants were a unique sub-population. When their responses to the various questions regarding their job experiences in Nepal were compared to that of other participants (those who had worked in the university system, the donor community or other private organizations), there were striking contrasts. In spite of being the officer corps of the Nepalese bureaucracy and supposedly being entrusted with the tasks of leading the country, a significantly higher percentage of them indicated that they were somewhat or very dissatisfied with their jobs (36% vs. 13%: 18% : 20%). Similarly, a strikingly lower percentage of them felt like an important person in their own department/unit (44% vs.

61%: 91%: 80%), felt that their skills were being utilized (32% vs. 65%: 82%: 74%), and reported that they had excellent or good opportunities for promotions (12% vs. 43%: 63%: 50%). Similarly, when their responses to the various *contextual* statements that might have led to their emigration to the US were compared to that of their counterparts working outside the Nepalese bureaucracy, a significantly higher percentage of them indicated that the salary they were receiving was not sufficient to lead a decent life for themselves and their families (81% vs. 39%: 20%: 18%), they felt that they could earn and save more, and enjoy a better life in the US than in Nepal (71% vs. 48%: 70%: 29%), were not satisfied with their jobs (50% vs. 32%: 27%: 44%), and saw limited future prospects for their areas of expertise in Nepal (73% vs. 64%: 55%: 61%).

Fifty percent of my interview consultants who had professional work experiences in Nepal expressed strong dissatisfaction with the existing scheme of things in Nepal. Insensitive and unresponsive bureaucracy, unwarranted political intrusion in the professional work space, the existence of an unjust system and the culture of corruption and favoritism that it has helped to ossify in the bureaucratic and political systems, and the donor-driven development programs were some of the issues my interview consultants strongly expressed their dissatisfactions with. Thirty six percent of my survey participants who had work experiences in Nepal indicated that their dissatisfaction with the policies adopted by the successive Nepalese governments were important or very important on their decisions to emigrate to the US. Thirty nine percent of them also indicated that politicization of the work place was important or very important in their decision to come to the US. The figures for those who came to work in the US, those who had worked with the Nepalese government, and those who were in the university system

in Nepal checking important or very important in response to this statement were even higher. They were 58, 44, and 50 percents respectively.

When asked about his professional work experience in Nepal, Sameer, one of my consultants who had worked in a government-owned industry and who strongly articulated his feelings, reported that he did not have much say there and that there was too much bureaucracy. If he needed something, it was like he had to go all the way through. Even when he had to ask the peon--the lowest ranking staff in the Nepalese bureaucratic hierarchy--to do some official work, he had to think twice. And the unwarranted political intrusion in the professional setting, according him, was just “too much, really too much”. Out of many bitter experiences, he recounted one to illustrate how frustrating and demoralizing it was.

Once, there was a close person of a local politician. He used to come to work, and had a night shift. But, instead of working, he used to go to bed. He did not care about anything actually, and he wasn't assigned any responsibilities. He was a kind of overhead employee, he was just an extra and did not do any work. This was going on okay with him until I came into the scene. When we were working in the same shift, I told him that his ways would not work with me. Others started to complain (about him), and in one shift, about three to four hundred of us used to work. I was the engineer and was the highest official in the entire workforce working on that shift. I had to manage the overall functioning (of the industry) and it was wrong to tell someone to work while another was sleeping soundly. I did not allow him to sleep and there was no point in being afraid of the politicians. The conflict started from there. What I did was that I changed his job location from the department he was in earlier. Generally, sugar industries operate during the winter season and the local people of the *Terai* relatively feel the cold more. I moved him to a place where there wasn't any shade, where it would be cold, and that he could not sleep. When the sugarcane is fed in the conveyor belt, they fall down here and there, and they should be picked up and fed again. This should have made him alert every time. Even if there weren't any work, he could not sleep. I put him in that kind of position. After that, the general manager called me and asked him to be relocated elsewhere. Then I asked him what would I tell the other workers if I relocated him? That I would let him sleep again? Then I requested him (the general manager) to bar him from coming to the factory except to collect his paycheck. Because, he had no work to do there and did nothing as well, and it was like that things would move even without him. Actually, even in a better way. I also told him that maybe, the factory should send his salary right to his home. After saying this, the general manager could not bypass me directly. Then, the chief engineer requested me, and then the local level politician came to the factory and asked who I was, and even threatened to fix me. What I told him was that it was not like that I should go and compromise with him (the staff). Then later, the management changed his shift. I was in the C shift and they moved him to the B shift. After that, I don't know, but it was a small conflict with a local politician, which otherwise should have been a trivial issue. (NY1M30BRPNY4: September 2005)

By providing an account of the Nepalese elite Other's local manifestations (the peon and the local politician in question) and terming their professionally and institutionally wrong intrusion in the professional setting as "too much, really too much," Sameer portrayed the Nepalese elite Others in a similar manner the Apache Indians characterized "the Whiteman" (Hess 1979) as self-centered, arrogant, and unconcerned about his sentiments as well as the wellbeing of the industry that produced sugar for the country. Furthermore, the Nepalese elite Other's conduct was characterized as morally wrong, and the milieu they found themselves in as suffocating. An unjust system perpetuated by the Nepalese elite Other was what my consultants who were civil servants earlier talked about the most. Dr. Gautam, who at present is a faculty at Harvard University used to be a section officer at the department of statistics in Nepal's National Planning Commission. While there, he had strongly felt that there wouldn't be any justice for him as long as the situation in Nepal and the political system remained the same. My other consultant, Dr. Saurav, who also had worked for the Nepalese government termed his decision to come to the US as a "bold step" and also said that he was compelled by a "desperate situation." Though he did not use the word "suffocating" to describe how he had felt while he was still in Nepal and working for the Nepalese government, but from his emotional description, that was exactly what he had felt. According to him, it was the bureaucratic culture of the government, the culture of corruption, and the overall political and social culture that was not conducive for him to stay there than the job *per se*. After going through all these, at some point, he could not take them anymore and decided to emigrate to the US. About thirty years ago, he emigrated to the US without any intention of returning home. He knew no one in the US at the time of his arrival, and recalled with

deep sadness, how difficult it had been for him to leave behind his family and country on one hand, and start a completely new life in the other.

Out of my forty six interview consultants, only two expressed their dissatisfaction with Nepal's development efforts and the associated institution and practice of foreign aid⁴³. Statistically, these might be outlier cases. However, the ideas of development and foreign aid are so prominent in Nepal's development discourse and national strategy that it would be unjust to treat them as such. Rather than leading the present discussion astray, I believe it will help provide a window on how the Nepalese bureaucracy and the foreign aid regime operate in Nepal. Currently, a proud co-owner of a leading health software firm based in Boston, Dr. Ramesh had to struggle against many odds in his initial days to establish himself in the US. At the time of my fieldwork, ten Nepalese software engineers were working for his firm in the US. Sixty more were working in his branch office in Nepal, and he had plans to increase that number to 200 to 300 within the next two to three years. He is one of the very rare transnational Nepali who straddles the globe and has one foot in Nepal and the other in the US at the same time. He was also one of my few consultants who had bits and pieces of work experiences in the Nepalese

⁴³ Like a great majority of Nepal's educated class, many of my interview consultants were also oblivious about the development practices in Nepal, as well as how the institution and practice of foreign aid operated there. The only way to learn about them for the average educated Nepali is either to read scholarly work (as far as I am aware of, the only university departments in Nepal that require their students to read them are the departments of geography, and sociology/anthropology at Tribhuvan University) or be a civil servant in any ministry of the Nepalese government where there is a direct infusion of foreign aid, and *be involved in* or *observe* the ongoing development practices, or be employed by the donor agencies and be in a position to *observe* how the aid is infused. For example, a fresh medical or engineering school graduate who joins the Nepalese civil service and gets posted in a far flung district, probably will not have a clear understanding of the country's development processes and the role foreign aid plays in it. I was not surprised at all when many of my interview consultants did not mention Nepal's foreign aid driven development efforts during the interviews. One of (out of only two) my consultants who expressed his dissatisfaction with Nepal's development efforts and the associated institution and practice of foreign aid had been a part of a Nepalese bureaucracy where there was massive infusion of foreign aid, and had observed how it operated. The other was a student of sociology, and had read about, and was aware about Nepal's development efforts and the institution and practice of foreign aid in Nepal.

government, the donor community, and in the private sector. By profession, he was a computer engineer and when I asked him how satisfied he was with his professional work experience in Nepal, he jumped straight into the development and foreign aid issue, located the Nepalese elite Others running the government in a distant space and the past like the New Agers, skeptics, and parapsychologists did, and portrayed them as detached from the grounded realities of Nepal, possessing less knowledge, having an outdated and non-holistic view of issues at hand, and irrational.

What happens is that, in Nepal, I was a consultant in the irrigation support sector for (computer) system set up for the department of irrigation...for different systems; irrigation management, computer system, inventory management, budget management and so on. The World Bank was helping them (department of irrigation) to set up everything. So, the thing is that it was enforced by somebody else. That is the problem in Nepal. The Nepalese government...Nepal itself does not have any initiative, and it doesn't come from the government. It comes from outside and all the expatriates are going to help...forcing them "let's do this, and let's do that." That thing is never going to work. And, I gave up, I gave up. They are still doing the same thing now. I have been here for the last ten years. When I go back, I ask my colleagues about what is going on and they tell me that the same thing is going on ... there is no initiative and this (computer system) is all a waste of money, nothing happens. Nothing happens there and at a particular point, we would not even need that ... Capital is so costly in Nepal...All we need is infrastructure. Before infrastructure, we were just following people ahead of scale. So, we did not have the basic infrastructure...no road, no water supply, nothing right? Clean water...all of these things were missing and we are investing in all these ITs and all of these things ... It's a total waste of resources. I went to about 40 different districts of Nepal and saw the resources being wasted everywhere ... When I asked them "Why do you need all this computer and things?" It never came from inside (people at the local level did not demand it). That was a waste. People are really friendly in Nepal and they have talent. There are so many talented people in Nepal, its just the basic management is missing ... People are not lazy ... the things (their voices) do not get heard. There is no structure to move their voices at the upper echelons. (BOS2M40BRPNY8: July 2005)

Absence of Opportunities, and Career Considerations in Nepal

About 40% of my interview consultants who had work experiences in Nepal reported that they had opportunities to enhance their basic professional skills there. However, most of them were there for a very brief period of time after acquiring their professional degrees, and the jobs they had were their first ones of their lives. And, about 50% of those who said they had opportunities to enhance their skills were fresh medical

school graduates, and 25% of them were employees of the private sector--where the emphasis would obviously be on productivity. About 40% of those who said that they had opportunities to enhance their basic skills in Nepal later said that they did not have further opportunities to enhance their knowledge or learn more specialized skills⁴⁴. As mentioned earlier, Dr. Gautam had purposively elected to be posted at Nepal's National Planning Commission after passing Nepal's civil service exams with the one and the only hope that being there would increase his chances of going abroad to pursue further education. When I asked him if he saw or had any opportunities to do so, he flatly said "No, I did not see that." He also reported that even if he had blindly followed his seniors like others, he still would not have had much prospect to rise in the hierarchy. He told me that he had sensed all of these and also realized that he would not be his full potential had he continued to stay there. According to him, this was also one of the biggest factor contributing to his emigration to the US. Dr. Mochan, my other consultant who worked for the Nepalese government recounted a similar story and reported that the guidelines for promotions and professional development the Nepalese government had was only for theoretical purposes. In reality, they were hardly followed and practiced. Although most of my consultants who had worked for the Nepalese government or the Tribhuvan University emigrated to the US before they would have applied for promotions, about

⁴⁴ Further education or training for a great majority of Nepalese civil servants and university teachers usually means going abroad on a scholarship provided by an agency of another government or a multilateral agency (China, Australia, France, Germany, Norway, Spain, and South Korea are some of the countries, and the World Bank and the United Nations are some of the agencies that offer such scholarships). Such scholarships are usually offered to the Nepalese government or the Tribhuvan University. The Nepalese government or the Tribhuvan University then selects a candidate and recommends him/or her to be sent to pursue that academic or training program. With the exception of the US's Fulbright and Japan's Monbusho scholarship programs, most other governments usually hand over the responsibility of selecting the candidates to the Nepalese government or the Tribhuvan University. Specialized scholarship offers are then sent to appropriate departments and all other generic scholarships are handled and administered by the country's Ministry of Education and Sports.

11% of them specifically mentioned seeing their seniors being in the same position and without possessing any advanced skills for more than ten years. Sameer, whom I have quoted above once and who worked in a government-owned industry, summarized what he made of the possibility of him being sent for further studies or training by his department:

... in the skill enhancement aspect, you know, it is the bureaucracy. First of all, they (such scholarship opportunities) would come to His Majesty's Government, then to the ministry of industry. If and only there aren't any close kinfolks of those working in the ministry of industry, then only it would come to the industries. And there are many industries. Even if it trickled down to the industry level, it would come to us only if the general manager did not have a candidate of his choice ... if you have connections, or if you have a networking, then it's very easy to get it. If not, then it's really difficult. (NY1M30BRPNY4: September 2006)

Similarly, 60% of my survey participants who had work experience in Nepal indicated that the limited possibilities for professional development and promotion were important or very important in their decisions to come to the US. This figure for those working for the Nepalese government checking important or very important in response to this statement was an astounding 68%, and affirms to what my interview consultants had reported during my fieldwork. The limited prospects for their areas of expertise in Nepal was the other major issue for the survey participants. Sixty four percent of those who had work experiences in Nepal, another 64% of those who came to the US to work, and 73% of those working for the Nepalese government indicated that it was important or very important in their decisions to come to the US. As it has been revealed above, my survey participants who were Nepalese civil servants earlier were largely a disenchanted lot. When their responses to the various questions regarding their careers in Nepal were compared to that of other participants (those who had worked in the university system, the donor community or other private organizations), their answers were again, in striking contrast to that of others. Compared to others, a significantly lower percentage of them

reported that they made progress in their careers (44% vs. 68%: 91%: 65%), they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their careers (50% vs. 78%: 91%: 55%), had excellent or very good opportunities for promotions in Nepal (12.5% vs. 73%: 62%: 50%), had excellent or very good opportunities to enhance their skills in Nepal (29% vs. 43%: 87%: 56%). Furthermore, they were the least likely to be encouraged by their superiors to pursue further studies abroad (58% vs. 83%: 64%: 61%) and encouraged to return home after finishing their studies (44% vs. 64%: 70%: 44%), and report that they had excellent or good relationship with the chief of their work units (53% vs. 55%: 87%: 69%). In addition, they were the most likely of my survey participants to explore other avenues for work and career opportunities. Probably due to their immense dissatisfaction with their jobs and career prospects, an incredible 63% of them indicated that their friends and relatives had told them that there were better career prospects in the U.S. and had advised them to emigrate, and that this was an important or very important contextual factor in their decision to come to the US. The figures for others checking important or very important in response to this statement were 18, 36, and 47 percents respectively. In addition to the other attributes, the Nepalese elite Others were also constructed as an obstacle to the Self's professional growth. At the same time, the Self was represented as underdogs who faced great odds.

As the figures from the survey data I have presented above and elsewhere in this chapter indicate, most of my survey participants who had worked with the donor community (n=11) in Nepal too had intense desires to pursue the highest possible degrees and learn the latest developments in their fields. Unlike my research subjects who had worked for the Nepalese government, a great majority of them were very satisfied with

Figs. 3.5-a-f The Mailed Survey: Reflections on Jobs and Careers in Nepal

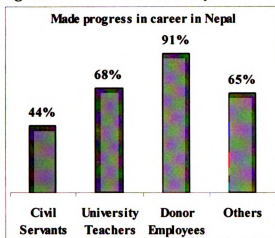


Fig. 3.5-a. Made Progress in Career

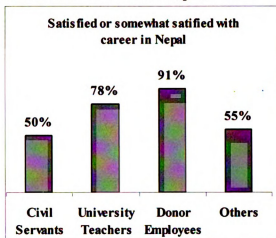


Fig. 3.5-b Career Satisfaction

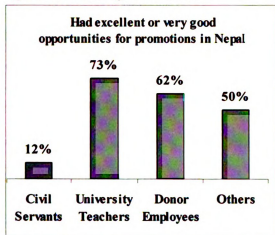


Fig. 3.5-c Opportunities for Promotions

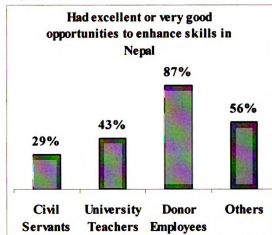


Fig. 3.5-d Opportunities to Enhance Skills

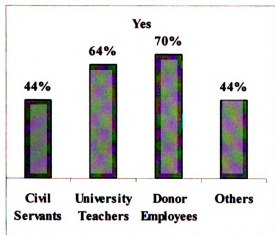


Fig. 3.5-e Encouragement to pursue studies abroad and then return home by superiors

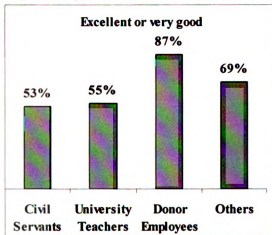


Fig. 3.5-f Relationship with the Chief

Note: Total number of survey respondents=132. The number of people who responded to each question varies.

their jobs, had felt that they had made progress in their careers, had excellent or good opportunities to enhance their skills, had excellent or good opportunities for promotions, had good working relations with the chief of their work units, and were encouraged by their superiors to return home after completing studies abroad. The very few of my interview consultants (n=3 or 7%) who also had worked for the donor community expressed very similar feelings about their jobs and careers. Manju, one of my female consultants was one of the project development coordinator of a major US INGO in Nepal. She worked with different INGOS, and altogether, she worked for about fifteen years in Nepal and was very satisfied with her jobs and career. According to her, she worked with underprivileged rural women, helped them become independent, and sensitized them to their rights. She strongly felt that there were immense opportunities to work on women's issues in Nepal. She strongly asserted that there was an environment to work professionally, independently, confidently in an INGO setting. She worked at the grass-roots level for many years and felt that she knew the real problems of the rural poor. However, according to her, she failed to make her and her organization's voices heard at the policy making ends. She applied to graduate schools in the US believing that her academic credentials were not enough to translate her extensive grass-roots research into policy documents that could draw the attention of policy makers in Nepal. What is striking about Manju is that she was never a member of the Nepalese professional cadre. But still, she constructed the Nepalese elite Others as irrational, self-centered, possessing less knowledge, as well as the "problem" of the country while portraying herself as a forward-looking, problem-solving, rational, and pioneer Self.

What I feel is like... if the powerful people listen to what I have to say, I feel I can make change. I felt that way. I worked in high-paying INGOS and whenever I raised issues, they were like I was being arrogant. This is how they took and people were like it was my money that was speaking...I

moved away from my family in an insecure environment for a mere fifteen to twenty thousand rupees per month. Who else will do that? People won't make this type of sacrifice. If I do Ph. D., establish my name, associate myself with a group and raise voices...and if the people in the National Planning Commission or others who need to hear us listen, then that will be enough. (AIIIF40NEGS1: January 2006)

While working in Nepal, Manju reported that she felt that she was contributing something for the country. Unlike many of my other consultants, she had a strong desire to return to Nepal after completing her studies. She hailed from a high-ranking civil servant's family, felt that she was pampered by the handsome salary of the INGOs, believed that her skills and educational credential would be valued, and hoped that some of her *afno manche* might be able to find her a job once she returned to Nepal after completing her studies.

Personal Narrative I

While I was in Nepal, I had unique opportunities to be a member of the officer corps of the Nepalese government as well as a faculty of the country's oldest and biggest university. What I had observed and experienced in these two organizations were very much similar to what my consultants had confided or reported to me were their own experiences. After graduating from the Tribhuvan University, I started my career as a temporary part-time university teacher. I was assigned to teach two courses and was quite satisfied with the job. My salary was meager, there was extensive intrusion of politics in the academia, but my biggest concerns were the lack of opportunities to engage in academic research and pursue further education. After about a year, I joined the Nepalese government as a sociologist and was posted at the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage in Kathmandu.

I had joined the department with the expectation that I would be able to apply my skills there, and thus contribute in the overall development efforts of the country.

However, the department was undoubtedly, one of the most bizarre organizations that I had ever been a part of. It's primary responsibility was to increase the Nepalese people's access to potable water and sanitation facilities, particularly in the small towns and rural areas of the country. Despite its managerial role in executing these responsibilities and having about three thousand employees under its command throughout the country, things were not as bustling as it should have been in a central department. Work was very much centralized and all the paper work was essentially handled by a tightly-knit core group of about five individuals--who always commuted to work in chauffeur-driven government-owned cars and wore unbelievably high quality clothes. I was there for a total of eleven months and despite repeated requests, neither was I assigned a single task where I could apply my skills, nor did a single official document passed through my desk. Like me, most other engineers, administrators, and accountants were directionless too, and were not assigned any specific tasks.

Two months after joining the department, I had proposed to the deputy director that I was interested in evaluating the sustainability of the water supply systems the department had constructed throughout the country. However, my proposal was brushed aside with a single statement: "We do not have funds to support this unnecessary project of yours." Thereafter, I did not make any requests. I continued to go to "work," because like my other colleagues there, I did not have any viable alternative. Though I utilized my time there by reading books and preparing for my Graduate Record Examinations, most of my colleagues just sat down, drank tea, talked, waited for the clock to strike five, and

then went home. The only tangible “work” that I ever did there was that I translated a five-page document from Nepali to English, and most of the time I always came home without having anything significant to say about the day to my family. When I resigned from my position at the end of my eleventh month, I still had no clue as to how the system worked or how the department accomplished its goals.

Like a majority of my research subjects who were Nepalese civil servants earlier, I too was very dissatisfied with my job. While I was there, I never felt that I was an important person, was never given any opportunity to enhance my skills or apply my skills, never felt that I would have a worthwhile career there, and was never encouraged to pursue further education. After a couple of months there, what I realized was that the department was not what it supposedly stood for. Despite the department’s stated goal of delivering (piped) drinking water to all the citizens of the country by the year 2006, high level officials often talked insouciantly about striving to deliver just “water” (as opposed to safe drinking water) and that the world would not stop on that date, and that there would be plenty of time to work afterwards too. The department’s activities were largely funded through loans from the Asian Development Bank, and there were a couple of projects that had huge amounts of funds. Mid level engineers fiercely competed with each other to be assigned to these “rich” projects as project managers and used any means to get hold of those positions. While I was still there, there was a change in the government, and almost immediately, the incumbent project managers in those projects were recalled to the department and replaced by those who were reported to have access to the new political leadership. During my tenure there, I always constructed the incumbent elite Others as self-centered, corrupt, dishonest, tainted by material interests and irrational

needs, and pathological. Rather than problem-solvers, they were the major “problem” of the country and felt that the country would have been much better without them.

After I left DWSS, I had opportunities to travel to several rural parts of Nepal. Having “worked” there had sensitized me to the issue of potable water supply and I was always observant about the water supply systems that were or were not in the places I visited. I reached many areas where the department had not reached yet and saw women walking miles just to fill their pitchers with water. I also reached areas where the department had constructed water supply systems earlier, and saw them in conditions that ranged from fully functional to fully non-functional. I saw quite a few that had crumbled to pieces within a few years after construction. When I inquired the locals how that had happened, they complained that the contractors to whom the department had entrusted to build the systems had used low-grade materials and that it had made no efforts whatsoever to create a mechanism for their smooth operation and maintenance after they were handed over to the local beneficiaries⁴⁵. In essence, the department was telling the Nepalese government that it planned to construct this and that many water supply systems in this and that district, asking for funds to construct them, and once the funds were available, were constructing these systems through mostly dishonest contractors, then adding the number of households having access to “potable” water in the national data base, and then completely forgetting about it. It was only then that I understood why my earlier attempt to evaluate the sustainability of the water supply systems the DWSS had constructed was nipped right in the bud, why the core group of decision makers did all the paperwork, and where all the money that were made available to purchase quality

⁴⁵ Even though the latest statistics indicate that 82 percent of Nepal’s rural population use improved drinking water sources, this figure can be misleading. Because, it is a cumulative figure and does not take into account water supply systems that are partly functional or that have been totally out of commission.

materials went. Though I was quite oblivious to these ground realities during my tenure at the DWSS, the fact that a great majority of the people who were supposed to make these rural water supply systems functional were either holding their cards too close to their chests or just sitting down--sipping tea, talking about politics, and at times, plotting conspiracies to oust each other from positions where one had control over considerable funds--bothers me even to this day.

Personal Narrative II

When the 28 year old *Panchayat* system of governance introduced by Nepal's late king Mahendra finally collapsed in 1990, there was much jubilation throughout the country. The reintroduction of the multi-party system of governance raised high hopes and aspirations amongst the general people. I was a 23 year old college student then and like many other Nepalis, I too believed that Nepal's stagnant years were over and that the leaders of the just-legalized political parties--who were brutally suppressed and had suffered unimaginably during the *Panchayat* years--would work honestly to propel a great majority of Nepalis out of grinding poverty, would rectify many of the inefficient and inept practices of the Nepalese bureaucracy, and lead the country on the path of progress and prosperity. The media was dominated by stories of political parties and their leaders, who were promoting themselves for the upcoming general elections. Nepal Television aired interviews with many political leaders, and I was deeply moved by the tragic stories of some of them, particularly those who had refused to compromise with king Mahendra. They had decided to live in exile in India without any means of support, and had lived there with their families in abject poverty for almost three decades. I

saluted them for their unflinching belief in their political ideologies as well as for their unbelievable courage and determination to endure such sufferings.

Having heard many such stories of courage, determination, and sacrifice, I was easily captivated by the eloquent speeches of both the centrist and leftist leaders. They declared that Nepal had stagnated due to the inappropriate and self-serving policies of the rightist *Panchayat* era rulers, and that the country would make the quantum leap in no time under their able leadership and guidance. Having witnessed and at times been extremely frustrated with the inefficiencies of the *Panchayat* era bureaucracy, I found their promises uplifting. In the general elections of 1991, I enthusiastically voted in favor of the political parties that were brutally suppressed for the last three decades. The Nepali Congress won a comfortable majority and the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist Front (CPN-UML) emerged as a strong opposition party. With a benign constitutional monarch and warmer relations with India⁴⁶, Nepal's future looked extremely bright, with everything perfectly set for a two party system of government.

However, within a year of Nepali Congress rule under the leadership of Girija Prasad Koirala, many Nepalis, including myself, felt that Nepalis had been deluded by the leaders of the so-called democratic political parties. The personal ambitions and rivalry between the Nepali Congress parliamentarians were so intense that in 1994, an absolute majority government of their own party was brought down by none other than their own parliamentarians. This plunged the country into totally unexpected mid-term elections, and none of the political parties in this election emerged with a clear mandate

⁴⁶ The Indian state, as well as various political parties of India, had actively supported the people's movement of 1990 in Nepal. In addition, some of the older leaders of both Nepal and India had developed personal friendships and the former were reported to have participated in India's struggle for independence from the British in the late forties.

to govern the country. The following years saw “unholy alliances” between the centrist, rightist, and leftist parties in Nepalese politics. Parliamentarians of the same political parties routinely crossed floors to keep a multitude of shaky coalition governments afloat⁴⁷. Rather than attending to the needs of the great majority of the people, the country’s two biggest political parties who had promised sweeping changes and a rapid transformation of the country earlier were preoccupied almost all of the time with either clinging to power, or devising ways to oust the other from power. As a result, Nepal witnessed the formation of 7 governments between 1994 and 2000. All these intra- and inter-party conflicts were disappointing. It was particularly disheartening when Nepal’s most revered politician (as well as the chief architect of the Nepalese democratic movement of 1990) Mr. Ganesh Man Singh renounced his Nepali Congress party membership and blamed his own colleagues for pursuing personal ambitions, practicing unparalleled nepotism and unprincipled politics, and thereby, pushing the country into such a predicament.

While a great majority of Nepalis were mired in grinding poverty and many Nepalese parents were being compelled to send their children to work for wealthy households in Kathmandu as domestic servants⁴⁸, the democratically elected parliamentarians shamelessly bestowed unprecedented privileges onto themselves in

⁴⁷ There were reports that the loyalties of democratically elected parliamentarians were routinely bargained for, and then bought. One of the country’s leading cartoonists ridiculed such an incident by drawing a picture of two men and a goat, and with a statement that captured the sentiment of the moment. One of the men in the cartoon is the buyer and the other is the seller. The potential buyer bargains with the seller and the seller responds by saying “the price for this goat is fixed, and is not negotiable like that of a (Nepalese) parliamentarian.”

⁴⁸ The poverty of some Nepalis after 2000 had become so unbearable that as many as one fifth of the population of some villages were reported to have sold one of their kidneys to wealthy Indian patients in India. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3674328.stm; <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=42676> accessed: 3/1/07 <http://espresso.repubblica.it/dettaglio/1613092> accessed: 10/6/07

addition to unscrupulously pursuing petty personal ambitions. Besides enjoying many perks and benefits, they almost unanimously voted in favor of a proposal that guaranteed them life long pensions even if they were elected for only one term (four years)⁴⁹. Furthermore, they also passed a resolution that allowed them to import foreign vehicles free of custom duties and sales taxes⁵⁰. What was even more perplexing was that a few of the Prime Ministers and a Deputy Prime Minister disregarded the country's national interests and clandestinely signed unequal water sharing treaties with India when they were on official visits there⁵¹. On top of all these, Nepalis also saw many of the parliamentarians and their close associates getting extremely rich over the years. During the *Panchayat* era, many of the leaders of the political parties had survived by taking up minor jobs like a cashier in a bank or that of a school teacher in their own villages. Many of them did not own any significant property in the capital, and I had seen quite a few of them walking around (in Kathmandu) on flip flops. However, within a few years in power and despite their sufficient-for-groceries-only official salaries, many of them built or bought luxurious houses in and around Kathmandu,⁵² and their spouses and children were routinely seen commuting comfortably in government vehicles or private cars. Their rags-to-riches stories provided fodder for Nepali satire artists and journalists, and

⁴⁹ Within Nepalese bureaucracy, only the civil servants who were recommended by the public service commission of Nepal are eligible for pensions.

⁵⁰ This event is better known as the "Pajero scandal" when all of Nepal's parliamentarians (except one from the Nepali Congress), supreme court judges, heads and members of the constitutional bodies, high level army and police officials, top officials at the royal palace secretariat, and other special-class officials in the Nepalese government imported expensive Mitsubishi or Toyota SUVs. The Nepalese customs regard cars and SUVs as luxury items and levy about 200% tax on their import. It was reported that about 600 individuals imported the vehicles. The reasoning behind this resolution was that the ownership of the vehicles would ease the travel of the parliamentarians to their respective constituencies. However, a majority of the constituencies were in the hilly and mountainous districts of the country and did not have roads. Furthermore, to purchase one SUV, it would have taken each parliamentarian and other high-level Nepalese civil servants about 24 years of their official salary.

⁵¹ When they were known later, their own parties and fellow parliamentarians denounced their actions and labeled them as traitors.

⁵² The Kathmandu Valley is the most expensive place in the country.

cartoonists routinely portrayed some of the politicians and officials attempting to explain how they suddenly acquired so much wealth⁵³. Like Mr. Ganesh Man Singh and many other Nepalis, I was extremely disappointed with the performance of Nepal's elected representatives. By the mid-term election of 1994, I had lost all hopes for Nepal's new rulers and did not see any point in casting my vote in their favor again. In fact, I was so frustrated that I purposively invalidated my vote by placing the stamp right in the middle of the symbols⁵⁴ of the two closest competitors who were contesting the elections from the constituency where I was residing at that time.

Nepal is blessed with immense natural resources and breathtaking natural beauty. During my high school days, I too used to weave a lot of dreams like Ankala Chalaune and imagined the many wonderful things we could have done with our natural resources. Though I had limited opportunities to see my own country then, I still used to sit in front of a map of Nepal after visiting a new place, and imagine the many possible projects Nepalis themselves could have attempted and accomplished. Since we had a mostly mountainous terrain with thousands of rivers flowing between them, I usually imagined constructing modern hydro-electricity plants to provide energy to Nepali households as well as for ropeways (that are suitable for a mountainous terrain), electric trains and buses, and a range of other industries. Fuel wood has been the traditional source of energy in Nepal, and deforestation was a major issue while I was in high school. Our school occasionally involved us in reforestation projects around the denuded hills of the

⁵³ In one of the cartoons, a MP explains: "I just discovered the wealth my father had left behind for me." In another, a MP points to his young son and tells the investigating officer: "All the wealth in this house is his legitimate earning."

⁵⁴ More than half of Nepal's population is illiterate, and the candidates are assigned an election symbol like the sun or a tree or a bicycle by the Election Commission of Nepal. The candidates are then expected to inform their supporters what their respective election symbols are. On the ballot, their supporters are expected to put a stamp next to their symbol.

Kathmandu Valley, and we were also exposed to other sources of fuel like bio-gas and methods of cooking in a solar powered pressure cooker, or cooking more with less firewood. Since we had an electric cooking stove at home, I used to imagine how Nepalis could have saved the country's forests by simply switching to electric cooking stoves, and wondered why that was not taking place at the national level. I was a minor then, and obviously, did not have a clear understanding of the Nepali scheme of things. However, deep inside my naïve heart, I believed that somewhere in the corridors of power of Nepal, somebody must be charting the future course of our country similar to what I had imagined.

As I studied and read more, traveled in Nepal and India, witnessed the senseless politics of both the autocratic *Panchayat* and the post 1990 democratic eras, I started to sense where the country was heading. The grim reality was that Nepal's leaders were not leading the country on a path similar to what I had imagined as a very young man. Leaders who appeared visionary during the election campaigns turned out to be deceitful once they were elected and couched comfortably in powerful positions. In the days before the general elections of 1991, I watched Girija Prasad Koirala--a man who dominated and still continues to dominate much of Nepali politics--on Nepal Television, promising voters of one particular remote constituency that he would make electricity available in their villages should they elect Nepali Congress to govern Nepal. His assurances probably worked and the Nepali Congress won the elections by a majority. Then again in the months preceding the general elections of 1994 and 1999, I watched him repeat the same promises, to the same people in the same constituency⁵⁵. Then around 2002 or

⁵⁵ He was the caretaker Prime Minister during both of these periods, and during the election campaigns, he used state helicopters to travel to this particular village as well as to other parts of the country.

2003, I came across a news report entitled “Villagers themselves bring electricity to their village” on the web edition of the *Kathmandu Post*. They were the same villagers whom Koirala had promised earlier to bring electricity to their village, not only once, but thrice (in 1991, 1994, and 1999). Ironically, he became the country’s Prime Minister for three times between 1991 and 2000, but did not bother to keep the promises he made during the election campaigns. Tired of his false promises, the villagers took the initiative, and constructed a micro-hydroelectricity system to power their homes by taking loans from private banks.

Girija Prasad Koirala was not alone in routinely dashing the hopes and aspirations of the Nepali people. Many of his colleagues from his own party as well as the opposition routinely did the same. Just days before the April 1999 general elections of Nepal, Nepal Television aired an interview taken with Mr. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. Mr. Bhattarai is a veteran Nepali Congress politician and had headed the country’s interim government formed after the people’s movement of 1990. He also had contested and lost the two subsequent elections. However, he was frequently praised in Nepal and India for his almost Gandhian lifestyle. He was reported to be a non-smoker, a non-drinker, a strict vegetarian, and a life-long bachelor. He was also reported to have owned almost nothing material in his life other than his clothes and a few basic necessities of life like an umbrella, a *surahi*⁵⁶, and a steel trunk (to store his clothes). During Mr. Bhattarai’s official visit to India in 1990, Mr. V. P. Singh, the then Prime Minister of India, had commented on Indian National Television that Indian leaders had forgotten Gandhi’s legacy and way of life, and had become very materialistic. The Indian Prime Minister praised Mr. Bhattarai’s lifestyle and commented that Indian leaders should be inspired to

⁵⁶ A long-necked earthen vessel that is widely used to store drinking water in South Asia.

follow Mr. Bahattari's example. But in this particular interview, Mr. Bhattarai was unmistakably inebriated--he had watery eyes, a flushed face, and a slurred speech. Though intoxicated, Mr. Bhattarai answered many of the questions sensibly and within the context. But when the interviewer asked him why he was still contesting the 1999 elections from the same constituency where he had been defeated twice before, his answer was: "I am contesting with the hope that I will win this time. If I win, I will get a salary every month. You know, I have a habit of consuming alcohol everyday, and I need money to buy it. If I win this time, I won't have any problem in buying alcohol." Though Mr. Bhattarai had made impossible promises to the residents of the Kathmandu Valley before⁵⁷, these remarks literally blew me and many other Nepalis away, and I just wondered what the true motives of younger party cadres could be, if such a leading Nepali Congress politician who had reportedly devoted his entire life for the cause of democracy could go on national television, and tell the nation that he was contesting elections primarily to quench his thirst for alcohol. Ironically, he and his party (Nepali Congress) went on to win the election, and he became the country's Prime Minister for the second time⁵⁸. There were many glaring examples like these, and, I knew that many Nepalese politicians were still not sincere about what they preached, and their purported commitments toward improving the well being of the Nepali people and the country.

The post 1990 political elite's penchant for power, wealth, and alcohol (I must add) had a detrimental effect on the country's well being. New employment opportunities were not created and, as discussed in chapter one, young Nepalis emigrated abroad in increasing numbers in search of livelihoods. In addition, the Nepalese state did not make

⁵⁷ His two most famous election campaign promises were: "I will turn Kathmandu into Singapore," and "I will bring enough water to wash the streets of Kathmandu."

⁵⁸ Ten months later, intra-party rivalry forced him to resign from his post.

significant efforts to improve or increase the country's basic infrastructures (other than roads) like railways, ropeways, airports, hospitals, hydro-electricity plants, water-supply systems and so on, and they largely remained at the pre 1990 levels. Even nine decades after electricity was introduced in the country⁵⁹, only 15% of Nepal's population had access to it in 2000--one of the lowest rates in South Asia (Gyawali 2001). Furthermore, only 2% of Nepal's entire energy demands were met by electricity (Gurung 2004) despite the country possessing the world's second largest capacity for hydroelectricity generation. The fates of Nepal's railway and ropeway services--services that could have totally revolutionized the transportation sector in Nepal and reduced the country's dependence on oil if they were appropriately geared for the welfare of the general public--are even more disheartening. In 1933, the British had constructed a 32 mile narrow gauge railway line between Janakpur⁶⁰ and Jainagar⁶¹ to transport Nepalese hardwood timber to India. A train still runs on that railway line, but its length has remained a constant 32 miles for an appalling 74 years. Similarly, the first major ropeway in Nepal was installed in 1924, and a USAID project in 1964 had improved and extended it from the *Terai* town of Hetauda to Kathmandu. Despite being 20 times cheaper to maintain and costing half as much as to build a mountain highway, Nepal's ruling elites never bothered to promote ropeways in other parts of the country. Even the existing one was closed down in 2001 due to government apathy, mismanagement, and neglect (Shrestha 2004).

⁵⁹ During the autocratic Rana era, technology was introduced in Nepal for the sole benefit of the ruling elite. For example, electricity was introduced in 1911 to light Rana houses in the Kathmandu Valley, a ropeway in 1924 to transport stones for building Rana palaces, a railway in 1933 to export hardwood timber and bring in cash for the Ranas, and automobiles (around this period) to transport the powerful and mighty in the narrow streets of the capital.

⁶⁰ A southern Nepalese town that is situated near the Indian border.

⁶¹ A small Indian town situated just across the Nepalese border.

In bold contrast to the post 1990 ruling elites' apathy towards basic technologies (like micro-hydroelectricity plants, railways, and ropeways) private citizens, rural communities, and a business house pioneered the micro-hydroelectricity and ropeway sectors in the post 1990 era Nepal. Around 1995, I watched a news report on Nepal Television about a young man from a remote mountain village. He had barely studied up to the tenth grade, but had managed to convince private Nepali banks to loan him three million Rupees to construct a small run-off hydroelectricity plant in his village⁶². Within a couple of years after constructing and running the system, the previously poor village, where a majority of the people were seasonal agricultural workers, had metamorphosed itself into quite a well-to-do one with almost everyone employed in community based paper production industry. At night, they used the electricity to light the houses and cook, and during the day, to run the paper factory. In addition, this small-scale intervention saved their forests, made it possible to utilize plants that could not have been used for any other purpose other than making paper, and provided employment and income to all. In yet another example, rural villagers living close to the Kathmandu Valley managed to construct a 1.9 mile ropeway (Bhattedanda Milkway) with assistance from the British Embassy in Nepal to transport their agricultural products to the nearest road-head, from where they would be transported to the capital on trucks. Like the remote village where the young man was successfully running a micro hydroelectricity plant for the benefit of all the villagers, the locals of this village also ran their ropeway system for the benefit of all. Earlier, it used to take about three hours to carry the milk to the nearest road-head (due to the mountainous terrain). By then, the milk would have curdled and become

⁶² The young man had to make more than 70 trips from his village to the capital to have his loan approved.

useless. Their only alternatives were either to boil it down to *khuwa*⁶³ or churn it into *ghiu*⁶⁴. But the construction of the ropeway had reduced that time to 22 minutes and for the first time in their lives, the villagers were able to transport their milk to the capital and sell at a higher price. This small project was accomplished with less than US\$ 100,000.00, but had remarkably enhanced the villager's incomes, saved their forests, and freed the women from the time-consuming and back-breaking chores of firewood collection and *khuwa* making (Upadhya 2004). A private business house also managed to initiate a cable car service in central Nepal despite considerable financial and bureaucratic hurdles (Shrestha 2004). It transported passengers from a road-head to a popular pilgrimage site and was a path breaking step in domestic tourism. With 22% of the investment projected to be recovered within three years of operation of the cable car service and start being paid back around the end of the fifth year, it is perhaps the most spectacular success story in the entire financial history of Nepal.

The political and bureaucratic leaders of the post 1990 era Nepal still refuse to take any cues from these classic examples of “hybrid or minority culture” (Escobar 1995: 225) or “counter-development” (Arce and Long 2000:19) or “grassroots globalization” or “globalization from below” (Appadurai 2001:3): situations when people use their scope and power to shape things emerging in the wake of the spread of ‘the techniques’ of modernity to build new economies, deal with their basic needs, reposition the local modes of organization, and strive for a democratic and autonomous standing in respect to

⁶³ *Khuwa* is a semi solid paste left after boiling and constantly stirring milk. It is used to make a variety of sweets. In the local market, milk fetched 30% more money than *khuwa*, and *khuwa* fetched 75% more money than *ghiu*. Generally, farmers make *khuwa* when they cannot sell their milk and *ghiu* when they cannot sell both milk and *khuwa*. Their economic standing usually correlated with which milk product they were able to sell in the local markets. Those who could sell their milk are usually far better off than those who sell *khuwa* or *ghiu* (Upadhya 2004).

⁶⁴ Clarified butter

the various forms by which global power further seeks to extend its dominion. These immensely successful projects initiated by rural communities and a private business could be easily replicated in other parts of the country and elsewhere. Even when ordinary Nepali citizens repeatedly demonstrated the enormous advantages of such small scale projects, Nepalese ruling elites across time have focused extensively in multi-million dollar projects. For example, many medium scale (but still multi-million dollar projects) hydroelectricity plants were built during the *Panchayat* era with loans from international lenders. However, the average production cost of electricity in Nepal was four to eight times higher than that of India and Bhutan, though both had constructed their dams in a terrain similar to that of Nepal's (Gyawali 2001). Institutionalized corruption (similar to what Dr. Saurav reports in the later part of this chapter and what I observed during my tenure as a member of the officer corps of the Nepalese government) had factored into the overblown cost of electricity generation in Nepal. There are countless opportunities to initiate such successful small-scale and inward-oriented projects that improve the living standard of the poorest of the poor; nevertheless, Nepal's democratically elected government ministers and their high-level bureaucrats concentrated and still concentrate their efforts on securing multi million dollar loans to finance deceptively inflated "development projects" from bilateral and multi lateral lending agencies⁶⁵.

In an intensive study of seventy poor rural households in Western Nepal in the mid to late 1970s, Blaikie et al. (1980) had asked their research subjects what they

⁶⁵ Nepal's net borrowing from abroad increased almost by seven fold between 1990 and 2002--when the democratically elected parliamentarians were effectively in power. Within twelve years, the country's net borrowing from abroad increased approximately from US\$ 125 million to US\$ 853 million (at 2006 prices). http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Key_indicators/2006/pdf/NEP.pdf (accessed: 3/1/07)

thought were the forces that made and kept them poor. According to the authors, their answers revealed a shocking pattern of calculated oppression, expropriation, systematic neglect of their basic needs and rights, and the Nepalese government was regarded as an important active agent in their deprivation (of basic needs). Though the experiences described and analyzed by Blaikie et al. in their book were those of the very poor in the late seventies, I too had encountered countless Nepalis in the remotest parts of Nepal during the late nineties, living in horrifying squalor and completely neglected by the Nepalese state as well as by those who supposedly represented them. Many villages did not have running water, and access to basic amenities like electricity, sanitation facilities, and even primary health care services was a remote dream for them. I was so overwhelmed by their poverty and state of helplessness that at times, I did not have the courage to tour the whole village or ask them any other question other than the ones required by my job. Though I was amidst my fellow countrymen in one particular village, the environment there was so wild, inhumane, and intense that I felt like as if I was watching fast-forwarded mechanisms of survival of the fittest right in front of my own eyes. Children were born in unimaginably horrendous living conditions, and I could not help but wonder how some infants and children managed to survive such adverse living conditions and climatic situations. It was obvious that nothing had changed in these particular villages not only for years, but for several generations. Interestingly, two of my interview consultants from my dissertation research who hailed from rural areas of Nepal also described observations eerily similar to mine. One of them was in his early forties and the other was in his mid thirties. However, both of them had left their villages when they were nine to study in a boarding school in Kathmandu. Both had returned to their

villages many times while studying in Kathmandu, as well as after coming to the US. Even during their most recent visits to their villages (thirty and twenty five years later respectively), both of them reported seeing the same things they were used to seeing as children. According to them, the farms, the houses, the local schools, the paths leading from the road-head to their villages and so on were still the same. Women still carried water around in pitchers, did their laundry with hands, cooked their meals with firewood, and the men still farmed with oxen, used the same farm implements, and smoked from the same hookahs. Almost all of the money that had been infused into the country in the form of grants and loans to help villagers like these had definitely not reached their intended beneficiaries.

From all these observations, I had come to the conclusion that many of the political leaders of the post 1990 era Nepal who claimed to be “democratic” and many of the bureaucratic elites--who in essence are clones of their political masters and are supplanted and uprooted at their (political leaders’) will--had a predatory *modus operandi*, and were not any different from their *Panchayat* and Rana era predecessors. Almost all of them pursued vested interests and remained indifferent towards the welfare of the common people like Ankalal Chalaune. They had not only failed, but had hopelessly and repeatedly failed the Nepali people. During the course of my fieldwork, I met about a dozen prominent Nepalese political leaders in New York and Washington D.C., and almost all of them were indispensable actors in the absurd theatricals that took place on the stage of post 1990 Nepal. Having known their egotistic characters and debauched morals, and having constructed them as the most negative elements of Nepalese society for most part of my adult life, I just could not reach out to them and

offer my *namaste* despite the fact they were all senior to me, and doing so is a time-honored Nepali tradition.

Narratives: “I definitely planned to return home after finishing my studies”

Over sixty percent of my research subjects reported that before coming to the US, they definitely planned to return to Nepal after completing their studies, or planned to study, gain some experience, and then definitely return home. However, a closer examination of the survey data revealed a very interesting pattern. When compared with their counterparts who worked for the university system (n=24) or the donor agencies (n=11) or the private sector (n=20), only 37% (vs. 74%: 82%: 50%) of those who were Nepalese civil servants (n=19) earlier reported that they definitely planned to return to Nepal. Therefore, this chapter is exclusively devoted to the narratives of my consultants who previously were Nepalese civil servants to provide a context for understanding their identity construction processes. What is remarkable about the narratives of these consultants is that, despite working in Nepal in different decades, eras, and in different professional fields, they constructed the identities of the Nepalese elite Others and their own in remarkably similar ways. Like the identity construction processes of the New Agers, skeptics, and parapsychologists, all of them borrowed from “a shared set of cultural understandings and categories to distance themselves from their Others” (Hess 1993: 43). Specifically, this section will focus on how this identity construction process shaped their immigration decisions.

Fernando's Story

I knew Fernando from my early childhood days. He was one of the first batch of students of Budhanilkantha School, Nepal's elite boarding school in Kathmandu where my father taught for over 30 years. Back then, he was a small, slim boy with a very clever looking face. Since I had the privilege to walk around the school with my father and observe many student activities even when I was an elementary school student, I got to know many students who were older than I was. I still remember Fernando being very talkative and usually participating in most of the extra curricular activities that took place in that school. He actively took part in the poetry, drama, quiz contest, debate and many other programs. One particular event I still remember vividly is one where he played the role of a beggar in the annual school play entitled "The Mighty Mandarin," which was staged on the school's Parent's Day. Though his role was very limited in this particular play, he was dressed up in a raggedy costume made of jute sacks and his performance was just superb. His participation in almost every sphere of the school life made him visible in the crowd, even for a six-year-old kid like me.

Fernando came from an elite Brahmin family, and his father was a priest as well as a professor of Nepali language at the Tribhuvan University. His younger brother and I attended the same college in Nepal, and from him, I knew that their father was a devout Hindu. At home, they had to strictly follow Hindu beliefs and practices, and I had noticed his brother being a strict vegetarian and coming to college with his head shaved once every month. After graduating from high school, Fernando appeared in the national limelight. While I was still in high school, I was awestruck when a reputed Nepali literary journal published his poem along with a brief interview and a picture. I forgot what the

poem was about, but I still remember him saying, "...we were encouraged to write in school, then I wanted to write myself, and now, I am addicted to writing" to the interviewer's question as to how and when he started writing poems. During the course of the interview, he also commented that he had written nationalistic songs, one of which was quickly picked up by the then *Panchayat* government and played over the national radio.

Today, Fernando is in his early forties and can be described as a Hispanicized-Nepalese-American. When I met him after probably 20 years, I was really surprised to see that he had not changed much. He was still slim, and still had the same clever looking face. Had I ran into him in a crowded subway station, I believe, I still could have recognized him. He is married to a Colombian born physician, speaks fluent Spanish, communicates with his wife and kids mostly in Spanish, and has spent more of his life in the US than in Nepal. He works for the software giant Oracle, and lives in an upscale neighborhood of central Boston with his wife, a four-year old son, and a two-year old daughter. I called him as soon as I reached Boston during my fieldwork and he readily agreed to be interviewed. He invited me to his house for brunch, as well as for the interview.

After getting lost for a while in Boston's confusing serpentine roads, I finally reached his house. His house was quite big with moderate front and back lawns, and was surrounded mostly by trees. His living room was huge, had high ceilings, and was decorated with artifacts and souvenirs from the world over. When my older son (who accompanied me during some phases of my fieldwork) and I reached his house, he was alone and was cooking lunch. He welcomed us inside and asked how my father and we

were doing. He keenly listened as I updated him about my father and us. It was a hot day and his wife had taken their kids out for a swim. He told me that they would arrive shortly and after lunch, they were planning to visit a zoo some 35 miles away. Eager not to waste any time, he wanted to begin the interview right away. To keep my son entertained during the interview, he showed him his kid's playroom that was littered with hundreds of toys. He suggested that we sit at the dining table and proceed with the interview. As he was answering my first question, his wife opened the kitchen/garage door and told him in Spanish that the kids were getting impatient to leave for the zoo and were still sitting in the car. He introduced me to her and explained what was going on. She greeted me with a *namaste* and welcomed me to their house. Realizing what was going on, she then went back to her car to get the kids. Fernando wanted to move the venue to a quieter place and suggested that we shift to a shady part of the back lawn. He brought two plastic chairs and a table to continue with our interview. In the meantime, his son had already entered the house and appeared very irritated for not having left for the zoo as his mother must have told him. He came straight towards his father and started punching him. We had to stop the interview and it took quite a while to cool the boy down. Fernando then told him in fluent Spanish that he had a new friend in the house and introduced him to my son. Soon, they were friends and were busy with the toys, and did not bother us very much for the rest of the interview. Later he explained that Saturdays and Sundays were the only days he totally devoted for his family and his kids were easily upset when things did not work out that way.

Had Fernando returned home after his studies, he would most probably have lived with his parents. While I was a master's degree student in Nepal, I had once given a ride

to his younger brother on my motorcycle and had dropped him off at their home in Lalitpur⁶⁶. They had a modest two storied house with very limited front and back yards in a somewhat crowded residential neighborhood. His brother had taken me in and had served tea. By local standards and for a devout Hindu priest's house, I would say that the living room was surprisingly well organized with sufficient furniture and decorated with pictures and various artifacts. Also, he would most probably have been married to a very obedient and tradition bound high-caste Brahmin⁶⁷ girl, and would have had an authoritative relationship with his wife and children. If I had visited him at his home in Nepal, most probably, he would not have been cooking a meal nor would his children dared to confront him the way his son did while the interview was in progress.

Fernando was very straightforward and answered the questions directly. During the course of the interview, he told me that he became fed up with Nepal's scheme of things very early in his life. According to him, it was during his first two months of college in Nepal that he really felt down and lost confidence with the system and Nepalese society as a whole. At the time when he joined college (1980), the underground political parties of Nepal were launching a movement against Nepal's *Panchayat* system of governance. In an attempt to pressure the then incumbent government, the leaders of the underground political parties were encouraging their student organizations to organize and forcibly impose complete closures of academic institutions and transportation. Under intense pressure from the students, all the classes in the colleges were indefinitely suspended. Though he was himself active in the movement, he could not agree with the idea of college closures. He believed that the movement was appropriate, but also

⁶⁶ One of the three ancient towns of the Kathmandu Valley.

⁶⁷ There are strict hierarchies within the Brahmin caste as well.

believed that the classes should not be hindered. Dissatisfied with this turn of event, he gathered some like-minded friends and went to the campus chief to request resumption of the classes, who then told him and his friends that he would resume the classes only if they could come up with a request signed by 51 percent of the students. Barely an hour had passed as he and his friends were discussing ways to obtain signatures of the largely absent students, when a group of student leaders having connections with the political leaders surrounded them and beat them severely within the college premises. Though he felt that what he was trying to do was the right thing to do in the given circumstances, this incident, according to him, completely broke down his naïve spirit. In addition, he also realized the struggle an ordinary citizen has to go through (in Nepal) even to achieve a very mundane, but desirable situation.

The personal computer had just been introduced into Nepal in the late seventies and early eighties, and even a great majority of Nepal's educated had no idea what it was. Being a very ambitious person, Fernando was well ahead of others and had planned to study computer science--a field that was still fledging in the West. Being a very diligent as well as an intelligent person, he did exceedingly well in his intermediate level studies. He had applied for scholarships from the Nepalese government, and was awarded a full scholarship to pursue subjects other than computer science at the neighboring countries. However, he was determined to study computer science and declined to accept these awards. He believed that the situations and circumstances in the other South Asian countries were similar to that of Nepal and wanted to study computer science in the US. The harrowing experience of his first two months of college in Kathmandu and the unreliability of Nepal's academic calendar had made his desire to study in the United

States even stronger. His determination to come to the US was so strong that he had learned a great deal about the US while he was still in Nepal and even took courses in Spanish--the second most widely spoken language in the US--at the World Languages College in Kathmandu.

Since the various scholarships the government of Nepal offered him did not accommodate his personal interests and ambitions, he independently applied to US colleges. With excellent academic credentials, recommendations, and test scores, he was accepted at most of the colleges to which he applied. Finally, he chose to attend Ohio Wesleyan University where he was awarded full scholarship to pursue his undergraduate studies. He majored in computer science and mathematics and completed his studies within three and half years. In his last year of college, he felt that he should pursue further education and applied for Ph. D. programs. He was accepted at the University of Wisconsin and readily accepted the offer.

Having something like eight months of free time after graduating and before joining his Ph.D. program, Fernando decided to return to Nepal, to serve the Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (RONAST). Earlier, RONAST had awarded him a small scholarship to pay for his travel to the US (when he came to pursue his undergraduate studies) on the condition that he would serve RONAST for some time upon completion of his undergraduate studies in the US. As per this agreement, he went back, reported to RONAST and was employed as a temporary hire. Even though he was there for a short period, he attempted to apply his computer skills to enhance the institution's computer capabilities. He somehow managed to work on a simulation model to forecast the pollution levels of a local river. But, his attempts were met with

discouraging, and often fatalistic answers from his superiors. Some even told him that his knowledge did not have any application in Nepal. They also told him that he should continue with the very mundane things they were already doing and give up his innovative ideas that would otherwise have helped improve the computer abilities of the institution. Most of the time, he was assigned to prepare colorful reports, which were later on presented by his superiors to different ministries. During his short stint with RONAST--the supposedly leading research center of the country in science and technology--he was appalled by the complete absence of result-oriented work. He felt that there wasn't any drive for work in that institution, and that time and work itself were not valued.

Working at RONAST undoubtedly gave Fernando a "conversion" experience. A naïve and nationalistic Self went on to construct his own as well as the elite Other's identity. He distanced himself from his negative elite Other, and constructed his own identity in direct opposition to it as future-oriented, scientific, untainted by material interests and irrational needs, underdog working against great odds, rational, and so on. This conversion experience convinced him that Nepal was not a place to be for a person with his temperament. He clearly understood how a competent professional's productivity was circumvented and frustrated by the elite Other who dominated much of the Nepalese bureaucracy where they had planted their own version of work culture. He also saw that he would not be able to find any other job suited to his qualifications. Even if he found one, he would not have the liberty to pursue the right course of action. Fernando was the first person from his family to come to the US and even when he completed his undergraduate studies, he still had not thought about taking up work and

long-term residence in his host country. When he left Nepal to pursue his Ph.D. program, he left with a stronger sense of the Self, whose *janmabhumi* (land of birth) was Nepal and *karmabhumi* (land of work) was the US. He felt that he could not survive in Nepal by working sincerely, and did not want to “succeed” like other high-ranking Nepalese authorities who had reached their power positions and accumulated wealth by resorting to sycophancy and corruption. The idea of being an international citizen who would readily apply his skills wherever the opportunities were provided looked very attractive to him as well.

Dr. Gautam’s Story

"Why not?" was the email response Dr. Gautam gave to my host who had earlier inquired about the former’s interest in participating in my research project. My host also set up the interview time for me , and I reached Dr. Gautam's rented house in central Boston right on time. Both Dr. Gautam and his wife came to answer the door-bell. Though I had seen Dr. Gautam’s picture before, it was my first encounter with him. He was in his fifties and looked much older than in the photo I had seen. Being the first Nepali to be a faculty member at Harvard University, Dr. Gautam is perhaps the most famous Nepali in the US. They welcomed me and my son to their house and we sat down and introduced ourselves. Dr. Gautam and his family were living in a rented two-storied house during the time of my fieldwork. A set of huge couches was very inconveniently and awkwardly placed almost at the middle of the living room and an old 26 inch TV was placed in one corner. Toys, magazines, books, and common household stuff were scattered all around. After a brief conversation, Dr. Gautam wanted to proceed with the

interview and suggested that we move to the adjoining dining room. He turned on the TV and selected the cartoon network to entertain my son during the interview. We then moved to the dining room, which also seemed disorganized. An embossed-on-silver image of Kathmandu's *Pashupatinath* temple hung on the wall. A bunch of non-ferrous utensils (that are still items of daily use in Nepal) were placed on a shelf. They had been meant to decorate their house, as was typical of many other homes of Nepalis in the US. However, their placement in the Gautam home made them look like candidates for a garage sale. From the collection of these items in his dining room, I got the impression that these items of daily use belonged to him in Nepal and that he had brought these as souvenirs of his past. We began the interview while his wife prepared and served us tea.

Dr. Gautam came from a school teacher's family and was raised in a small village in the Eastern hills of Nepal. His village did not have a middle school at that time and he studied there up to the fifth grade. After that, he and his elder brother were sent by his family for further schooling to their maternal uncle's house in a small town in Eastern Nepal. Dr. Gautam informed me that his father was initially a district education officer (civil servant), and was sacked by the then *Panchayat* government for his alleged association with a human rights activist during the political upheaval of 1960⁶⁸. After being expelled from the civil service, his father returned to his village and established a primary school and became its headmaster. Later on, his whole family moved to the town where Dr. Gautam was staying with his maternal uncle. According to him, his father

⁶⁸ In that year, king Mahendra had staged a blood-less coup and seized control of the country by overthrowing a democratically elected government. He imprisoned the Prime Minister and opposition leaders, dissolved the parliament, suspended the constitution, and outlawed all political parties. Two years later, he introduced the partyless *Panchayat* system of governance, in which he exercised absolute power through village, district, and national councils.

again joined a local primary school, as its headmaster, and later, managed to upgrade it to a high school. Even though his family's financial situation was not great, his father supported Dr. Gautman's first two years of college in Benaras (India) where he studied science. Thereafter, he primarily paid for his studies up to the master's level in Kathmandu by taking odd jobs. According to him, he had a very inquisitive mind from early childhood and always strived to pursue beyond what he had already achieved. When I asked him when it occurred to him that he should pursue his Ph. D. in the US, he told me that one of his teachers was enrolled in a Ph. D. program in the US and he was very much inspired by him. Before attempting to come to the US on his own, he had sought help in acquiring a scholarship from the minister of education for further education. However, his attempts to see the minister were thwarted by the minister's secretary, who scornfully had told him that the country needed doctors and engineers, and that a scholarship would not be made available to a statistician. After that, he sat for the TOEFL and GRE exams, applied to US universities and was offered admission and a teaching assistantship by the University of Texas at Dallas. He has been in the US for probably over 20 years and according to him, already had "toured the country" by accepting various teaching and research positions in leading US universities before settling down at Harvard. During the time of my fieldwork, he was an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, and biostatistics director of General Clinical Research Center at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

While he was pursuing his master's degree in Nepal's Tribhuvan University, he had started teaching and felt intense pressure from his peers and family to join the Nepalese civil service. Having a son in the Nepalese bureaucracy was a source of great

pride for parents at that time, and joining the civil service itself was seen as a great feat. Even in his circle of friends, becoming a civil servant was seen as the ultimate goal of life. According to him, those who could not make it were looked down on, and were ridiculed with statements like "...he is good enough for teaching." This attitude of his colleagues really infuriated him, and he sat for Nepal's civil service exams, passed it, and joined the statistics department of the National Planning Commission--the country's advisory body for formulating development plans and policies. As mentioned earlier, he had done so with the intention of taking advantage of the opportunities--which he believed would be there--to pursue further studies in the developed countries. However, after working for a while, he felt that he was not the type of person who would fit in a strictly hierarchical workplace. In addition, the existing culture of approving of whatever the superiors said, and of snatching away all credit due to those in the lower rungs of the hierarchy made him extremely uncomfortable. He felt that he was being forced to do this and that rather than doing things on his own initiative. Earlier, he had taught at a college in Pokhara⁶⁹, and had experienced the freedom that was there in the academic field. In addition to his frustrations, he also had strongly felt that had he continued his service with the Nepalese government, he would never have reached the upper rungs of the hierarchy. Like my other consultants, Dr. Gautam also located the Nepalese elite Other in a distant past and constructed it as the real "problem" of the country as well as the obstacle to his professional advancement. He characterized them as promoters of the social institution of *afno manche* and self-centered. While working as a Nepalese civil servant, he had realized that it was the social capital of *afno manche* that really counted, and competent individuals were neither encouraged nor were their work appreciated. He asserted that if

⁶⁹ A town in mid-western Nepal renowned for its scenic beauty.

one did not have *afno manche*, nothing would work in Nepal. He strongly felt that whatever he had achieved so far was the maximum he could do on his own, and knew that he would be extremely frustrated later on. This identity construction of the Self as marginalized professional in the Nepalese bureaucracy had encouraged him to migrate to the US to pursue an advanced degree. Like many of my research subjects, he too had planned to return home and be a teacher at the university. Being independent and a (part-time) faculty at the Tribhuvan University was what he had planned. Settling down in the US was something he had never imagined before.

Dr. Mochan's Story

During my fieldwork, Dr. Mochan was an assistant professor at the dental school of Tufts University. In addition to teaching, he was also very much involved in cutting-edge research projects and was exposed to concepts and procedures that regular dentists probably would not be exposed for the next ten years. He felt that he was contributing in the development of his field, and ultimately, for the wider benefit of humanity. At his work place, he had only one boss, had the freedom to do a lot of things on his own, and did not feel any kind of unnecessary pressure. In all the research projects he was involved with, he said that his roles were identified right in the beginning, he was involved in every step, was listened to when he had something to say, his points were well taken, and if considered useful, were acted upon. He also felt that his contributions were valued by his employers, he had plenty of opportunities to enhance his skills, and had not had any issues with his promotions. He had very good relationships with his colleagues and

superiors and any competition in his work setting, he asserted, were healthy ones and were result-oriented.

Dr. Mochan was in his late thirties and was born in Kathmandu. His parents had passed away when he was a child, and he was raised by his relatives in Kathmandu too. After his SLC, he studied science for two years and was awarded a scholarship by the Nepalese government to study dental medicine in Pakistan. He returned to Nepal after studying there for five years, sat for the Nepalese civil service commission exams, and upon passing it, joined the department of health services of the Nepalese government. Unlike Fernando and Dr. Gautam, Dr. Mochan did not have any specific plans to come to the US. Nevertheless, he had the feeling that he should do some post-graduate studies in some field or do some kind of specialization in his field. While he was working for the Nepalese government, he had expected that he would at least be provided an opportunity to pursue his post-graduate studies in some Asian countries. But, as time passed by, he lost his hope in such opportunities being offered to him. Once, the Nepalese Ministry of Health was seeking an internal candidate to be sent abroad for specialized studies on a government scholarship. Dr. Mochan reported that he also applied for this opportunity, and had made it to the interview stage. But, he was asked questions that were totally unrelated to his work, and the members of the selection committee were also not related to his profession. According to him, the environment there at that time was that the list of the persons who would be sent (for further studies) were predetermined, and the interview sessions were only a formality. Like Dr. Gautam, Dr. Mochan also confided that without having *afno manche* in the upper hierarchy, it was very difficult to be officially selected as a candidate for further study opportunities. Furthermore, he and his

colleagues had routinely observed their other colleagues who had a powerful circle of *afno manche* (usually the political leadership), being awarded the opportunities to study abroad. Seeing all this, he explored other avenues and started to correspond with US universities. Finally, he came to Tufts University where he was offered a work-study opportunity to do his master's degree in dental medicine. He worked for the department and his stipend was enough to pay for his tuition. In addition to this opportunity provided by the Tufts University, his Nepali girlfriend (now spouse) was already working as a researcher in a pharmaceutical company in the Boston area, and helped him during his student days.

While working for the Nepalese government, Dr. Mochan felt that he was not treated fairly by the administration of his department. Unlike other colleagues, he willingly went to serve in the country's remote areas. But, according to him, the department of health services did not encourage those who had served in the remote areas in any way. Specifically, they were not given any preference when opportunities for medical professionals to study abroad were made available by the Ministry of Health. He also reported that his seniors had felt this same sort of institutional marginalization. Instead of rewarding them for their services in the remote areas where others dreaded to tread, he and his colleagues felt that they were kicked all around the country by the administration of the department of health services. Those who went voluntarily to serve in the remote areas, according to him, were destined to be in those areas for all their lives if they did not use personal connections and pressure tactics to get out of there. He compared his frequent transfers to a soccer ball in that he was repeatedly kicked from this district to that district and from that district to this district. And those who were posted in

the capital, according to him, did everything they could to stop them from being transferred there out of fear that they would be ordered to go and serve in the remote areas.

While he was posted outside the Kathmandu Valley, he reported that it was a lot of fun to work and that he benefited immensely from his practice there. He was a fresh dental school graduate, did not know many things, and on many occasions, had treated his patients by consulting his text books. He informed me that he was satisfied “only” when he was treating his patients. Later, he moved to the Bir Hospital in Kathmandu and did not have any problem with his practice. In fact, he told me that he used to work longer hours than others, and that his official assistants disliked him, for it prevented them from leaving early. However, at times, he reported that his bosses tried to overrule him on trivial issues. Even when he brought new ideas to the work place, he reported that they deliberately resisted it. When I asked him about his role in the decision making process of his department;

Emm...I was a third-class officer and in the decision making process...they might have listened to some extent in my department...they used to...but in the decision making process, I did not have any kind of role. Later, when I moved to the Bir Hopspital, I expressed my dissatisfaction to many of the things that were not right there. It was not a say in the official decision making process, but more a complaint and anger expressed against the chaos that existed there. This might have brought some changes, but a person of my level did not have any voice in such matters directly. (BOS13M30NPNY11: July 2005)

Like a great majority of my research subjects, Dr. Mochan did not plan to stay in the US. He still feels that Nepal needs him more than the US and that his stay in the US so far has not overpowered his Nepaliness. He considers his stay in the US temporary, and still feels that he probably can adapt to many aspects of Nepal quite easily if he chooses to return. When I asked him how he felt about being a professional, and at the same time, being a Nepali citizen residing in the US, he commented:

I have certain amount of guilt. A government that itself is poor has invested in us. After investing and when it is in a position to reap the benefits of my service...I am needed in Nepal more than here. Due to my personal interests, compulsions and other variables...I am staying here. That guilt is there. But, the fault is not all mine. I was like in Nepal...when I say "I," I am being symbolic because there are many others over here who are like me. To some extent, it is also the state's fault for not being able to keep them there. For example...when I completed my education in Pakistan and returned home, I went to the Ministry of Education. I went there and informed them that I had passed everything. I also informed them that I was sent to Pakistan on a scholarship granted by the Ministry of Education. Before accepting that scholarship, I had to sign a paper saying that I would return upon completion of my studies and work in Nepal, and report my arrival to the Ministry of Education. When I went to report my arrival, they did not have any records. They were not in a position to direct me as to where I should go (to report my return). It was because things were mismanaged. According to that agreement, I worked for five years in Nepal. I compensated what I had taken from the government. But, after that, they could not retain me there and it is also the fault of the state too. (BOS13M30NPNY11: July 2005)

During the interview session, Dr. Mochan was very quick to construct the identity

of his Others as disorderly, unscientific, and exploitative. Like the Western Apache Indians who portrayed Anglo-Americans in their joking imitations as gross incompetents in the conduct of social relations (Basso 1979: 48), Dr. Mochan portrayed the high-level Nepalese civil servants or members of the ruling elites as individuals whose approaches were self-centered, and also being totally unconcerned about the wellbeing of the country and honest civil servants like him. He also used the symbolic "I" to refer to many other Nepali professionals who were also Nepali civil servants like him earlier. In stark contrast to his portraits of the Nepalese elite other, he constructed his own identity as well as that of his friends who were Nepalese civil servants earlier as honest, sincere, diligent, virtuous, being very concerned about the well-being of the country and longing for an eventual return, but marginalized and treated poorly in Nepal's civil service.

Head-on Collision with Indifference in New York and Washington DC

On 16th September 2005, a rally was organized at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza Park, New York, by members of the Nepali Diaspora community residing in North America. It was primarily organized to protest king Gyanendra's takeover of the country on February

1, 2005 as well as to draw the attention of world leaders to the worsening situation in Nepal. It was scheduled to coincide with the World Summit being held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City, which had brought together about 170 heads of states and governments. About 350 Nepalis, mostly young and about a quarter of them women, and a few Americans participated in this rally. Quite a few of the older participants were well-known members of the Nepali Diaspora. The crowd had gathered at the 1st Avenue side of the park. As I was walking from 2nd Avenue towards the crowd, almost at the middle of the park where there were not that many people, I saw a prominent political figure of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), Mr. Bharat Mohan Adhikari talking with three or four other Nepalis. Mr. Adhikari who probably is in his late seventies or early eighties, is the younger brother of the late Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Man Mohan Adhikari--who was also the only democratically elected communist Prime Minister of any country in the world. In the post 1990 Nepal, Mr. Bharat Mohan Adhikari had held many important positions including the governor of the central bank of Nepal (Nepal Rastra Bank), Finance Minister, and deputy Prime Minister. In addition, he has been a standing committee member of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) for quite a long time and wields enormous influence amongst his party colleagues and members.

I was not sure whether he came to participate in this rally from Nepal or was on a private visit to the US, and had just dropped by at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza Park on that day. Just months earlier, he was placed under house arrest by the royalist government of Nepal and his presence gave me the impression that he was there to lead the protest. Throughout the protest rally, I did not see him participating in any of the activities nor

did he address the gathered crowd even when he could have easily done so. However, what I found really astonishing was his attitude towards his fellow countrymen who had voluntarily taken a day off from their busy lives, or had traveled from as far as California and had gathered there to express their concerns with the deteriorating political situation back home. Most of the time, Mr. Adhikari, stayed where I had seen him first, flanked by his wife and probably his personal assistant. When I was walking past him towards the crowd, I noticed that he was keeping a keen eye on anyone walking towards the crowd. He looked at me keenly too, we had eye contact, and from his body language and facial expression, it was not difficult to tell that he had recognized me as a Nepali national, and was expecting me to recognize him and greet him with a *namaste* first. He was so confident about it that he had slightly drawn his hands forward to return my *namaste* even before I had made any gesture to do so. Since I never knew him personally, I did not feel it necessary to go over and greet him despite the fact that he was a prominent political figure of Nepal. I just kept on walking along without giving much heed to his presence there. As he sensed that I was not going to walk over to him to offer my greetings, he quickly put his hands behind his back. However, I observed many other Nepalis making the journey to where he was standing--with his arms firmly behind his back--and offering their submissive *namastes* accompanied with a slight bow.

Mr. Adhikari represents a leftist political party that prides itself in being the party of the working people of Nepal. It believes in periodic elections, government of the majority, pluralism, rule of law, human rights, and strives to create an economically self-sustained society, provide quality education and health service, full employment and social security to the Nepali people. What I found perplexing was that, such a veteran

politician representing a party that had such ideological moorings was behaving like a Rana autocrat, and that too, in a country where Presidents themselves usually reach out and shake their hands with the general public in their public appearances. One of my consultants who was also present, also was perplexed by Mr. Adhikari's behavior. Later, he confided to me that he felt as if Juddha Shumsher⁷⁰ was visiting New York instead of Mr. Adhikari. Had he walked around the park and reached out to the Nepalis who had gathered there, and then asked them how they were doing, and had thanked them for their concern for the country as well as for their efforts to raise awareness about Nepal in the international arena, he would have garnered much respect both for himself and his party. It was just unbelievable that despite being physically fit to do so, he elected to confine himself at one spot of the park and expected his fellow countrymen who had gathered there to come to his *chakari*.

Though I never expected to meet Mr. Adhikari in New York City nor did I have any plans to ignore him purposively, I was really surprised that my mind instantaneously constructed him as arrogant, needlessly honor-seeking, totally unconcerned about the welfare of the common Nepalese, and one of the major "problem politician" of the country. In other words, I constructed him as being fundamentally different than myself, and was surprised that my personal Self almost reflexively distanced itself away from him. I was even more surprised when one of my consultants portrayed him as an autocrat by comparing him to Juddha Shumsher.

About a month later, I was doing my fieldwork in Washington, D.C. The Liberal Democracy Nepal (LDN), a University of New Mexico based think tank that facilitates a dialogue between Nepalese both in Nepal and abroad for the meaningful benefit of Nepal,

⁷⁰ A hereditary and autocratic Rana Prime Minister who ruled Nepal from 1932 to 1945.

had organized a two-day workshop entitled “Opportunities and Challenges for Nepali Political Parties.” It was attended by the representatives of six political parties of Nepal: Nepali Congress, Communist Party of Nepal (UML), Nepali congress-Democratic, Rastriya Prajatantra Party, Jana Morcha Nepal, Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Ananda Devi) and had a face-to-face interaction on the ongoing political crisis in Nepal. Prominent Nepali politicians like Dr. Ram. S. Mahat, Mr. Chakra Bastola, Mr. Jhala Nath Khanal, Mr. Pari Thapa, Mr. Ashok Rai, Dr. Minendra Rijal, Mr. Bilmalendra Nidhi, Mr. Anil Jha, and Mr. Dhruba Pradhan represented the various political parties. Nepal’s noted human rights activist, Mr. Padma Ratna Tuladhar was also present. In addition to these delegates, about 10 members of the organizing committee, 20 invited guests, and about 10 graduate students were also present on the occasion. Most of the organizing committee members and the invited guests were faculty members (Dr. Gautam and Dr. Saurav were also present there) at different US universities.

The workshop consisted of four moderated thematic sessions, and the delegates, LDN moderators, invited members of the Nepali Diaspora discussed several aspects of the themes, including the restructuring of the state, social justice, and inclusive party polity. In addition, a panel on the United Nation’s possible role was also organized, and the Assistant Secretary-General of the UN and deputy executive director of the UNICEF Mr. Kul C. Gautam--who is also a Nepali--was the keynote speaker. When it was their turn to speak, almost all of the delegates expressed their gratitude to LDN for inviting them to the US as well as for the commendable work they were doing. Pretty quickly, they descended into an orgy of dissecting self-criticism, and almost all of them accepted their past mistakes (one of them, Dr. Minendra Rizal apologized for it) and said that they

have learned their lessons, highlighted some of the serious extant flaws of their own parties, and said that they would work together to create a new and prosperous Nepal where there would be “complete” democracy. Also, they criticized both the Maoists and the king for their heavy handedness, and agreed that the need of the hour was to adopt an all-inclusive democracy, to break the guns of the warring parties, and to embark on the “highway of development.” They also requested that members of the Nepali Diaspora contribute from their respective positions⁷¹. Some also said that they would make efforts to accommodate the Nepali Diaspora in the country’s political processes and development endeavors.

Many of the delegates were seasoned politicians and were excellent orators. If one were oblivious to the recent history of Nepal, he or she would have totally believed in what they were saying and also believed that they would start working in a new co-operative spirit as soon as they stepped out of the jet liner at Kathmandu airport. However, despite all the rhetoric about their unwavering commitment to inclusive democracy, equality, justice, and accepting that they too had inherited the same paternalistic and feudal *Panchayati* culture⁷² and that it was high time for them to cast aside that mentality, it was really astonishing to observe that all of them were behaving in a manner not any different from what Mr. Bharat Mohan Adhikari was doing in New

⁷¹ Dr. Minendra Rizal of the Nepali Congress-Democratic made this statement. Given the context of the deliberations, what he meant was that Nepal abroad should protest regressive moves and support development efforts at home.

⁷² One of the delegates, Mr. Pari Thapa, Vice Chairman of the National People’s Front (Rastriya Janamorcha), summarized the feudal culture of the Nepalese political elites with a saying of his own “kunami basne ra dunama khane, pindhima sutne ra bhitta ma thukne.” Translation: “stays at a corner and eats on a leaf, sleeps at the porch and spits on the wall (of his own house).” What he meant was that the political elites stay away from the people, but make sure that they are served well (a leaf plate cannot be moved around and the food has to be served where the person who is going to eat is seated. Mr. Thapa implied that the feudal lord gets to eat well without doing anything), and they always occupy a central position (a porch in the Nepalese house is a central place from where everyone has to pass through to get into or out of the house), and do the most stupid things (spit on the wall).

York City. I was there for two full days and none of them made any attempt to reach out to me despite the fact that I had made myself absolutely visible by sitting in the front row of the oval-shaped conference table and taking notes. I also had made it a point to dress-up for the event. Neither did I see a single delegate reaching out to other participants (less than 20) who were not members of the organizing committee. The only people they interacted with were either themselves, or members of the organizing committee, or other Nepalis who personally went to meet them.

Though there were many opportunities to ask questions to the delegates on both of the days and despite having really hard questions regarding their many unethical practices while they were in office, I opted not to ask any out of fear that my questions would provoke them unnecessarily and influence the flow and content of the deliberations, and thereby compromise the integrity of my research. I silently observed the proceedings, except for the occasional conversations I had during breaks with other participants (whom I knew already or came to know there)⁷³. During the deliberations, the delegates moved in and out of the conference room very frequently. At one point, about half of the delegates and participants were in the lobby, making phone calls or talking with each other or members of the organizing committee or those Nepalis who had followed them to the lobby. Only two of them, Mr. Jhala Nath Khanal, standing committee member of the UML and a long time MP of that party, and Mr. Anil Jha of (NSP-A) were taking notes. Mr. Dhruva Pradhan, who once was the police chief of the country and was representing the rightist Rashtriya Prajanta Party, was so unconcerned with the whole deliberations, that most of the time, he was busy playing with his digital

⁷³ My silence and unwillingness to reach out to the delegates undoubtedly intrigued many of them. However, I believe that it did not affect the flow and content of the deliberations in any way.

camera. On the first day of the workshop, I felt that most of the delegates looked at me with suspicion, probably wondering who I was and with which political party I was associated with. I knew none of them personally and as with Mr. Bharat Mohan Adhikari, I did not reach out to any of them, but looked straight at their faces whenever I could. By lunch time of the first day, I felt that they were really surprised that I had not spoken with any one of them. Until then, they used to glance at me occasionally, but were careful to avoid any eye contact. But after lunch, they saw that I was not an *afno manche* of any one of them and was not going to reach out to them first, all of them just stopped looking at me as if I were an untouchable who would spoil their day should their eyes fall on me⁷⁴. They continued to do so in the second day as well.

On the second day of the workshop, the Assistant Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. Kul Chandra Gautam had invited all the delegates, members of the organizing committee, and the participants to a dinner program in a Chinese restaurant near Georgetown. Since Mr. Gautam extended the invitation to everyone once again before the workshop concluded, I also planned to attend and do some more observations. Just before the crowd was about to leave and had gathered at the lobby, I decided to see how I would be treated by one of the delegates if I first introduced myself to him. The only delegate standing alone was Nepal's noted human rights activist Mr. Padma Ratna Tuladhar, who also was a member of the Nepalese parliament for a long time. I walked towards him, offered my *namaste*, introduced myself, and asked how he was doing to start a conversation. He returned my *namaste*, looked straight at me, expressed utter disbelief on the fact that I had finally reached out to him, shook my hand, then closed his eyes and

⁷⁴ In rural Nepal, people from the so-called high castes still consider seeing a member of the so-called untouchable community in the early mornings as an inauspicious sign.

muttered a ‘hmmmmmm...’ He was clearly not interested to engage himself in any kind of conversation with me. Maybe he was tired after a long day, but the way Mr. Tuladhar-- a person who had donated all his official salary to social charity and is widely respected as a dedicated human rights activist in Nepal--treated a fellow Nepali who had attempted to speak with him in the capital of the United States so indifferently left me dumbfounded.

Later, the crowd gathered at the Chinese restaurant, and there too, I had a head-on collision with a leftist politician who treated me with absolute indifference. There were about forty five people and we were asked to be seated in a room with four big round tables. About half of the delegates and key members of the organizing committee of the workshop seated themselves with the host. The rest of the delegates were scattered and a prominent politician of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), Mr. Jhala Nath Khanal was seated next to me. Even after having seen me for the last two days and being a prominent leader of the largest communist party of Nepal that espoused socialist ideals, he was adamantly indifferent to my presence, and I believe he had made it a point not to turn his head towards me. We were there for about an hour and he never looked at me despite the fact that I was seated right next to him. I just could not help, but wonder how they would treat other unfortunate Nepalis, for example, those working as laborers in the Gulf countries, if they could treat a well-dressed, possibly highly educated fellow Nepali whom they had come across in the capital of the United States.

Having closely followed their petty-politics for the last fifteen years, I knew what the delegates were saying were perfidious. They were just saying things to appease the workshop organizers, who had worked so hard to make it happen and who were really

concerned about the deteriorating situation in the country. As they have said in their past trips to the US, they once again revealed their true colors when one of the student participants asked them what their respective party's policies were to encourage young Nepalese professionals who were currently in the US to return to Nepal. Mr. Chakra Prasad Bastola, an influential second generation leader of the Nepali Congress who has kinship ties with the party's leadership responded without uttering a single word of encouragement or hope to this question by saying "We expect the children of the Nepali Diaspora to return to Nepal." Another politician and one of the ideologues of Nepali Congress-Democratic, Dr. Minendra Rizal went further in revealing their collective intention and said "Even if you do not return, what you are doing is commendable." The rest of the delegates just nodded in approval to these responses. Towards the end of the workshop, a high school friend of mine, who was also participating in the workshop came close to me and confided his overall feeling about the delegates by saying "they just say that they will do this and that, but in the end, they won't do anything." I was just relieved to know that I was not the only one who had reached that conclusion.

Though I was observing these extraordinarily "democratic" politicians of Nepal in the capital of the United States, I felt that Nepalese history was repeating itself. When I was still in college in Nepal, I had read a book entitled "*Tyas Bakhatko Nepal*,"⁷⁵ written by a retired Nepalese courtier. It was an analytical description of the Nepalese society during the Rana regime, and I believe, many of the accounts written there were what the courtier himself had witnessed during his tenure as a member of the Nepalese royal court (which was controlled by the Ranas until 1951). In one of the chapters, he had described how indifferently the Ranas used to treat Nepalese citizens who had managed to acquire

⁷⁵ Literal translation: "Nepal of those days"

professional skills abroad. According to him, three Nepalese students had managed to study industrial engineering in Japan (probably during 1930s or 1940s), and had returned home with great expectation that they would be welcomed and immediately offered jobs by the Rana regime. Some of their relatives took all of them to a *chakari* session in the palace of the Rana general who was in charge of the state-owned industries at that time. Since they kept a close eye on the movements and actions of their courtiers, that particular general knew who they were and why they were there. Being the only formally trained industrial engineers in the whole country, the young graduates were being arrogant and were not bowing down to the general and refraining themselves from asking him to give them jobs or opportunities to apply their skills in the existing industrial infrastructure of the state. Since the country did not have any large scale private industries that could have utilized their skills, he was the only person who could have given them meaningful jobs. The general knew this and had taken note of their attitude, and was determined to prove who called the shots, as well as, completely break down the independent spirit of the young men. The young men did not have any choice other than to continue attending the *chakari* sessions in the general's court, where he kept on treating them indifferently until their naïve spirits broke down. As soon as they fell on their knees and begged the general to give them jobs, the young men were immediately given appropriate jobs and ordered to report for work the very next day.

On January 7th 2006, I came across a news entitled “NRN’s deplore their exclusion from CA polls” in a Nepalese news portal. The Nepalese Americas Council (NAC), a coordinating body of all North American Nepalese-American organizations had issued a press release and had expressed deep regret over the recent decision of the House

of Representatives of Nepal to exclude Non-Resident Nepalese (NRNs) from voting in the historic constituent assembly elections⁷⁶. Earlier, the government of the seven party alliance had reached a peace deal with the Maoists, agreed on an interim constitution, and had agreed to hold elections to the constituent assembly in June 2007. This had happened despite the fact that many representatives of the six political parties (who were also prominent and influential personalities in their respective parties) who were participating in the Washington D.C. workshop had publicly stated that they would make efforts to accommodate the Nepali Diaspora in the country's political processes and development endeavors.

The observed attitudes of Mr. Bharat Mohan Adhikari, representatives of various political parties of Nepal who were attending the Washington DC workshop, the statements made by them, and the news piece on the exclusion of Non-Resident Nepalese from participation in Nepal's historic constituency assembly elections by Nepal's ruling elites epitomized the marginalization of the country's professional cadre from any meaningful participation in the country's development processes. Individual Selves who did not offer their greetings *first* to the elite Other or the visiting dignitaries as well as Mr. Bharat Mohan Adhikari were purposively ignored, and unfortunately, this is the larger scheme of things in Nepal. No matter how highly-skilled a Nepalese citizen might be, he or she would not be welcomed by Nepal's elite Others unless and until he/she resorts to the institutions of *afno manche* and *chakari*--similar to what the three engineers had to do with the Rana general. It was not surprising at all when the visiting elite Others of Nepal did not provide any assurances to honor and make use of the knowledge and skills of Nepalese professionals who wished to return to home, and the country's highest

⁷⁶ http://www.nepalcouncil.org/News_detail.php?newsid=38 (accessed 01/23/07)

governing body systematically excluded the Non-Resident Nepali collective from assuming any political role in the country's future.

Dr. Saurav's Story: "Shocked by Indifference Even When I Offered Treasure Troves"

The Nepalese government sent a young man, Mr. Saurav to the American University of Beirut to study pharmacy and, as a result, thirty seven years ago, he was in charge of the herb extraction section at the research laboratory of Royal Dugs, a Nepalese government undertaking. According to him, it was a pilot project, and at that time, attempts were being made to start a pharmaceutical industry in the country. After working for two years in that section, he moved to the marketing section, where his job was to identify markets and market the drugs. Production had increased, the market was expanding, and during his tenure, he reported that he increased the annual sales from Rupees 200 thousand (approximately US \$ 19,740.00 at that time) to Rupees 2.5 million (approximately US \$ 247,000.00) (more than 12 fold). According to him, the industry had even started distributing bonuses to its employees. Being a qualified and key employee of a government-owned pharmaceutical industry, he received several promotions during a five year period. However, he reported that he had reached a position where he either had to join the corrupt practices of his colleagues⁷⁷, or resign and

⁷⁷ Initially, Dr. Saurav did not mention what the corrupt practices of his friends were. But later, he told me that many of his friends who continued to work for the Nepalese government had become extremely "rich," and claimed that they owned more absolute wealth than he did despite the fact that he was a professional in the US. Many of his friends, he reported, owned several houses in Kathmandu, and some had even boasted to him about how they had embezzled government, and even USAID funds. Corruption in the Nepalese context usually means government officials working out kickbacks from business persons or contractors for facilitating huge government purchases or construction projects, or accepting bribes for performing mundane administrative functions like renewing a driver's license.

leave the workplace altogether (because he blocked other's path for corruption). He reported that he was extremely frustrated by the corrupt practices of his colleagues, elected to leave, and emigrated to the US in 1975 with the intention of permanently settling down in this country.

After coming to the US, he did his Ph.D. in pharmacy at the University of Buffalo. After earning his Ph.D., Dr. Saurav taught there for several years. Currently, he is a faculty at the University of Rochester's medical school where he teaches pharmacy to physicians and conducts pharmacological research. He also has about 60 scientific papers to his credit, has made over 100 presentations, written chapters for medicine text books, and is considered one of the top geriatrics pharmacists of the US. The walls of his office room are decorated with many certificates and recognitions he has earned for his contributions in the field of pharmacy. He feels that his contributions in his field have been greatly honored in the US and was immensely satisfied with it. Dr. Saurav considers himself a local US citizen, and also feels that he is very much embedded in the US society. Neither does he feel lost or marginalized, nor has he ever regretted his decision to come to the US. However, he still has immense love for his country of birth. He is actively involved in the Non-Resident Nepali movement and keeps himself updated on the political developments in Nepal, and has a strong desire to help Nepal and Nepalis in any way he can.

He is a frequent traveler to Nepal, and one of his passions is to teach Nepalese medical students pharmacy, and train Nepalese pharmacological researchers, scientific research methods. During one of his trip, he visited the schools of pharmacy of the only two universities that had medical science programs, the Kathmandu University and the

Tribhuvan University. He told me that he had talked with the faculty members as well as the officials of these universities, and had offered to teach one course on pharmacy to their students every year. According to him, he had further said that he would neither charge any fees for his services, nor would he seek any financial help to cover his travel and other expenses. However, to his amazement, both of these universities did not respond encouragingly to his offer despite the fact that he was a highly recognized pharmacological researcher in the US--a country that probably has made the most scientific advances in that field. He informed me that his resume was as impressive as that of other American professors who were occasionally invited to give seminars there. He told me that he was really shocked and disappointed by the indifferent attitude of the university officials, even when he had offered his services for free, and lamented the fact that his colleagues in Nepal still had not developed the culture of supporting and sharpening each other. Rather than taking his offer--which would have been “treasure troves” for the students as well as for the institutions--he felt that they feared being outsmarted by a person who possessed superior knowledge and skills. Dr. Saurav was a very optimistic person and he hoped that the situation in Nepal would improve and that he would be able to transfer the skills he has developed in the US.

Apart from his passion to transfer the skills he has learned in the US, Dr. Saurav's other passion is social work. He informed me that he had instituted two nursing scholarships in Nepal to honor his father, and that he was also a frequent contributor to Nepalese charities. Once, he got hold of 500 electronic hospital beds that he could have sent to Nepal. Leaving aside not finding people willing to ship them, what he found really surprising was that he could not find people willing to take them in Nepal (had he been

able to ship them). Being a geriatric pharmacist, he always felt that he should be able to do something for the elderly people of Nepal. He planned to open a 200 bed shelter for the homeless elderly in Nepal, and accordingly, started to raise funds in the US. He even had negotiated with the business-industry community of Nepal and they had allotted a piece of land for this purpose. When he had collected enough funds to start construction for a 50 bed shelter and a small hospital, he enthusiastically went to Nepal to initiate the process. However, once again, he was extremely disappointed to find that the culture of indifference was prevalent even in the social service sector.

I went with this idea there and everybody said that they would do it. They neither said that they need to form a committee nor other things that are important for initiating such projects. Nobody was ready to take full responsibility. I went there with a feeling that I would do something. It is like that now and I think it would be the same later on as well. Unless there is something for some one, things don't get done. It's a very sad commentary. I am here, I went there with funds to start a shelter for the elderly. They should have said "welcome, what can I do to make it happen." Things should have been the other way round and they should have invited me to initiate such projects. But, I had to go around and try to find people willing to take this responsibility. What I felt was that if I stayed there on a long-term basis, I would go mad [he laughs]. That culture still has not developed. (WA7M50CHPNY2: October 2005)

Dr. Saurav's narrative provided concrete examples to construct his own as well as that of the negative elite Other's identities. Like the New Agers, skeptics, and parapsychologists (Hess 1993), he also constructed his Self as honest, diligent, future-oriented, scientific, untainted by material interests and irrational needs, underdog working against great odds, and a pioneer blazing the trail towards new forms of knowledge. However, he was once a member of Nepal's ruling elite--but systematically cornered and forced to emigrate against his will--by none other than his own colleagues. Furthermore, his superior knowledge possessing and philanthropic Self continued to be marginalized by the Other whom he constructed as irrational, possessing less knowledge, having an outdated and non-holistic view of science, self-centered, and stunningly

corrupt. Dr. Saurav's construction of the Nepalese elite Other was strikingly similar to that of the Apache Indian jokers, who presented the approaches of "the Whiteman" as "ineffectively guided behavior, of social action gone haywire, of an individual stunningly ignorant of how to comport himself appropriately in public situations" (Basso 1979: 48).

Discussion

Unlike the Western Apaches who assert that joking was a "means of 'stretching' social relationships, a playful device for testing and affirming solidarity by ostensibly denying it" (Basso 1979: 69), my interview consultants who were Nepalese civil servants earlier did not have a genre of humor that made fun of the Nepalese elite Other, and at the same time, affirmed their solidarity. However, when I asked them about their professional work experiences in Nepal, almost all of them expressed deeply nursed grudges against Nepal's ruling elites (without any probes from my part). Almost all of them perceived that they were denied the identity of a professional Self by an entrenched and negative elite Other while they were in Nepal, and the expression of grudges was an important element in the construction of their identities. In accord with Stuart Hall's observations, my research subjects also constructed their identities within a discourse, and narrated it from the position of the Other (1991: 49; 1996: 4). What they had observed and experienced while they were in Nepal, and their respective positions in a system of bureaucratic and administrative relations where the elite Other had power and they did not, were the primary contexts from which they wove their identities of the marginalized selves. In Hall's terms (1990: 223-6), their "identity of becoming" was in a mode of production and positioned between the individual and other determining

structures and institutions. Their identities were positioned by, and positioned by themselves within, the narratives of their past (Ibid). As such, the marginalized “Self” was defined and maintained in large part by its contrast to the elite “Other,” and together, they provided vehicles for making sense of and commenting on the practice of marginalizing non-*afno manchhes* in the Nepalese civil service, polity, and society. In addition, like the jokes of the Western Apaches, the expression of deeply nursed grudges against Nepal’s ruling elites were also an “indirect form of social commentary” (Basso 1979: 69) as well as a kind of “micro-sociological analysis” (p.17) the immigrant Nepalese civil servants practiced on themselves. Similar to the Western Apache jokes that arose out of particular situations, the negative feelings expressed against Nepal’s elite Other also arose within appropriate contexts, i.e. when talking about their professional work experience in Nepal during the interviews or when some one publicly started to talk about their past work experiences in Nepal (see “Pot-Luck Picnics, Dashain Gathering, and Celebrating Success” in chapter six).

A great majority of my research subjects came to the US, without ever imagining that one day, they would decide to settle down in their host country. What is also interesting is that a significantly lower percentage of my survey participants who were civil servants in Nepal earlier reported that they definitely planned to return to Nepal after completing their studies in the US. As discussed earlier, over 70% of my interview consultants were working in their respective fields, many had become highly successful in their careers, and were in leading research or managerial positions in the US. Like my interview consultants whose stories I have narrated in this chapter, a remarkably higher percentage of my survey participants who were Nepalese civil servants earlier also

Figs. 4.1-a-f. The Mailed Survey: Experiences and Perceptions of Jobs in Nepal

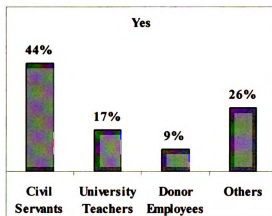


Fig. 4.1-a. I felt marginalized at my job.

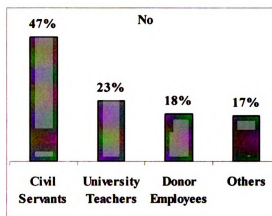


Fig. 4.1-b. I had a say in the decision making process.

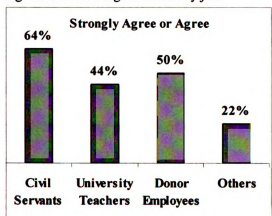


Fig. 4.1-c. I will not be able to influence the decision making process if I return.

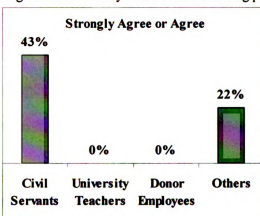


Fig. 4.1-d. My superiors/colleagues will not respect my enhanced knowledge and skills.

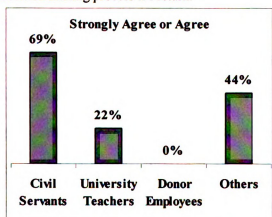


Fig. 4.1-e. There was a small coterie of decision makers who disregarded the welfare of the country.

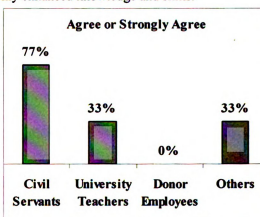


Fig. 4.1-f. Most of the decisions will continue to be taken by a small group of decision makers who put their own welfare before that of the country.

Note: Total number of survey respondents=132. The number of people who responded to each question varies.

reported having similar experiences at their work units in Nepal. When their responses were compared to that of those who had worked in the university system, the donor community, or other private organizations, 44% (vs. 17%: 9%: 26%) of them reported that they had felt marginalized at their work units. Forty seven percent of them (vs. 23%: 18%: 17%) also reported that they did not have any say in the decision making process of the department or unit where they had worked, and that it was an important or very important reason in their decision to come to the US. Furthermore, when their responses to the various *contextual* statements that might have dissuaded them from returning to Nepal were compared to that of their counterparts working outside the Nepalese bureaucracy, a significantly higher percentage of them agreed or strongly agreed that despite their advanced expertise, they felt that they would not be able to influence the decision making process of their departments/units (64% vs. 44% : 50% :22%) and that their superiors/colleagues in their departments would not respect their superior skills (43% vs. 0%: 0%: 22%). These data reveal that my survey participants also constructed their identities as marginalized, poorly treated, and underdog selves.

There is no doubt that Nepal had and still has an institutionalized system to cater to the needs of its citizens and the country. Promising young students were and are still sent abroad to acquire advanced skills on government scholarships or scholarships provided by other governments. What is really striking about the identity construction processes of my interview consultants who were Nepalese civil servants earlier is that, they reveal how poorly the systems of the state were managed and abused by the elite Other, or individuals who were entrusted to keep them running in a smooth and fair manner. What is also striking is that when these interview consultants who constructed

their identities as marginalized selves attempted to do something creative that could have increased the performance or productivity of the departments they were in, almost all of them felt they were out of sync with their elite Others, i.e. their superiors, and in the case of Dr. Saurav, with his own colleagues. All of my interview consultants who were civil servants earlier reported that they were either discouraged or marginalized or treated unfairly by the superiors and/or colleagues of their own departments. Their stories corroborate what Bista (1991) had long argued that the institutions of *chakari* and *afno manche* were highly institutionalized in the Nepalese administrative system, and also that informal sources, rather than formal rules usually influence administrative decisions (Shaha 1982; Dangal 2005). What I found most revealing was that a significantly higher percentage of my survey participants who were civil servants earlier, also had a very negative image of the Nepalese elite Other. Specifically, a great majority of them (69% vs. 22%: 0%: 44%), agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that a small group of decision makers who disregarded the overall welfare of the country existed where they used to work in Nepal. Moreover, 77% of them (vs. 33%: 0%: 33%) felt that most of the decisions in their departments would continue to be made by a small group of decision makers who put their own welfare before that of the country. This was something what I myself had felt very strongly while I was a member of the Nepalese professional cadre. In addition to the many contemporary devious politicians of Nepal, these small group of decision makers--who are entrenched in the many departments and ministries of the Nepalese government, command the resources at their disposal, and run the departments and use the resources mostly to serve their own, their trusted follower's, and their political master's purposes--are essentially the core problem of Nepal.

Almost all of my research subjects who were Nepalese civil servants earlier claimed that their “Others” were the “antiheroes,” and that they (the former) were the ones who stood for enlightenment in a manner that was strikingly similar to that of the skeptics who devote much of their time and effort to exposing exponents of the paranormal as deceptive manipulators (Hess 1993). My research subjects might not be “the perfect selves,” i.e. scientific, future-oriented, untainted by material needs and irrational needs, underdogs, pioneers blazing the trail towards new forms of knowledge and so on, and the elite Others not as unrelentingly stupid and evil as they have been portrayed to be. However, had these highly successful (in the US) research subjects of mine, many of whom were members of Nepal’s professional cadre earlier, been allowed some room to achieve what they desired or were provided opportunities to pursue their interests and ambitions by the various ministries and departments of the Nepalese government, they probably wouldn’t have left Nepal in the first place. Even if they had, I believe many of them would have returned after acquiring further education. Had they returned to Nepal, they could have contributed immensely for the country’s socioeconomic development. Some of my research subjects had been in the US for more than 38 years. However, many things in Nepal still remain the same. Exclusion from active and productive participation in the nation’s development efforts--if there has been any--is perhaps the fate of most of the professional Nepalese cadre. This is our very real world and I sometimes feel that it will never change. Like the billions of gallons of water that flow untapped down the Nepal Himalayas everyday and the thousands of tons of high-altitude and highly-valued medicinal herbs that get smuggled out of the country every year, the Nepalese professional cadre continue to immigrate to the Western

countries totally unchecked by the hundreds (possibly thousands) every year. Despite the diversion of its untapped wealth which otherwise could have totally revolutionized the Nepalese society and economy, it is just appalling when one realizes the insensitive and unimaginative character of the Nepalese civil society, media, and leadership across the entire political spectrum as well as time towards harnessing its very own resources for national progress.

Conclusions

Despite the various attempts made by successive Nepalese governments to modernize the country, a great majority of Nepalese professional cadre continue to be on the fringe of Nepal's socio-cultural and administrative-political processes. The narratives and the survey data I have presented in this chapter amply demonstrate that many ex-members of the Nepalese civil service--the professional cadre of the country--who were fully aware of the prevalent cultural system of the country, constituted their identities of the Self in a set of relationships with the negative elite Others. By constructing the identity of the Nepalese elite Others as an impossible lot, my research subjects who were Nepalese civil servants earlier emphasized significant differences between the conduct and value systems of their professional Selves and that of the entrenched elite Other. By narrating the morally wrong conduct and value system of the Nepalese elite Others, they were expressing their anger and irritation over their past experiences and present state of affairs of Nepal as well as making explicit what was compelling them to remain in the United States. In the next chapter, I examine how the ongoing Maoist insurgency, a state of political uncertainty, and the deteriorating law and order situation in Nepal influence

the professionals' decisions to remain in the US or not return to Nepal. Also, I examine the perspectives of those who have settled down in the United States and of those who are planning to return to Nepal.

CHAPTER FIVE: POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND NOTIONS OF COMPARATIVE SATISFACTION

This chapter examines how the ongoing Maoist insurgency, a state of political uncertainty, and the deteriorating law and order situation in Nepal have influenced my research subject's decisions to remain in the US or not return to Nepal. It will also build on Schiller and Fouron's (2001) concept of the "apparent state" to examine factors that have contributed to destabilize Nepal. I also compare and contrast the professional and financial satisfaction of those consultants who have settled down in the United States or are in the process of doing so, or prolonging their stay with that of those who plan to return to Nepal. I explore how their individual life experiences in Nepal shaped their outlook and plans for the future. In this chapter, I present, analyze, and interpret both qualitative and quantitative data.

The Maoist Movement, Political Uncertainty, and the Deteriorating Law and Order Situation in Nepal

On November 13, 2001, the ongoing peace talks between the representatives of an elected government and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) ended inconclusively. Ten days later, the Maoists renewed their violent campaign and launched coordinated attacks against army barracks and police posts throughout the nation. After more than 100 people were killed in four days of violence, the elected government of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba declared a state of emergency, and suspended all fundamental civil rights. After six months in a state of emergency, Prime Minister Deuba failed to secure

parliament's approval to extend the state of emergency, and he recommended that king Gyanendra dissolve the parliament and announce fresh elections.

Parliament was dissolved, a date was announced for the elections (November 13, 2002), Mr. Deuba was reappointed as the caretaker Prime Minister, and the state of emergency was renewed by ordinance (without the approval of any elected body of representatives). As discussed in chapter two, Prime Minister Deuba's action splintered his party (Nepali Congress), and he failed to bring peace to the country. Citing security reasons, Deuba requested in October 2002 that the king postpone elections for a year. King Gyanendra accused Deuba of being inept and incompetent to hold the general elections by the previously specified date, and promptly dismissed him and his government. Thereafter, two pro-monarchist rightist politicians were successively appointed as the country's Prime Ministers, and were asked to form all party governments, make necessary arrangements to hold the general elections⁷⁸, and initiate a dialogue with the rebels. However, both of them failed to accomplish any of the objectives. Violence continued and a loose alliance of five political parties was agitating against the king's earlier moves. In a surprising move, king Gyanendra reappointed Sher Bahadur Deuba as the country's new Prime Minister in May 2004. He (Deuba) managed to cajole the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist Front (UML), which was agitating against the king's earlier decisions, to join his government. However, once again, Deuba failed to contain the insurgency or hold general elections.

On February 1st, 2005, citing the failure "to make necessary arrangements to hold elections by April and protect democracy, the sovereignty of the people and life and property," king Gyandendra dismissed the government of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur

⁷⁸ No time frames were mentioned in their appointments.

Deuba, declared a state of emergency, and assumed direct power. During the time of my fieldwork (2005 July to January 2006), king Gyanendra was ruling the country through a council of about a dozen hand-picked ministers. Prominent leaders had just been released from house arrests or imprisonment, and clashes between the government forces and the Maoist rebels in different parts of the country had left hundreds dead. In addition, there were reports that both the Maoists and the security forces were routinely abducting civilians on charges of spying for the other side. Many individuals were reported to have been tortured, maimed, and murdered. However, the situation in Nepal had turned around when I conducted my mailed survey (between May and June of 2006). Earlier in September 2005, the Maoist rebels and the major political opposition parties of Nepal had agreed to launch a protest against the king's direct rule. After weeks of agitation in April 2006 by the Maoists and the seven-party alliance, the king voluntarily agreed to give up his state powers and reinstated the parliament he had dissolved on the recommendation of the then Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in May 2002. Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala of the Nepali Congress was appointed the country's new Prime Minister, and the Maoists immediately announced a three-month ceasefire. The seven-party alliance was in charge of the state affairs, and in May 2006, the parliament voted unanimously to curtail the king's political powers, as well as many other privileges. On June 16, 2006, the Maoist leader Prachanda and Prime Minister Koirala held a meeting and agreed to bring the Maoists into the interim government. Though the guns fell silent for the time being, much of the country was controlled by the Maoists, and the government had little control beyond the capital and the district headquarters. Furthermore, despite their commitment to a political settlement, the Maoists were running parallel local governments, continuing

their excesses, forcibly collecting taxes, recruiting very young men and women into their people's army with promises of handsome salaries, and running kangaroo courts that dispensed summary justices in the Nepalese hinterland.

The Nepalese Maoist insurgency has been purported to be a class struggle, and its leaders have claimed that they would eventually liberate the oppressed masses of Nepal. It has been reported that the Maoists have succeeded in recruiting many young people into its army from the numerous marginalized ethnic groups, as well as from the high caste and the so-called untouchable caste groups. Several outfits that were recently organized on the basis of ethnicity also aim to "liberate" their respective ethnic enclaves, and some have associated their ideologies as well as activities with that of the Maoists. However, the Communist Party of Nepal's (Maoists) leadership is also dominated by *Brahmins* and *Chhetris*, who have dominated much of Nepali politics for the last two hundred and forty years, and it is also very likely that the ethnic/caste profile of the Maoists, more or less, represents the ethnic/caste composition of the population of Nepal. As it stands today, the movement is led by *Brahmins* and *Chhetris*, but does not appear to be dominated by the agendas of any particular caste/ethnic group.

A class structure as envisaged, categorized, and understood in the West, does not exist in Nepal (see Appendix I). Given the past as well as the present circumstances, there could not be and cannot be a class struggle in Nepal in a truly Marxist sense. This is largely because the industrial base of the country is almost non-existent (there are a handful of industries in the entire country that employ only 0.84% of the total population of the country⁷⁹), and about 50% of the landowners of Nepal are small peasants who

⁷⁹ 2001 Census: http://www.cbs.gov.np/Pocket%20Book%202006/Chapter10/Chap10_1.htm accessed 1/29/08

make a living out of their own land, and are thus quite unlikely to join the “class struggle” of the Maoists. For example, when violence reached its peak between August and November 2003 (when more than 1,000 Nepalis lost their lives), it was reported that hundreds of thousands of Nepalis, mostly small peasants, took temporary refuge in India rather than joining the Maoists. In addition, anywhere from three to four million young and able bodied, but poor Nepalis--the most likely candidates to join a class struggle--have been working abroad for quite a long time (as discussed in chapter one). However, there were reports that the Maoists had chased away many of the landlords from Nepal’s peripheral areas who had allegedly subscribed to exploitative forms of land tenure and money-lending practices. Their lands were reported to have been expropriated by the Maoists.

In stark contrast to their people-centered revolutionary ideals, there were reports that the Maoists failed to distribute amongst the oppressed and landless the lands the former had wrestled from Nepal’s landlord class. Instead, there were numerous reports that accused the Maoists of keeping the seized lands for themselves, and in some cases, renting them (seized lands) out as well as giving cash loans to landless peasants at exorbitant interest rates. Furthermore, there have been countless reports of the Maoists collecting huge amounts of money as “people’s tax” from ordinary Nepalis like peasants, school teachers, government employees, petty shop keepers and so on. Also, there were countless reports of the Maoists burning down the houses or killing livestock or amputating the limbs of those who refused or could not pay their “taxes.” In addition, they bombed and destroyed many elements of the physical infrastructure that served the needs of the common people, like bridges, water-supply systems, and village offices.

However, they left unscathed the part of the infrastructure, like dams, electric power transmission lines, and industries that were on Nepalese soil, but largely served Indian interests⁸⁰. Since a truly Marxist class struggle is not possible in Nepal, it can be asserted that caste and class are not related to the Maoist movement. Furthermore, the overall conduct of the Maoists has amply demonstrated that they are not driven by political ideology either.

In addition to the excesses of the Maoists, there also were many reports of banks, business houses, and private homes being routinely robbed by highly organized criminal gangs in the country's capital and other towns. There were also reports that armed bandits cleared hundreds of acres of pristine government-owned tropical forest for private gains, and killed many endangered species of animals in government-protected nature reserves for their hides, bones and horns. It was against this backdrop that I had conducted my research, and it should be noted that these events were the immediate points of reference for many of my research subjects. In the next section, I will discuss some less referred to, but equally important factors that have contributed in destabilizing Nepal.

The Apparent State: Hostage to Powerful States and Global Lending Institutions

Despite the facade of Nepal being a democracy since 1990 and news reports of its leaders working towards peace and strengthening democratic processes, the Nepalese political processes as described in my personal narratives (Chapter Four) and above demonstrate that it has never been a functioning democracy. In this chapter, I will build

⁸⁰ What is surprising about the Maoists' actions or inactions is that the first eight out of their 40-point charter of demands they submitted to the Nepalese prime minister before initiating their "people's war" on February 13, 1996 constructed India and Indians in general as the oppressors and exploiters, and that the Nepali state should bring India's domination of the country to an immediate end.

on insights offered by Schiller and Fouron's (2001) work on the concept of "the apparent state." Schiller and Fouron have noted that despite possessing the fixtures of a democratic state, "the governments of many countries today have almost no independent authority to make meaningful changes within their territorial borders" (p.211-12). They argue that the formal apparatus of a government and the struggles for power within the state do not tell the whole story. Reflecting on the Haitian experience, which is the focus of their work, they write:

While governments may be able to repress their citizens and curtail dissent as well as refuse to implement aspects of imposed polities, their political actions as well as their financial activities are monitored and constrained from abroad to such an extent that national leaders are left with no domain from which to take any action that will benefit the majority of their people. The more powerful states and global lending institutions can ensure that the Haitian government does little or nothing. As the citizens of Haiti discovered when they elected Aristide, if a leader is chosen through democratic elections who does not please the international community of lenders, that leader may find his or her government destabilized and is likely to be overthrown. Sovereignty is effectively a facade if Haiti's leaders do not have the power to set their own course and respond to the needs and demands of the Haitian people (2001: 212).

The Haitian experience of domination by powerful states and international financial institutions is remarkably similar to that of Nepal. The history of powerful states interfering in the internal affairs of Nepal dates back to 1816 when the first British Resident was posted to Kathmandu. In addition to exploiting Nepal's natural and human resources for the sole benefit of imperial Britain, the British Representatives routinely interfered in the intense power struggles of the Nepalese courts, and went on to extend their support to the most autocratic ones (Acharya 1998). One of Nepal's noted scholar (Mishra 1987) maintains that Nepal lost its power to decide progressively back in 1885, when the autocratic Ran ruler Bir Shumsher acquiesced to the long-standing demand of the British Indian government to allow it unhindered access to Nepali labor power of its choice. According to him, the capitalist processes set in motion by the British in Nepali

hinterland damaged the country's autonomy as well as the indigenous cycles of production and consumption. Mishra also notes that until 1947, the British peripheralized and underdeveloped Nepal, and in the more recent past as well as the present, the Indian dominant alliance was doing the same.

Due to the unique geographical positioning of the country (the country largely being cut off from China because of to the Himalayas), India exerts an enormous amount of influence and power over Nepalese politics, economy, and the overall society. For example, it played decisive roles in bringing down the Rana regime in 1951, and later, the *Panchayat* regime in 1990. More recently, a few scholars have examined Nepali Maoist's opaque relationship with New Delhi, and have suggested that the Nepalese Maoist insurgency should be viewed in the context of India's role in shaping the past 50 years of Nepal's political history (Mishra, C. 2004; Shah 2004; Mishra, R. 2004). Furthermore, India has repeatedly enforced extremely unequal bilateral trade, transit, and water resources sharing treaties on Nepal, further circumventing the country's autonomy. Mishra (1987) asserts that Nepal took shape as a near-full-fledged hegemony of the Indian state and Indian mercantile bourgeoisie after the signing of the 1950 Indo-Nepal "Treaty of Peace and Friendship," which was largely aimed at China, has never been amended, and unfortunately, still governs the relationship of the two countries.

With China officially becoming a communist state in 1949, and due to its strategic location between two rival regional powers, Nepal began receiving significant amount of aid from the mid-1950s from an unusual mix of donors (Mihaly 1965; Dharmadasini 1994) to finance its innumerable development projects. The biggest donors to Nepal: India, China, and the United States were motivated to give aid by their own strategic

interests. China perceived a tacit Indo-U.S. alliance in the latter two's support of Tibetan refugees who had fled after the Chinese invasion of Tibet, and India pursued a vigorous aid diplomacy to keep Nepal out of the Chinese sphere of influence after its defeat in the Indo-China war of 1962 (Khadka 1997a; 1997b). Similarly, the U.S. aid programs in Nepal sought to prevent communist incursion by encouraging political stability (Mihaly 1965; Khadka 1997b).

In addition to the aid provided by India, China, and the United States, Nepal's successive ruling elites vigorously pursued various sources of foreign aid and loans. As a result, Nepal received foreign aid from countries promoting diverse ideologies as well as loans from international lending institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank. For example the Nepali Congress government observed with pride when donor agencies and lending institutions committed to a four-fold increase after it came to power in 1991 and attributed this increase to the appreciation of the Nepali Congress government's economic policies by the donor and lending agencies. Similarly, the Communist Party of Nepal-United-Marxist-Leninist (UML) that criticized receiving aid and investments from what it once criticized as the "imperialist-capitalist countries" also expressed its commitment to liberal economic policy and foreign investment after it came to power in December 1994. Again, when the Nepal Aid Group pledged \$993 million in aid for the fiscal year 1996-97 at its mid-April 1996 meeting in Paris, the finance minister of the Nepali Congress government attributed this largess to the "resumption of the free market economic policies" that had been stalled by the UML government (Khadka 1997b). More recently, the Maoists leader Prachanda

stated in an interview that they were fighting against “feudalism” and not against “capitalism.”⁸¹

The actions and statements of Nepal’s key political parties and politicians demonstrate that they still regard international lending institutions as sources of assistance, despite the failure of foreign aid in the last five decades to develop the poorest countries of the world in the modernist sense by the injection of massive amounts of funds (Hancock 1989; Grant and Nijman 1998; Dichter 2003), its extensive political components, lack of adequate focus on the social and economic welfare of the receiving countries (Hook 1995; Grant and Nijman 1998; Schraeder et al. 1998; Alesina and Dollar 2000), and misappropriated funds (Grant and Nijman 1998). As Schraeder (1998) observed, successive ruling elites of Nepal continued and at times stepped up efforts to demonstrate that past aid flows had been effective and had satisfied the conditions imposed by donors, and that they had the ability to convert aid resources into long-term economic growth. However, Nepali scholars have long argued that foreign aid has resulted in the enhancement of the position of the upper social classes who benefit from the maintenance of the existing system of political and economic power (Mishra and Sharma 1983; Mishra 1987; Panday 2001). What is noteworthy is that despite their full knowledge about the pervasive corruption and the misappropriation of public aid monies by government ministers and bureaucrats, the lending institutions and bilateral donors continued to support successive Nepalese governments.

Similar to what Schiller and Fouron (2001) have observed about Haiti and as discussed earlier in chapters two and four, corruption also thrived in Nepal. In fact, some

⁸¹ http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/09/world/asia/09nepal.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&ref=world (accessed 4/9/08)

of their observations perfectly fit the Nepali scenario: “Massive corruption has also been the order of the day. The rich pay few or no taxes, the state continues to be used as a means of taxing the poor, and international aid goes into the pockets of government officials” (p. 224). As with the case of Haiti, most of the money that came into the country in the form of “development assistance,” but were essentially loans, was not invested in programs that would have raised the standard of living of the majority of Nepali population. Moreover, the structural adjustment and liberalization programs of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund forced Nepal’s ruling elites to privatize about two dozen government owned companies. Many were operating inefficiently due to pervasive corruption, but were, at least, providing goods and services to the common people at affordable prices. On the other hand, the Nepalese government was also required to take austerity measures that drastically reduced funds for essential state-provided services like health care and education, and eliminated subsidies on fertilizers and small-scale irrigation services to pay back the external debts it had accumulated over the years. In addition, they also required successive Nepalese governments to increase the price of petroleum products⁸², slash import tariffs and eliminate additional duties, retrench a large number of civil servants, allow foreign joint ventures and the private sector to operate banks and financial companies, and broaden the tax base of the country. In striking parallels with the Haitians, an increasing number of Nepalis were sustaining themselves on the remittances sent back by family members working abroad rather than by the fruits of “development assistance.” As Kellner (1998: 25-6) had noted, the highly complex and multidimensional processes of globalization clearly dominated the agendas

⁸² The most recent fuel price hike occurred in January 2008, and the Nepalese government was forced to roll it back due to massive protests.

of Nepalese elites and affected the economy, polity, culture, and everyday life of Nepal and Nepalis.

Schiller and Fouron (2001: 214) use the term *apparent state* “as a means of exploring why people around the world still regard their countries as independent and place their countries’ woes solely on the corruption of their political leaders, whereas they see countries like the United States and the “lending community” as sources of assistance. Schiller and Fouron hold that citizens in the apparent states mistake the rituals and symbolism of nation and the political apparatus of a state for actual control over the nation’s economic activities and transactions. They suggest that the reinforcement of the institutional structures of the state-its courts, police, and electoral processes-by foreign aid reduces the state’s actual sovereignty, and assert that such projects contribute to the illusion of the citizens of the apparent states that their states are sovereign, and their elected leaders have the power to shape the future of their country. Given Nepal’s experiment with the rituals and symbolism of a democratic state, the country’s subordination by powerful states and international capital, and the powerlessness of its leaders to make meaningful changes in the country, it can be safely asserted that Nepal is a bona fide member of the league of “apparent states.”

In addition to the immigration decisions of many of my ex-civil servant subjects being influenced by their construction of the Self as marginalized in the professional work force of Nepal, many of my research subjects were directly influenced by the ongoing political instability, and indirectly by the aura of Nepal being an apparent state. Similar to what some of Schiller and Fouron’s (2001: 230) research subjects acknowledged about Haitian leaders, Nepalese leaders also, except for corruption, did

not, and still do not have much sphere for economic action independent of the strictures of powerful states and international lending institutions. For example, the 1950 Indo-Nepal “Treaty of Peace and Friendship” bars Nepal from constructing any dam within 50 kilometers (31 miles) of India’s border. However, the same treaty does not bar India from constructing dams within 2 kilometers (1.24 miles) of Nepal’s border and from flooding large tracts of Nepali land. As I have demonstrated in chapter four, a great majority of my research subjects, especially those who were Nepalese civil servants, had experienced extremely discouraging situations while they were in Nepal. The sources of this dissatisfaction at the immediate level were the corrupt practices of Nepalese politicians and bureaucrats, and at the wider level, it was the policy of domination of powerful states and international lending institutions.

Getting out of Nepal exposed all of my research subjects to the wider scheme of things. Their previous professional experiences in Nepal allowed them to compare and contrast the Nepalese and American ways of doing things as well as of living. Therefore, the possibilities of achieving higher professional and financial satisfactions in the United States and Nepal were always evaluated comparatively, and many took informed decisions about staying back in the United States or going back to Nepal. When asked what their current plans were about taking long-term residence in the US or returning home, my research subjects gave very mixed answers. Table 5.1 reports this data, showing the striking similarities in the responses of my interview consultants and survey participants.

Table 5.1. Plans about returning to Nepal or staying in the US of the Research Subjects

Question: What are your plans about returning to Nepal?	Interview Consultants (n=46)	Survey Participants (n=132)
Probably or definitely will return after completing studies/gaining enough experience	5%	12%
Will go back after I retire	7%	15%
My stay in the US is temporary, but unsure when I will return	22%	12%
Will stay for a couple of years and then return to Nepal	17%	20%
Probably or definitely will not return to Nepal	17%	18%
Undecided	22%	20%
Other	10%	3%
Total	100%	100%

Fifty six percent of my interview consultants reported that the continuing political uncertainty and the deteriorating law and order situation in Nepal were the primary reasons that dissuaded them from a return to their homeland. Even those who had planned to return earlier reported having taken a “step back,” and felt that it would be very unwise to take an impulsive decision and return to Nepal. For example, Dr. Gautam strongly felt that he would be robbed by bandits, and possibly get killed for his “US dollars,” if he returned to settle down in Nepal. Quite a few of my interview consultants were still in touch with their colleagues in Nepal. They were repeatedly being told that it was getting increasingly difficult even to work in one’s own office setting in Nepal and that they were just unable to contribute to their respective fields despite possessing the potential to do so. One of my consultants, whose father is a leading physician of Nepal had

also expressed similar feelings (of the difficulty to work) to his son, and also had added that whenever a political party was out of power, “every person--from the gateman to the chairman changed.” (For a discussion of the survey results on this issue, see Appendix II, section 5.1)

Professional and Financial Satisfaction

Almost all of my interview consultants who were working during the time of my fieldwork expressed immense satisfaction with their professional life. When asked about their present jobs, almost all of them talked passionately about what they were doing, and it appeared to me that they just loved and took great pride in with what they were doing. When asked to name three most important factors (related to life in the U.S.) that kept them here, 48% of those who were working professionals categorically stated that their careers were the number one reason. For the same question, 45 % of them stated that it was their income, and 58% stated that the possibility of living a fulfilling and satisfying life kept them in the US. When asked to compare their overall living standard and general economic situation in the U.S. to that of their situation in Nepal, 40% of them said that they had a higher standard of living and better economic situation in the US, 27% of them said that their situations were similar, and 10% of them said that they were better off in Nepal. During the time of my fieldwork, 40% of them were living in modest houses/ condominiums/ town houses, and 22% of them were living in luxury houses and driving around in Mercedes Benzes and Saabs. Only the newcomers, students, and those living in the city of New York were living in rented apartments. However, what I found really interesting and revealing was that, 28% of them commented on the almost certain

impossibility of starting life on one's own in Nepal--something which they said was very much possible and achievable in the US. Quite a few of them mentioned about the achievability of the American dream or five-year plans in the US. Dr. Saurav, (who had professional work experiences both in Nepal and in the US) summarized his own experiences as follows:

Over here, I did not know anyone when I came here first. You also need to know people over here. If you know people, you can achieve a lot of things in ten years. If not, then it will take twenty, and I have gone through that. But, you will surely achieve here. But there (Nepal), you will never achieve anything or reach where you want to be. (WA7M50CHPNY2: October 2005)

"I would be spending most of my time trying to put food on the table," was what Paramendra thought would happen to him if he were to return to Nepal right away. He was one of my younger consultants who hailed from the historically marginalized *Terai* group, and had firmly decided to settle down in the US. He commented that he felt more at home in New York than in Kathmandu due to the prejudices of the hill people--who largely dominated Nepalese politics and bureaucracy since the country's unification in 1769. Earlier, he had graduated from Beria College majoring in sociology. He had strong desires to serve Nepal, was my only other consultant who strongly objected to the way the foreign aid regime operated in Nepal, and also lamented the fact that Nepal did not have learned leaders and bureaucrats who could tackle the unjust policies of lending institutions. Paramendra's observations were echoed by Dr. Sundar, my other consultant who was a second time returnee to the US. He summarized the major difference he had observed between Nepal and the US as follows:

In Nepal too, people can work and support oneself. But, what should be the secondary activities draws your constant attention. For example, I have to educate my children, build my own house and the whole thing. People have to think about these things in addition to teaching (your work) and it keeps your mind occupied. Over here, what happens is that even by holding a simple job, it automatically covers most of these things. This is the major difference I have observed. (NY8M40BRPNY11: October 2005)

In 1985, Dr. Sundar had earned a master's degree from North Carolina State University at Raleigh. He was a faculty member of the Tribhuvan University and had returned home to resume his university career. After returning from the US, he taught at the forestry institute in Hetauda⁸³ and Pokhara for three years. However, he reported that there weren't many opportunities for research, the resources were scarce, priorities were limited, and the emphasis was more on other (unnecessary) activities⁸⁴. The absence of opportunities to apply the skills he had learned in the US made him extremely dissatisfied, and he said that he felt very "bitter" about it. Low productivity at his work was his biggest concern. Had his involvement in professional research work in Nepal gradually increased, he reported that he would not have cared much. He came back to the US in 1988 to pursue his doctorate degree. After finishing his doctorate program, he did not return home and during the time of my fieldwork, he was a senior statistician in a leading pharmaceutical company, and had settled down with his family in New Jersey. (For a discussion of the survey results on this issue, see Appendix II, section 5.2)

Settlers

"It is possible to pursue your passion in the U.S."

During the time of my fieldwork, Navin was working with a multidisciplinary team of biologists and engineers that was trying to develop a high-throughput genome

⁸³ A small town in the central *Terai* of Nepal.

⁸⁴ Though he did not elaborate what these unnecessary activities were, the usual trend in the various institutions and departments of the Tribhuvan University are quite similar to that of the country itself. Faculty members compete with each for positions like the dean, department chair, campus chief and so on.

sequencing facility in a leading research university in Boston. It was basically a biological research project, but required huge engineering systems robots. Navin informed me that many engineers were working in this field, and his expertise was in the area of systems design, robotics and low-volume liquid handling/optimization. Along with other engineers, he built sample platforms, automaton systems, and robots. Their work mostly involved hardware components and a little software component. Navin reported that there were about four hundred staff members at his work unit and that it was still growing. There were many different groups under this project, and his particular group was devoted to developing technology for the whole project. He worked together with a team of molecular biologists, and electrical and mechanical engineers to develop, build, and test sample platforms, automaton systems, and robots.

Navin reported that there was not much hierarchy at his work unit and that there was only one group director. All other staff members were at the peer level, and unlike profit making organizations, they did not have any standardized positions and promoted staffs accordingly. He also informed me that the titles did not change, but the responsibilities went on increasing, because one's experiences increased as they went along. Being a research institution, Navin reported that there was a high turnover of people. People came there, worked for four to five years, and attempted to launch a career with that background and impressive credentials. . He also informed me that most of the people at his work were very young, and they had a very small bureaucracy. Compared to profit making industries, Navin informed me that his and his colleague's salaries might have been a little less, but they had immense flexibility in the job. He could keep his hours flexible, and as long as things were being done, he could come early and leave for

home early, or come late and leave late. Every year, he was entitled to four weeks of leave and three courses (free of charge) at the university where he was working.

Earlier, Navin had studied mechanical engineering at Punjab Engineering College, India, where he acquired a very broad education. By the time he was done with his studies there, he had no clue as to what area he should pursue. He also felt that the professional framework of India was very structured⁸⁵. He already had an elder brother in the US and through him learned about the open academic structure of American universities and found it very appealing. He told me that he came to the US primarily due to this reason. He graduated with a MS in mechanical engineering from Tufts University, where he studied ultrasonic metal welding, and helped develop a fully-automated Ultrasonic Rapid Manufacturing (URM) device. As he had planned, he came to the US, explored certain areas, picked up the one that interested him, specialized in them, and started working in that field. Like many of my consultants, Navin had the encouragement from his brother to pursue his passions in the US and enjoyed the freedom to do so without much resistance or restrictions. In addition, Navin also reported that he was an aspiring entrepreneur, believed in economic growth, and for the long-term, had an intense desire to do something that could involve both Nepal and the US. Professionally, he informed me that he was very satisfied and strongly felt that he was making some contribution in his area of expertise. However, at the personal level, he reported that it did not have any meaning, and at times, he felt like a cog in the wheel. Though he told me that he had not thought about it extensively, but if he could, he would leverage his

⁸⁵ What he meant was that students of one stream could not take courses from other streams even if that would help them achieve their career goals. For example, engineering students are not allowed to take courses of molecular biology, and this is a common practice in South Asian colleges and universities.

contacts in the US and apply his knowledge and skills in Nepal. This, he felt would be his contribution to Nepal and that it would be very fulfilling for him.

Suresh attended the St. Xavier's High School in Kathmandu, which was run by US Jesuits fathers. As opposed to all other government run and most private schools, the focus of education in that school according to him was on learning and content, rather than on memorizing and grade. After graduating from high school, Suresh, like most of my interview consultants, went through the Nepalese higher education system. Like most of his friends, he joined the Amrit Science College in Kathmandu and studied science there for two years. The Amrit Science College was a government-run institution, and the way the curriculum was developed and presented, and the way the students were tested were fundamentally different from what he had experienced in his high school. The focus there was on grades and passing, getting high marks, memorizing and so on. He told me that even at that age, he had strongly felt that he was not getting a meaningful education there and asked himself if he was going to extend that way of learning into his engineering degree, or if there was a better way. He had one elder brother, one elder sister, and one younger sister. At that time, his brother had gone to India and his elder sister had gone to Pakistan to pursue their higher education. And from his siblings, he reported that he knew the Indian and Pakistani educational systems. But, what was unknown to him and his family members was the American system of education. Though he was offered a four-year Colombo Plan (full) scholarship to study engineering at India's Illahabad University by the Nepalese government, he declined that offer and chose to step into the unknown. He came to Davidson College in 1987 despite the fact that he was offered full scholarship only for his first year of college.

Being a very bright student, Suresh managed to secure full scholarships for the rest of his years at Davidson. After graduating from Davidson, he went to Clemson University in South Carolina and earned a master's degree in mathematics in 1993. Then again, he joined the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and earned another master's degree in operations and research. With a background in industrial engineering, mathematics, applied mathematics, and management, Suresh started his career as an operations research analyst for US Airways. From 1995 to 1998, he reported that he built mathematical models to solve airline problems. After that, he joined a supply chain software company in Maryland as a senior analyst. He had moved to corporate headquarters at Rockville, MD in 2003 and has been the director of development since then. During the time of my fieldwork, he reported that he was working with a team of operations research statistics professionals. Most of them were mathematical modeling experts, and they worked with companies to help them determine the right prices for their products as well as optimize their promotions. In addition to American staffs, Suresh informed me that his team also had Chinese, Indian, and Russian members.

Mathematics was his passion since his childhood and when I asked him how satisfied he was with his job, he told me that he was very satisfied with it, and would be even more if only his company could do a little better. Just on the day I had interviewed him, he told me that he was telling some of his colleagues what he liked best about his job. According to him, he had lots of opportunities to work on very different types of problems. Sometimes he would be working on transportation problems, sometimes on pricing problems, sometimes on forecasting problems, and a lot of these involved optimization mathematical problems. Due to his managerial position, he informed me

that he gets to sample a wide variety of problems, and he thought that there were probably a very few of them (in his own work unit) who gets to do all these because, typically, most of them focused on one problem, and that was it. He compared his job to that of those working in the military side, where they spend almost their entire careers working on only one military problem. The other thing he reported he really liked about his job was that his days went very quickly. He told me that he gets into his office at nine in the morning and the next time he looks at his watch, it would be half past six in the evening. His company had shrunk drastically in the recent years due to rounds and rounds of lay offs, and he commented that this had resulted in a lot fewer people doing a lot more work. Suresh was obviously a key figure in his company, and he informed me that he had quite a big say in what went on there.

We are a software company, so a lot of [questions regarding] the software design, like “should we build this and that language? Or that language? Or should we support only UNIX? Or should we support Windows”...these are mostly technology questions, and I don’t get involved in that. But, what I do get involved in and what I really end up being the decision maker is how we solve this problem. Should we use this algorithm? Or should we use that algorithm?...A lot of the core engine decisions, I get to make...in terms of the product we build, I have quite a bit of a say. (WA6M30BRNN4: October 2005)

For his own career growth as well as to keep his company current, his company had partnered with university professors to do research. They gave them [the university professors] problems and they would come back with possible solution methodology or propose something else. In addition to establishing contact with the academia to know what was going on, Suresh routinely attended conferences and trade shows to understand what other people were doing in their field. Furthermore, he had innumerable training opportunities, and just last summer he took a course at MIT. He reported to people whom he really respected and thought highly of. He commented that he was very lucky because he usually heard people whining and complaining about their bosses. During the time of

my fieldwork, Suresh informed me that his elder brother had settled down in Pittsburgh and his elder sister had done so in Atlanta. His younger sister was living in England, and he himself was settled down in an affluent suburb of Germantown.

“I would not have achieved this much even if I had worked for my entire life in Nepal”

As briefly discussed earlier, one of the issues raised by quite a few of my interview consultants was the almost impossibility of starting life on one’s own in Nepal without patronage and connections, and reaching satisfying and fulfilling professional and financial stages. About sixty percent of my interview consultants indicated that they could have survived in Nepal, but affirmed that life would not have been as easy and comfortable as it had been in the US. About 25% of my interview consultants who had work experiences in Nepal mentioned that they were financially very well off in the US, and could immediately purchase anything they strongly desired. This was something they strongly asserted would not have been possible in Nepal. One of my consultant mentioned that had she stayed back, she would have had difficulty even in buying a simple item like a birthday gift. Even consultants who hailed from upper class family backgrounds and who could have literally “waddled in the wealth left behind by their parents and ancestors,” were making preparations to settle down and talked about the financial security one could achieve in the US in a relatively short period of time.

Prasanna was born in a privileged household of professionals in Kathmandu. His father was a faculty member at Tribhuvan University’s Institute of Engineering, and his mother was a physician working for the Nepalese government. As a child, he had lived in

England for five years. When he was eleven, he returned to Nepal with his parents and attended Nepal's elite boarding school. From there, he had passed the University of Cambridge's international "A" level examinations, and then had studied medicine in Bangladesh at his family's own expense. After graduating from medical school, he returned to Nepal, worked for a year as an intern, and then started working as an in-house medical officer for private nursing homes. When I asked him to share his work experiences in Nepal, he complained that more than the work itself, he was very frustrated with the money he was making. He informed me that he used to earn about six thousand rupees (US\$ 110.00) per month, half of which went to gas. Despite being a physician, he felt that he was not getting appropriate return for all the hard work he did in Nepal. From that perspective, he thought that it was a waste of time to be in Nepal and decided to move somewhere and started to explore other opportunities. He also commented that to make money in Nepal, one either needed to have lots of money at hand, or a father who was in an influential position. According to him, it was only then that one could do something in Nepal. For a common man to rise from the bottom or without owning anything in Nepal, according to him, was "next to impossible." There were people who had risen from a scratch, but still, he reported that this dream was more achievable in the US than in Nepal. When I asked him to compare his overall living standard and general economic situation in the U.S. to his situation in Nepal, he commented:

My economic wellbeing is definitely better over here. As I said earlier, I used to earn six thousand Ruppes, and half of it used to go on gas alone. What do I do with the remainder? When you look at the situation in Nepal, it is extremely difficult for a regular middle-class family to sustain itself solely by relying on salary. If you do not have a side job, it will be quite difficult to sustain oneself. Since I had a house in Kathmandu and was living with my mom and dad, it was a lot easier for me. I knew that. (NY11M30NPNY3: October 2005)

Dipesh hailed from a middle class family background, and his father was a civil servant working for the Department of Forests. His father was routinely transferred from one district to another, and Dipesh grew up all over Nepal. Like most of my research subjects, he too had studied science after high school, was sent to study engineering in India under the Colombo Plan, had returned home, and had worked briefly for the state-owned Nepal Television, and later, with a development project of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Even though it is not the norm in Nepal, Dipesh commented that he could not imagine moving away from his parents' home and starting everything on his own. The cost of living in Kathmandu, according to him was just too high for a young professional to start everything on his/her official salary. During the time of my fieldwork, both Dipesh and his wife were working, owned a recently built moderate sized house, had two cars, and appeared very content with their financial well being. He commented that he would not have been able to achieve what he had achieved [in the US] in a couple of years, even if he had worked for his entire life in Nepal. When I asked him to compare his overall living standard and general economic situation in the U.S. to his situation in Nepal, he primarily emphasized the financial difficulties he had experienced in Nepal:

In Nepal, if one is employed in the government sector...it is very difficult to imagine how one manages one's life. Either you have to have a lot of ancestral property or other sources of income. I just wonder how people manage things. But, the UNDP job was better compared to the government job. The salary was probably three times more than the government job. But still, it was not sufficient to start my own life, like buying my own house and car, and so on. But, work in such projects would have allowed me to maintain a middle-class living standard only...to have the level of comfort we enjoy over here in Nepal, you have to be extremely rich (in Nepal). (NY5M30BRPNY4: September 2005)

Return-Planners

As discussed earlier, a great majority of my interview consultants were either uncertain or wanted to wait for next 10-12 years and see how things develop in Nepal. Only two of forty-six of my interview consultants categorically stated that they intended to return to Nepal. The responses of my survey participants were strikingly similar and when they were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with various contextual statements that might have influenced their decisions about remaining in the US or returning to Nepal, 64% of them indicated that they felt that Nepal needed their services and expertise. Seventy six percent of them felt that there was so much that still needed to be done in Nepal, and 71% felt that they could make significant contributions in their fields of expertise in Nepal. Seventy five percent of those who came to the US as undergraduate students and 76% of those employed in the “other” category (private sector, school teachers, freelance journalist etc.) reported that they felt that there were immense opportunities in the private sector in Nepal.

In addition to their optimistic outlook, families and friends were also an equally important factor for those contemplating returning home. Seventy percent of my survey participants reported that they missed their friends and family in Nepal. Another 70% of them reported that their families were in Nepal, and they wanted to be with them. This figure for those who hailed from the upper class family backgrounds was 88%. Forty eight percent of all the survey participants and 56% of the graduate students reported that their family members in Nepal wanted them to return home.

“My services would have more meaning in Nepal”

About fifteen percent of my interview consultants had medical backgrounds, and, regardless of their intentions whether to stay in the US or to return to Nepal, all of them strongly asserted that their services would have more meaning in Nepal than in the US. During the time of my fieldwork, Priya was preparing to acquire a U.S. medical practitioner license. After graduating from Manipal Medical College in Pokhara, she had worked as an intern for one and a half years at the pediatrics department of the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu, and for a year at the Nepalese Army Hospital, also in Kathmandu. She came to the US in 2002 to join her husband, who was already working in the US. She informed me that she planned to do medical residency once she acquired her medical practitioner license. Though she was not sure when she would be returning to Nepal and liked many of the things in the US, she told me that she still felt that she did not “belong to this place.” She expressed her feelings as follows:

What I feel is that they don't need me over here. I think people back there need me more. Over here, people do not have difficulty arranging a meal in a day, but in Nepal, people have difficulty even doing that. Over here, if you have cough, you can find a hundred different varieties of cough syrups. But in Nepal, forget about cough syrup, people die because they do not have access to paracetamols. Children are born and their parents have difficulty keeping them warm and they die soon after. What I feel is that those who are born here have opportunities. People lose things over here because they do not manage their lives. But in Nepal, the resources are just not there. All the time, what I feel is that I shouldn't be helping people here, but I have to go back to my own country. I might sound like a hypocrite when I say “Oh, I want to go.” But definitely, what I feel is that my services would have more meaning in Nepal than here. (BOS12F30CHPNY3: July 2005)

When I asked her what factors of Nepal attracted her the most, she replied that it was “the sun, water, air, home, and family.” She was very confident about finding a suitable job. However, she was skeptical about adjusting to the prevailing work environment, which she thought had not developed yet. She told me that she found the corrupt system, the unprofessional behavior of professionals, the rampant poverty and the

difference between the rich and the poor, and the recent turn of events where a convicted criminal was sworn in as a minister of the royal government very frustrating. And at times, she informed me that she really wondered if anything could be done in Nepal.

“...People don’t wear shoes here. Therefore, we can sell more”

Subarna, one out of the two consultants who categorically said that they were determined to return to Nepal, told me a parable about two shoes salesmen who were sent to an African village to explore the local market for shoes, when I asked him what factors of Nepal attracted him the most. According to him, both of them observed that none of the villagers were wearing shoes. One called his boss and reported that there wasn’t any market for shoes because nobody wore them. Another called his boss and reported “people don’t wear shoes here. Therefore, we can sell more.”

A mechanical engineer by training, Subarna had been a member of the US professional workforce for the last seven to eight years, and was working with the audio equipment manufacturing giant BOSE during the time of my fieldwork in Boston. He hailed from a small village in Western Nepal and reported that his father had a small business in his village, and was also a volunteer social worker. Subarna informed me that, at one time, his father was elected as the mayor of his village and managed to bring water supply systems, materials for constructing schools, and linked the village with the country’s road network.

After passing his SLC, Subarna studied science for two years in Kathmandu. He did exceedingly well in his intermediate studies and thereafter, was sent by the Nepalese government under the Colombo Plan to study mechanical engineering at India’s

prestigious University of Roorkee. After finishing his undergraduate studies in Roorkee, Subarna informed me that he stayed there for two additional years and did research work in product development. Then, he returned to Nepal and worked for a couple of years at Nepal Hydro, a private engineering company. Unlike him, many of his friends had joined the Nepalese civil service after finishing their studies. Subarna knew about the work culture in the civil service and rather than joining the Nepalese bureaucracy and fighting with the system, he decided to work outside, gain knowledge and technical skills, and then possibly, start from a higher position. That was how his work with a private firm started and according to him, this feeling had developed in him even before he returned to Nepal from India.

At the private firm, Subarna designed turbines and equipments for Nepal's first privately owned and operated Jhimruk hydro power project. Many of the manufacturing events happened under his supervision, and he considered designing a hundred kilowatt turbine for a small village all by himself as his major achievement in Nepal. He reported that the work environment at Nepal Hydro was excellent, his colleagues were polite, helped each other out, and that there were plenty of opportunities to develop skills. However, he reported that the culture of the company--that determined how employees acted, how energetically they contributed to team work, problem solving, innovation, productivity, quality and so on--had not been developed, and that the company also did not have long-term visions like that in the US. He reported that had he opted to stay there, he would most likely have been in the track to be the general manager.

Subarna reported that there weren't any social or political or economic reasons that factored in his decision to come to the US. Like my other interview consultants who

had engineering backgrounds, Subarna also reported that he too came to the US to learn new things and develop new skills that would help him to develop new products, and had plans to return to Nepal once he had his academic degree and enough US work experience. As he studied and worked here, he reported that he understood many things which he was not aware about earlier, and told me that his goals and strategies had shifted accordingly. From product development, he reported that his interest had shifted to consumer area. However, he was still determined to return to Nepal, and he even had a firm date when he would do that. Earlier, he had attended Manhattan College in New York, and had earned a master's degree in mechanical engineering with a concentration in mechanical design. His next plans were to enroll in a Ph. D. program in the Fall of 2006 or 2007, and then definitely return to Nepal in 2011 to launch his own business. As I was writing this section, out of curiosity, I googled his name and was surprised to find that he was listed as a patent inventor. He had co-invented a loudspeaker suspension system, and had registered a patent right with his colleagues.

During the course of the interview, Subarna continuously compared his perspectives to that of other Nepali professionals and asserted that his take was like that of the second shoes salesman. Many of his friends, according to him, were like “why do you go back to Nepal? What is in there for us?” Compared to his friends, he reported that he was motivated by questions like “what can I give by returning to Nepal? What can I share with the people?” He strongly felt that Nepal lacked so many things, and therefore, there were so many opportunities to do things there. A strong prospect for researching new products, developing and marketing them, and the possibilities to teach other companies the skills he learned in the US were Nepal's biggest attraction for him.

However, Subarna conceded that the level of technology and the facilities that are available in the US would not be there, and was also well aware about the challenges that lay ahead. When I asked him what he thought would be the positive and negative aspects of his return, he expressed his firm determination and optimism as follows:

The positive thing is when I return to Nepal, I will be returning with the intention of establishing my own company. I will be free to work in the areas that interest me, I will have a much bigger choice for myself. Another part is that when you open a new company, it's a big start. Nobody will come and give me a paycheck for working eight hours. I will be in that stage and under those circumstances, I might have to work sixteen hours a day instead of eight. I will have to work much more. Right now, I am an engineer and work only on engineering pieces. But in those circumstances, I will have to manage, work as an owner, manage the finances, pay the bills, observe and monitor the functioning of the company...I will have to look after all the aspects by myself. The burden will be enormous. From that point, we can look at things positively as well as negatively. But when I look at it, it is a positive thing. From the same point, the major loss will be, I will definitely have less time. But at the same time, even if I have less time, I will be able to do the things I want to do. In addition, I will be working in the areas that I have always wanted to...and I will be developing my own products...then after that, I will have the choices. They will be grounded with all the opportunities (available there). (BOS11M40PCHNY10: July 2005)

After coming to the US, Subarna had visited Nepal three times. Again, he compared his experiences with that of his friends who had concluded after their trips to Nepal that it was not a place to return to. He reported that he never felt that way and whenever he was there, he reported seeing new opportunities, assessing what would be operational, and marveled at how things would work if he could do this and that in Nepal.

Discussion

Without any probing from my part, 33% of my interview consultants had mentioned that it would be a professional dead end if they chose to return to Nepal. Quite a few of them said with certainty that there wasn't any environment (in Nepal) for the kinds of research or work they were doing in the US, and that they would not be able to create one either. (For a discussion of the survey results on this issue, see Appendix II,

section 5.3) Though only two of my interview consultants indicated that donor agencies were promoting unrealistic programs in Nepal, and, by inference, Nepalese rulers did not have much freedom to decline them (unrealistic programs) or initiate their own, it is quite evident from the accounts of my interview consultants that they had unconsciously construed their lives to be under the shadow of an apparent state. It was a fact of life that their initiatives were circumvented by the Nepalese elite Other. However, the autonomy of the Nepalese elites was also circumvented by powerful states and international lending institutions. It was in these contexts that many of them talked about the impossibilities of pursuing one's passions, starting life or a viable business on one's own, achieving anything concrete and so on in Nepal.

Even though a great majority of my research subjects reported that they were staying in the US for a couple of more years, or their stay was temporary, or that they were undecided, what I strongly felt and what only thirteen percent of my interview consultants said explicitly was that, most of them were living in the US focusing on one objective at a time. In a great majority of the cases of my interview consultants, it was the men who first came to the US. The usual trend was once one of the spouses started working, the other would go to school, graduate, and then launch a separate career. Once both of the spouses were in the workforce, (or if only one of them were) and if they had teenagers, the priority shifted to the college education of their kids. It is interesting to note that about fifteen percent of my interview consultants reported that they would return to Nepal to retire, but only after setting their children in proper educational paths. During the time of my fieldwork, Sammer's wife was studying nursing and they had a ten year old son. This was how he described his situation:

Emm...it was like I would stay for a certain time to gain experience, but...even now, I still have not thought about living here for ever...After I finished my studies, we thought about what to do next. And my wife was interested to study. Then we decided to do something and I started my career. After this, it might be my son's turn and we might return after he finishes his college. Life is like this, you know. Even now, I am not like "we are staying here." I am moving according to my priorities. (NY1M30BRPNY4: September 2005)

Conclusions

The ongoing Maoist movement, political uncertainty, and the deteriorating law and order situation in Nepal were identified as the major factors that dissuaded my research subjects from returning home. Though only two of my interview consultants recognized the status of Nepal as an apparent state, many had unconsciously construed their lives to be under its shadow. More than eighty percent of my working research subjects were extremely satisfied with their jobs, careers, and household income. This was equally true even for those who could not be satisfied with their jobs, careers, and income in Nepal. The earlier in their lives my research subjects came to the US and the longer they stayed here, the more satisfied they were with their jobs and household incomes. A great majority of my interview consultants who were working professionals took great pride in what they were doing, and reported that they felt that their work was valued, recognized, and also felt included in their work settings. A great majority of them affirmed that they were able to pursue their passions in the US. A majority of my research subjects had not firmly decided about settling down in the US or returning to Nepal. However, a majority of my interview consultants were living in the US focusing on one objective at a time. Though a great majority of my research subjects reported that they could make significant contributions in their fields of expertise in Nepal, a great majority of them also reported that there was an absence of result-oriented work ethics in

Nepal's professional work settings, that they would not be able to adjust to the highly politicized work places of Nepal, and that Nepal had not created a climate for attracting and retaining talent. Very few of my research subjects had plans to return to Nepal, and they planned to do so because they saw immense opportunities to apply their skills in Nepal.

CHAPTER SIX: SETTLING DOWN

A man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it.

-George Moore

A great majority of my consultants call the United States their new home, and this chapter provides “thick descriptions” of the different facets of their immigrant lives. As such, it is not explicitly informed by the theoretical constructs that dominate the rest of this work, but builds on the issues discussed in chapters four and five, and provides context for understanding chapter seven. I emphasize how the many opportunities available, as well as the presence of their dearest and nearest ones, in the United States also influenced their earlier intentions of returning home. The presence of professional Nepalese in the United States is already a mass phenomenon, and communal functions like pot-luck picnics, *Dashain*⁸⁶ gathering, as well as private functions to celebrate personal achievements and *rites de passages*, have become fairly common events. Also, the Nepalese marriage pool has become sufficiently big enough in the United States that the parents/relatives of prospective brides and grooms or the brides and grooms themselves can find their matches themselves. I will present both qualitative and quantitative data, and compare the immigration experiences of my research subjects with those of other immigrant groups.

⁸⁶ *Dashain* is a 15-day long national festival of Nepal and is observed after harvesting rice around September-October. It commemorates a mythical victory of the gods over the wicked demons and glorifies the triumph of good over evil. This festival is significant for its emphasis on family gatherings as well as on renewal of community ties. During this time, people usually return home no matter where they are to celebrate the holiday together with their other family members.

The Transition: *Janmabhumi* and *Karmabhumi*

One of the most striking characteristics of my research subjects was that many of them did not come to the United States as classic one-way migrants--husband, wife, kids, and a few suitcases. As discussed in chapter four, over 60% of my research subjects planned to return home after completing their studies, or planned to study, gain some experience, and then definitely return home. During my fieldwork, three of my interview consultants (7%) described Nepal as their *janmabhumi* (land of birth) and the US as their *karmabhumi* (land of work) without any probes. Since it was such a compelling expression that aptly captured their personal feelings and circumstances, and reflected the grounded realities of both Nepal and the US, I included it as a statement in my survey instrument where the respondents could agree or disagree with it at several levels. A remarkable 62% of all of the survey participants either agreed or strongly agreed to the statement "I feel that Nepal is my *janmabhumi* and the U.S. is my *karmabhumi*." This figure was particularly high for the men (71% vs. 29% for the women), those who came from upper class family backgrounds (73%), those who had been in the US for more than eleven years (75% vs. 50% for those who had been in the US for 1 to 10 years), and the highest for those who were Nepalese civil servants earlier (86%). As discussed in chapter four, a great majority of my research subjects came to the US assuming that they would eventually return home after acquiring a degree or gaining enough work experience. However, without any probes, 33% of my interview consultants reported that their perspectives on life, career, and earlier intentions of returning home changed slowly as they continued with their education and lives in the US. In his initial days in the US, one of my consultant reported that he used to "look at things from Nepal's perspective only."

Figure 6.1-a-d. The Mailed Survey: Perceptions of Nepal as *Janmabhumi* and the US as *Karmabhumi*

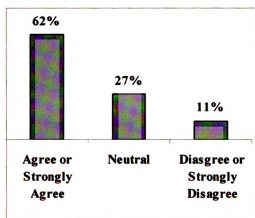


Fig. 6.1-a. All Survey Data

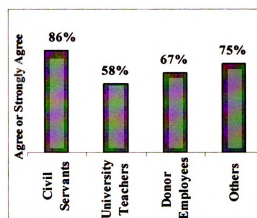


Fig. 6.1-b. Employment Status in Nepal

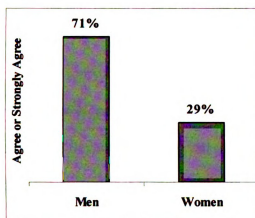


Fig. 6.1-c. Gender

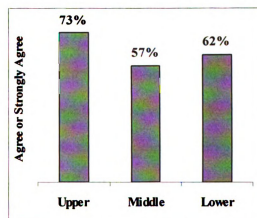


Fig. 6.1-d. Class Background

Note: Total number of survey respondents=132. The number of people who responded to each question varies.

As their exposure to a world that was so different from their own increased, they reported that they continuously compared things Nepal and the US, and realized that they had developed new perspectives, and began following them too.

My interview consultants' personal experiences in Nepal (see chapter four) also seemed to have played a pivotal role in their thinking about Nepal as their *janmabhumi* and the US as their *karmabhumi*. Dr. Kiran, one of my middle aged consultants who came to the US when there was relative peace in Nepal, was practicing law in the state of

New York during my fieldwork. Earlier, he had earned his LLM from Columbia University and his Jurist Doctor from Fordham University. He reported that he knew what awaited him if he had returned to Nepal after his studies in the US. Earlier, he was a faculty member at Tribhuvan University's College of Law and commented on his transition as follows:

Before I started teaching in Nepal, I used to think that if one returned with education from abroad (First World countries) one gets more opportunities. That, I did not see in Nepal. I have to admit that it's kind of discouraging. Because, what happens there is, he who has better contacts, links, gets the opportunities. I saw that and that was also a part of my observation when I was in Nepal later. That's why...that factor...even if I had gone there immediately, I was not sure about things. And I would have to start all over. I feared this and later on, I saw my friends who went back. They all had to start from the beginning. There was nothing that could change or anything to encourage you or get extra credit for what you do. That was one of the factors and as I stayed on, my mind changed. (NY7M50CHPNY2: October 2005)

Twenty five percent of my survey participants (n=33) reported that they had returned to Nepal earlier after pursuing higher education in the US or other developed countries. Seventy eight percent of those who had done so also agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that Nepal was their *janmabhumi* and the US was their *karmabhumi*. Having returned to Nepal after acquiring a professional degree from a First World country also had undoubtedly played a role in changing the perspectives of some of my interview consultants as well. It had allowed them to evaluate many things between Nepal and the US and make an informed decision before deciding to settle down in the US. Dr. Sundar, whom I have quoted once in chapter five, was a second time returnee to the US and commented as follows on his transition:

If I had not returned to Nepal after doing my master's degree, I probably would have returned on that year (when he finished his PhD). But, I returned, worked for three years, and had an opportunity to evaluate things. That's why, I was clear about what to expect in Nepal. Had I not been clear about the expectations, then I might have returned ... I thought about going back to Nepal, getting back to my job and supporting my family. I evaluated where it would be better for me and my family ... When I came from there (Nepal), I obviously had not made up my mind like that (taking a long-term residence in the US) ... But, what happened after coming here was that I thought about the welfare of my family. Nepal is not the only reason, but other aspects also gradually brought about a change (in my thinking). But even when it changed slowly, my desire

was to work with issues concerning Nepal. But, as far as returning to Nepal was concerned, my desire to return diminished gradually and I had given up this idea (returning to Nepal) by the time I was almost done with my PhD. (NY8M40BRPNY11: September 2005)

Unlike Dr. Kiran and Dr. Sundar, who were in their fifties and forties respectively, my younger consultants seemed to be very much influenced during their transition period by what they were continuously being told by their parents about the uncertain political situation in Nepal. Manjila, one of my female consultants who was working in a pharmaceutical company in Boston during the time of my field work, had come to the US in her twenties in 1997--a year after the Maoists launched their armed struggle in Nepal. When asked what her intentions before she left Nepal were about taking long-term residence in the US or returning to Nepal, Manjila reflected on her transition:

I did not have any plan like staying here, buy this big house and so on. It was like study first, and once you are done, go back. When I talk with everyone in Nepal, they say that I should stay here for some time and Nepal is not stable politically and there isn't any security, or jobs...and I get this kind of message. But when I think about it sometimes, you are so far away from your parents, intimate friends. We had to start from the beginning here. We had to make friends, move our house...everything...we had to start from scratch. It is kind of sometimes we feel that it was very difficult because we had to start from the beginning. But now, we are kind of settled down. (BOS14F30NPNY3: July 2005)

“Opportunities, Opportunities, and Opportunities”

When I had asked Fernando (a consultant whose story I have narrated in chapter four) to name three important factors (related to the US) that kept him in the US, he had emphasized that they were “opportunities, opportunities, and opportunities.” As stated earlier, he was in a managerial position at Oracle during the time of my fieldwork and reported that he had immense opportunities for professional growth as well as to pursue

Figures. 6.2-a-c. The Mailed Survey: Career Considerations

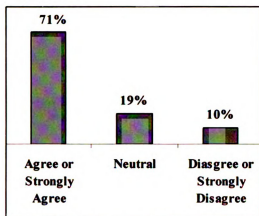


Fig. 7.2-a. I have a secure job in the US

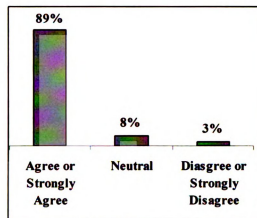


Fig. 7.2-b. There are tremendous prospects in my professional field in the US

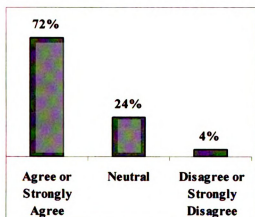


Fig. 7.2-c. I have higher job mobility in the U.S.

his passions both at Oracle as well as the other places he had worked before. Similarly, a great majority of my research subjects reported being extremely satisfied with their jobs and careers. Many of them felt that they were able to pursue their passions in the US. (For a discussion of the survey results on this issue, see Appendix II, section 6.1)

As mentioned in chapter three, about 75% of my research subjects had come to the United States as students. This had allowed all of them access to the professional job market of their host country after their studies, and in fact, had made it possible for them

to launch a professional career in the US. During the time of my research, about 70% of my research subjects were employed in their respective areas of expertise. Dr. Kiran, whom I have quoted once above, commented on how the many opportunities available in the US slowly dragged him towards a long-term stay:

At first, my intention was to study and then return. After that, as I told you earlier, after finishing at Columbia, I went to a legal firm and worked there for six months. It gave me an exposure to the American legal society. That's why...in the same context...I saw my friends who were working with me sitting for the bar exam and practicing. Their life style encouraged me to take the exam too. I decided to take the New York state bar exam. I took it and got admitted. I was the first Nepali to be a member of the American bar. After that, I wanted to find out the practical life of the legal part...how they practice law. After that, I got an opportunity to work in a private law firm. While working and in that context, my stay kept on growing. (NY7M50CHPNY2: October 2005)

For some of my interview consultants, opportunities were not just floating around, but were thrust upon them. When I asked him what his long-term plans were, Dr. Mochan, who was involved in cutting-edge research in dental medicine at Tufts University, revealed how he was being drawn deeper into the professional workforce of the US:

It is...I always used to tease my professor...my boss, that this place is like a quagmire. When I came first, it was that I paid tuition with that money, and while I was still studying there, they offered me a job. I accepted it and after that, they said that if I would stay, they would process my green card. I was boasting like "Oh, I don't need it, I am going back." Isn't it? And when I was still working there, they gave me another position in research...it was a sort of promotion. By doing that...one after another, I feel that I am being dragged deep inside the quagmire. I feel that I should get out of this, but they create such an environment that they dangle a carrot in front and keep you moving forward. I feel that it is beyond my control now. (BOS13M30NPNY11: July 2005)

Spouse, Kids, Siblings, Relatives, and Friends

A great majority of my research subjects (84% of the interview consultants and 77% of the survey participants) were married. About ninety percent of those survey

participants who were already married before coming to the US reported that their spouses were very supportive about their coming to the US. About 60% of my interview

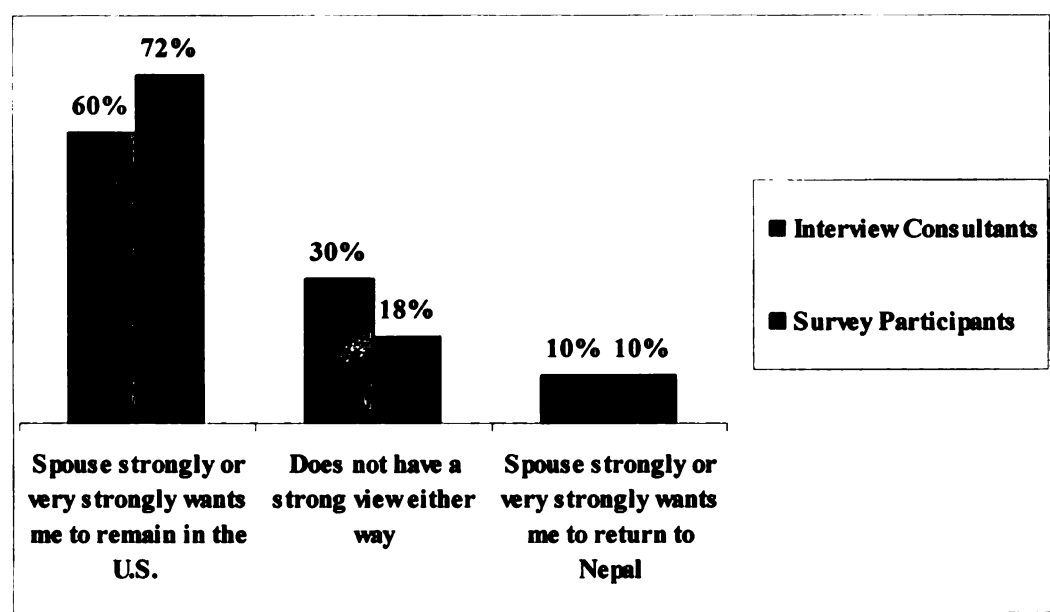


Figure 6.3. Spouse’s views about remaining in the U.S. or returning to Nepal

consultants and 72% of the survey participants reported that their spouses (who were with them in the US at the time of my research) indicated that their spouses either strongly or very strongly wanted them to remain in the US. This is quite similar to the findings of a study on Chinese students and scholars in the United States (Zweig 1995). Individuals whose spouses were with them in the United States were significantly more inclined to stay than those who still had theirs in China (p. 47). Only about 10% of my entire research subjects reported that their spouses wanted them to return to Nepal. The level of influence on my survey participants from their spouse’s views regarding taking long-term residence in the US or returning to Nepal was quite high. Sixty three percent of them reported that it was either strong or very strong, and 32% reported to have some

influence. Devendra, who was pursuing his PhD in economics in a leading university in Maryland during the time of my fieldwork, commented on his wife's views:

To be frank, she was very unhappy at first. She was like "I cannot stay here". Later on, she does not want to go back even when I wanted to go back. As far as possible, she wants to stay here. (WA2M40BRGSNY6: October 2005)

Rohit, my other consultant who was from an upper class family in Nepal offered his own observations of Nepali wives in the US:

What I have seen is that the wives are kind of ... emphasize to remain in the U.S. Maybe for her (his wife) reasons, I took U.S. residentship. First, I took Canadian residentship, and later on, I let it go after acquiring U.S. residentship. To my mind, they have freedom over here ... more than us ... living in the U.S. is more charming for wives. (BOS18M40CHPNY1: July 2005)

A majority of my research subjects were family oriented individuals and during the time of my fieldwork, I observed 52% of my interview consultants having children with them. Similarly, sixty percent of my survey participants also reported that they had children, and about half of my entire research subjects had two. During the time of my fieldwork, I also observed almost all of the children speaking English at home though it appeared that most of them understood Nepali too. In striking contrast to what I had observed, only 42% of my survey participants reported that their children preferred to speak English at home. Thirty percent of them also reported that their children preferred to speak both languages and 25% reported that they preferred to speak Nepali. When asked where their children preferred to live, 40% of the survey participants reported that they had children who were too young to have their own opinion. However, fifty four percent of them had grown-up children who could offer their own opinion and almost all of them preferred to live in the US. About 70% of the survey participants who were parents reported that their children's preferences to live in the US had either strong or very strong influence on their decisions to remain in the US or return to Nepal. Only 13%

of the survey participants who were also parents reported that their children's preferences had very little or no influence at all in their decisions. Though I did not ask the interview consultants (who had children) about the influence their children's views had on their decisions to remain in the US or return to Nepal, almost all of those who were in their late thirties or early forties reported that they were staying in the US primarily for the education and well being of their children. It was very interesting to note that those consultants who were in their fifties (n=3) and had settled down in the US reported that their children were the closest family members they had in their families. Since all of their parents had already passed away and that their children were all Americans, they did not see any point in returning to Nepal and be far away from their loved ones. Similarly, 66% of the survey participants felt that their children would have a better future in the US. This figure was particularly high for those who had come to work in the US (79%). When asked what their plans were for the higher education of their children, 80% of my survey participants wanted their children to attend US universities, which is consistent with the responses of highly educated Chinese professionals who were living in the United States in the 1990s (Zweig 1995: 49). Seventy four percent of the Chinese respondents wanted their children to attend US colleges or universities.

As discussed in chapter three, about forty percent of my research subjects mentioned having a sibling in this country before coming to the US, and about the same percentage of them reported still having them during the period of this study. Those who already had a sibling in the US reported having intense desires to come to the US and some even mentioned that they saw coming to the US as another stepping stone in their academic trajectories. In addition, about 65% of the interview consultants and 53% of the

survey participants also reported that they had a relative or a close friend in the US when they were still in Nepal. While my older consultants and those who had been in the US for around twenty years were usually the first ones from their families to come to the US, the US was not a *terra incognita* for my younger consultants. Almost all of them reported having familial and friend's links in the US even when they were still in Nepal. All three of my interview consultants who were in their fifties and even younger ones who had lived in the US for about twenty years reported that most of their relatives were in the US. Suresh, one of my younger consultants who had been living in the US for more than twenty years reported that all of his siblings (four altogether) and most of his cousins were in the US. This trend of bringing more siblings, other relatives, and the whole family shifting permanently to the United States was also observed by Leonard (1997) among South Asian immigrants. Suresh also reported that recently he had been spending most of his time with his family members rather than with his friends.

In addition to having siblings, cousins, and other relatives in the US, almost all of my interview consultants mentioned having a big circle of friends in the US too. Those who were young and hailed from middle-class or upper-class families reported that most of their high school and college friends from their days in Nepal were already in the US. A very surprising situation that attested to what these younger consultants had told me was revealed by Dr. Ramesh when I asked if his return visits to Nepal influenced his attitude about moving back to Nepal or remaining in the US:

For the first time...err...I was dreaming to go back to Nepal again. It was really great. I was missing people and all of these things. But one thing you can feel about Nepal is that you have to make your friends again, new friends. All of your friends are gone to other parts of the world. No one ever returns, you know. No one is there. So, you have to make new friends.
(BOS2M40BRPNY8: July 2005)

Almost all of my interview consultants reported that they regularly visited the homes of their Nepali friends and vice versa. Even when I was interviewing some, they received several phone calls from their Nepali friends. About 60% of the interview consultants and 40% of the survey participants reported that they hung out mostly with Nepali friends. However, twenty two percent of the interview consultants and 48 percent of the survey participants also reported that they hung out half of the time with Nepali friends, and the other half with non-Nepali friends.

Pot-Luck Picnics, *Dashain* gathering, and Celebrating Success

In addition to inviting friends and family members to celebrate *rites de passages* and other private functions, the more than three dozen websites of various US based Nepali organizations and communities indicate that get-togethers of Nepalis living throughout the US have become a fairly common event. A quick scan of these websites reveals that these groups celebrate *Dashain* (September-October) and the Nepali New Year (mid-April) almost every year. Sixty four percent of my survey participants reported that they always or most of the time attended get-togethers organized by the Nepalese living in their areas.

During the time of my fieldwork in Boston (July 2005), I had an opportunity to attend one of the monthly pot-luck picnics organized by the local Nepali community. A small group of Nepali women living in the Boston area had formed an informal social group. They were either professionals themselves, or were the wives of Nepalese men who were employed in professional occupations. In addition to occasionally raising funds for charitable works in Nepal, this group also organized a women's only get-together

once every month. They had their own website where they posted all the pertinent information, including the venue for the gathering, suggestions for which dish to bring, and driving directions. Usually, they left everything behind in the care of their husbands (including children), prepared a dish, and then gathered at a pre-designated venue for an afternoon of merry-making. This had been going on for about the last two years. However, they had invited their men and children to join them in this particular fun-filled-day for the first time ever. My son and I traveled with our host and his family to attend this event, and we reached the venue, Filipello Water Park in Watertown, Massachusetts at around quarter past three in the afternoon.

The park was very well organized and looked beautiful with various tree species and many flowering plants that were in full blossom. In addition to these floral attractions, it was one of the most sophisticated parks I had ever seen in the U.S. Instead of wood chips, the ground of the playground was carpeted with a seamless piece of sponge-like synthetic substance. The water fountain area also had the same instead of concrete, and the fountains were programmed to be activated by putting one's palm at either one of the two posts (supporting the pipe work) where the shapes of palms were embossed. If nobody was present between the fountains, it would automatically turn itself off. It also had a soccer field, a basketball court, and a volleyball court. In addition, there were several picnic spots, complete with tables, barbecue grills, and sheds.

Most of the participants were already there, and were around the table where all the food was placed. Almost everybody was enjoying the delicious snacks, talking to each other, inquiring about who prepared which item, and appreciating the best ones. Children were already in their swimsuits and enjoying the fountains that showered water

from multiple spouts with different patterns. Two teams of women dressed up in sports gear were energetically playing volleyball -- complete with the high jumps for the hard-to-return smashes. Their ages varied from teens to late forties.

I knew some of them from my previous interviews, but many were new to me. I went around and exchanged introductions. Many of them were computer engineers and about five of them worked in the same software company that was initiated, partially owned, and run by a fellow Nepali. Though that particular Nepali entrepreneur was on a business trip to Nepal, his wife and kids had joined this event. Other participants were coming in as late as half past four. One family came just to drop a dish, and left saying that they had engagements elsewhere. By this time, there were about twenty-five adults and fifteen children. As the men and women were done with their snacks, they started to gather around in men's and women's circles and started to talk. The group of women playing volleyball finally came for the food, and as they were on their way, they teased the gathered men by asking them where they were while the volleyball game was going on such a swing.

The topics of discussion at the men's group were as unpredictable as a tornado. On this day, they talked about the ongoing baseball games, the price of shares in the stock exchange, healthy foods, and the rising price of houses in Boston. As usual, the ongoing politics of Nepal was a leitmotif. From the talk of one of the men, it appeared that he had bought and sold several houses, and was offering suggestions on what to look for in a house and how to negotiate for a loan with the banks. Then to my astonishment and without my provocation, the topic shifted to their work experiences in Nepal as well as the indifferent attitude of the Nepalese bureaucracy towards the contributions highly

skilled individuals could make for the country. My host, who was a dental surgeon and a faculty at Tufts University, recalled how amazed he was when he went to report at Nepal's Ministry of Education after completing his studies in Pakistan (this story was narrated in chapter four). Four years earlier, the Nepalese government had sent him to Pakistan under the Colombo Plan scholarship to study dental medicine. Acceptance of this scholarship required the beneficiaries to sign a legal document in which they agreed to return to Nepal after completing their studies, report to the Education Ministry, and then work within Nepal for at least three years. He was baffled to find out that there was not even a single office within the entire ministry that had a record or tracked the scholarship recipients. He was even more baffled when the staff at the Ministry of Education too expressed surprised that he had come to report his return. Dr. Gautam also recalled a similar incident he had gone through in Nepal. He too was puzzled when the higher authorities in his office did now show any interest in extending his study leave while he was pursuing his Ph. D. in the U.S. He had then left Nepal without extending his study leave. He also recalled that later, he had received a letter from the department where he worked earlier asking him to return all the salary he was paid during his leave. It also had informed him that he had been sacked from his position. A section officer had signed this letter, but what he found surprising about it was that the section officer's name was not printed below the signature, and that the signature itself was not legible. He believed that a disgruntled staff had generated this letter and had used the letterhead and the stamps clandestinely. He then told us that he ignored the letter and did not follow-up with it.

My host then picked up the discussion and said how he had straightened up some arrogant Nepali politicians while he was serving in a regional hospital in Nepal. One day, while working in Nepal's first come first serve healthcare system, he heard his clerk call out the same name (of a patient) several times. Then all of a sudden, a man burst into his clinic by bypassing the clerk, and demanded that his tooth be examined next. He did not know who he was, but when he looked at his paperwork, he was the same man the clerk had repeatedly summoned for the examination. He politely told the man that he was absent when it was his turn to be examined, and requested him to go to the end of the queue again. The man was a district level United Marxist-Leninist cadre and tried to impress my host by telling him who he was. But still, my host refused to examine him insisting that he was not there when he was called for. Though the political cadre could not threaten him, he accused him of exhibiting "*Panchayat* era attitudes" of the medical professionals. My host went on to say that he got furious and told him that he would examine him last, and if he was still unhappy, he could do whatever he could to fire him or transfer him to another hospital. He even wrote a resignation letter in the middle of his work, gave it to the political cadre, and told him to submit it himself on his behalf to the hospital chief. Knowing that the hospital would not find another dental surgeon for a long time if he left, and also fearing that he would be held accountable by the people for the flight of the dental surgeon, the political cadre quietly retreated and never came back to have his tooth fixed. He told us that there were innumerable situations like these.

Soon, the topic of discussion changed to the modern conveniences you could install in your house. Eager to check out on what the women were up to, I excused myself from the group on the pretext to check on my son. When I made sure that he was doing

fine under the fountains, I moved to where the women had gathered. Most of them were sitting on the edge of the elevated flowerbed, and one pre-teen girl was standing close to her seated mother and mimicking a famous female Nepali singer. After a while, she went on to mimic a famous Indian actor's song. At one end, a woman was trying to entertain her friends who were sitting close by, by singing and dancing simultaneously, and occasionally moving her hip stylishly as women do in Hindi and Nepali cinemas. I knew some of them and introduced myself to the others. After asking me where I came from and what I did, the ones I met there did not seem to be interested to continue their conversation with me. Sensing their reluctance, I excused myself and walked towards the men. On the way, Dr. Gautam's wife was leaning alone on the side of an elevated flowerbed, and for courtesy, I stopped to talk with her. It was only after approaching her that I realized that she had put on too much and too strong perfume for my taste, at least. Nevertheless, we started a conversation, and she ended up lecturing me on the need to study those Nepalis who come to the U.S. as undergraduate students, and then fail and "drown" in this country. I told her that it would be something I would keep in my mind and headed towards where the men were still talking. It was almost half past six by now, and my hosts were anxious to head for home. After bidding good-bye to almost everyone, we headed back home.

During the time of 2005 *Dashain*, I was conducting my fieldwork in the Washington DC area. The Washington, DC based America Nepal Society had organized an event for *Dashain* and *Tihar Mela*⁸⁷ on October 16th and had invited all Nepalis who

⁸⁷ *Tihar* is another five-day Nepalese festival that is celebrated about two weeks after *Dashain*. It is also known as the festival of lights, as families decorate their houses and light oil lamps from dusk to about midnight in their windows and doors. It is widely celebrated by the Hindus in Nepal. *Mela* is equivalent to a fair.

were listed in their listserv via email to celebrate the year's Dashain that was being organized at the auditorium of Washington Bible College at Lanham, Maryland. Being a member of the Association of the Nepalis in the Americas, I also had received this email. Since I was in the Washington DC area at that time, it offered an excellent opportunity to observe a communal event of the local Nepalis. I reached the venue at half past twelve in the afternoon. Many had already arrived and some were still coming. All of the attendees were encouraged to register at the entrance for a small fee, and those who registered, were given a newsletter and a telephone directory of members of the ANS. A crowd of about 250 people, mostly Nepalis, was already in the auditorium. At a corner of the auditorium, a group of women were selling typical Nepali lunch. The members of the America-Nepal Women's Association of Greater Washington had prepared the lunch and were selling them to raise funds for their organization. Some were still buying food, and about 30 people were sitting and enjoying their foods on tables that had been set near the entrance and close to the food stall. At the middle of the auditorium, several rows of benches had been arranged for people to sit and see the cultural program. Most of the people were sitting on these benches, facing the stage, and talking with each other. At the opposite end of the auditorium's main entrance, a stage had been created by joining several tables. As I walked around, I spotted the Nepalese ambassador to the US, current and previous officials of Association of Nepalis in the Americas, and a few Nepalese artists. All the people gathered here, including the artists were new to me, and it appeared that the assembled crowd largely consisted of those who had immigrated to the US through the Diversity Visa Program. However a few of the young men and women were

undergraduate students studying in the Washington DC areas. During all this time, the children were running around and playing on their own.

In addition to Nepalis, about ten White Americans were also present in the crowd. Some of them were wearing traditional Nepali caps, and all the members of one particular American family were wearing traditional Nepali dresses. Along one wall of the auditorium, there were several stalls selling and promoting books on Nepal, Nepalese jewelry, and hand-painted cotton clothes. Around two in the afternoon, a Nepali cinema/television artist who usually plays comical roles stepped onto the stage, announced that the cultural program would begin, and requested all the attendees to take their seats. After a while, he announced the first item, and a small girl danced to the music of a patriotic Nepali song. This was followed by karaoke Nepali pop songs by young men, girls' group dances, nostalgic Nepali songs and so on. Two of the visiting Americans also sang very typical Nepali folk songs. Since the cultural program was being performed by amateur and juvenile artists, the crowd absolutely lost interest and started to dissipate in no time. Within half an hour, about two thirds of the crowd had ventured either outside the auditorium or had formed small groups of four to five persons and were talking amongst themselves. Despite the audience's total lack of interest in the cultural program, a video crew was videotaping the whole event.

Since the songs and dances performed by the amateur and juvenile artists also did not keep my attention, I took the opportunity to wander around and exchange introductions with those who appeared willing to talk to me. I had met Dr. Saurav (whose story I have narrated in chapter four) during this event. It was not only me who was reaching out to other Nepalis. Three other Nepalis were also promoting causes they were

passionate about. The first one approached me and asked if I would be interested to attend the birthday celebration of Nepal's renowned poet Mr. Laxmi Prasad Devkota. It was to be held in a couple of days in Virginia. The second one approached to promote an organization of Nepal's different ethnic groups in the US, and the third one encouraged me to join the organizations of the *Newars* in the US and attend the celebration of *Nepal Sambar*⁸⁸ 1126 that was scheduled to be held in Maryland about a month later. I politely thanked all of the men for their invitation and informed them that I was a visitor to the area and would be leaving for home in a couple of days. By three in the afternoon, the audience of the cultural program was all but gone. The announcer thanked all those who performed on stage that day. Next, the ANS president came to the stage and thanked all those who came to participate as well as those who had helped to make the *Dashain Tihar* Mela possible.

Unlike the annual conventions of the Association of Nepalis in the Americas, where people are usually in a very upbeat mood and professional artists are invited from Nepal to perform live, most of the people attending this event organized by the local Nepalis of the Washington DC area appeared quite wary and showed little interest in what was happening around. Undoubtedly, there were many small circles of Nepalis in the Washington DC area who hang out with each other. But, it appeared that the attendees in this gathering were very much detached from many other Nepalis as well as the umbrella organization that somehow attempted to bring them together. Though I did

⁸⁸ *Nepal Sambat* is a lunar calendar. It consists of 354 days and a month is added every third year. This calendar is said to have been introduced by a commoner and was in continuous official use in Nepal for 888 years, i.e. from 881 to 1769 AD. After conquering the Kathmandu valley in 1769, the Gorkhali king Prithivi Narayan Shah discontinued its use and instead, made the *Bikram Sambat* (a calendar introduced by the Indian emperor Vikramaditya that is 56.7 years ahead of the solar Gregorian calendar), which has been the official calendar of Nepal since then.

not ask any one of them, it was obvious that most of them did not know each other very well. Most kept themselves to their own small circle of friends.

While I was still conducting my fieldwork in Boston, Dr. Narayan had called my home and had extended an invitation to me and my family to attend a dinner party at his house in East Lansing. I had just returned from the first leg of my fieldwork and we reached his house around half past six in the evening. A crowd of about 25 men, 25 women, and 40 children had already gathered in his house. In addition to all the Nepalis living in East Lansing and Lansing, other Nepalis from Detroit, Midland, Bay City, Grand Rapids, and Cold Water areas were also in attendance. Since it was August, most of the invitees were spread out on his back lawn and deck. Two teams consisting of graduate students, an American guest, the host's daughter-in-law, and other younger Nepalis were playing volleyball at a corner of his backyard where a net had been set up. Most of the men, who were either professionals or graduate students, were either sitting on lawn chairs placed on the deck and talking, or just standing and watching the volleyball game. Almost all of the men were sipping a beverage of their choice. The sliding kitchen window led to the deck and all the snack items were arranged on the kitchen table. Those who had arrived earlier had already eaten their snacks or were still eating them. As usually happens in Nepali gatherings, the women had gathered separately in this gathering too, and most of them were concentrated at the back yard near the deck. They were attending the kids, sipping soft drinks, and chatting with each other.

As we were greeting everybody, the host came towards us and asked us to help ourselves. After getting some snacks and a can of beer, I too joined the men who were sitting and talking on the deck. As usual, the ongoing talk was about Nepal and the

imbroglio the country was in. Here too, the topics of discussion were very unpredictable. It quickly changed to getting traffic violation tickets, issues of racism in the US, the rise in the price of gasoline, and then to which universities the recent high-school graduates were attending and so on. During all this time, the hostess and the wives of other Nepalis living in East Lansing were busy inside the kitchen, making arrangements for the dinner. The host and his family had prepared a few of the curry items (for the dinner) and a few other items were prepared by other families living in East Lansing. Around eight, the host announced that the dinner was ready and asked everybody to come and enjoy a typical Nepali dinner. Those who were parents of young children went first to get food for their kids, and they were followed by the teenagers, and then the remaining adults. Almost everyone was done with their dinner within an hour, and around half past nine the host and his sons went around the house telling everybody that they were about to have a cake-cutting ceremony and asked all of the adults to come to their east side living room, which was essentially an extension of their kitchen area. In the middle of the kitchen table, there was a huge cake with congratulatory message for the host from his two sons. As most of the adults had gathered around the kitchen table, the host's elder son stepped forward and said that about twenty years ago, his father had come to the US with just two suitcases in his hands. And then he went on to say that they all joined him after a while, had lived in the US since then, and had come this far. We had not been told earlier, but his son went on to announce that his father had been promoted to the position of a full professor at Michigan State University. They had ordered the huge cake and were holding the cake-cutting ceremony to celebrate his success. Everybody clapped and the elder son asked Dr. Narayan to say a few words to the gathered crowd. Dr. Narayan moved forward

and thanked his sons for bringing that huge cake and also thanked everybody for attending the party. Then he went on to say that all of the Nepalis gathered there had contributed something in his success. He specially named three physicians who were living in the Detroit area and said that he would not have come this far without their help⁸⁹. He then went on to say that he looked at these three individuals as his role models. Then the wife of one of the physicians whom he had praised asked if the host's wife had to say something. She did not step forward from her position, but said that she really had a hard life with two kids in her initial days in the US, expressed immense happiness that all of them had succeeded, and thanked everybody for joining them that night. Then Dr. Narayan's son asked his father to cut the cake. When he was done with the first piece, Dr. Narayan's elder son picked up the plate, then the cake, and moved it towards his father's mouth. Dr. Narayan took his first bite and the crowd clapped and cheered.

Nepalese Gene Pool and Tying Nuptial Knots

About a week before the thanksgiving day of 2005, Dr. Jitendra called me to extend an invitation for his daughter's engagement ceremony. He is in his mid fifties and is currently a faculty at Michigan State University. Earlier, he had acquired his Ph.D. from MSU, and then had returned to his faculty position back in Nepal. After working for 15 years in Nepal's university system and experiencing very discouraging situations, he had finally decided to come back to the United States. At present, he is a permanent resident of the US and lives in East Lansing with his wife, one daughter, and two sons.

⁸⁹ He did not elaborate how these physicians had helped him in his professional career that was so different from theirs.

I reached his house exactly on time. There were already about 20 people in the living and the adjacent dining rooms. Some of the Nepali graduate students and their wives and two Nepali couples from Grand Rapids were already there and talking in the living room. The groom, who was very young, good-looking, well-dressed, and wearing a garland made of yellow-red-white flowers was seated in the middle of a sofa with a *tika* (vermillion dot) on his forehead. His father was a professor of English at Nepal's Tribhuvan University and he had attended the same high school that I had attended back in Nepal. After high school in Nepal, he had come to the U.S. to pursue his undergraduate studies. He was a telecom engineer and had a job with a regional U.S. telecom company in Atlanta. Though he was ten years younger than me, he recognized me instantly due to my long association with my *alma mater* and greeted me with a "*Namaste dai*" (Greetings, big brother). For this event, the groom was accompanied by his maternal aunt and uncle, who were also seated on the other sofa.

I knew most of the people in this crowd, and they too, knew each other quite well. As I went around greeting everybody, I was surprised to see Dr. Shankar and his wife in the crowd. Dr. Shankar and his family were residents of East Lansing from 1990 to 2002. They had moved to North Carolina in 2002 and had driven all the way to East Lansing to attend this event. Soon, other Nepalis living in East Lansing, Bay City, Saginaw, Kalamazoo, Ann Arbor, and Detroit areas started to arrive. Almost all of the men were either professionals or graduate students. However, only three of the women were professionals, and the rest were homemakers or worked in clerical positions. Some even brought along their relatives, who were visiting them from Nepal. In addition to this Nepali crowd, five female students of MSU, who were friends of the bride, also arrived.

By 11:30, almost all of the expected guests had arrived and at around noon, the crowd, about half of them women, swelled to about 60 adults and 12 teenagers. What was interesting about the gathered people was that except for Dr. Jitendra's nephew and his family who came from Chicago to attend this event, none of the guests were related to him or his wife. Almost all were friends he and his family had made in Nepal or the U.S. Had this event taken place in Nepal, all the guests would have been exclusively the family's closest relatives.

During all this time, Rekha, the bride remained upstairs. She was a civil engineering senior at Michigan State University. When everybody was assembled in the living room and the adjacent dining room, Dr. Jitendra called her name and asked her to come downstairs. Almost everybody turned their eyes towards the stairs. After a while, Rekha came downstairs with an extremely pleased expression on her face. She had put on very light makeup, was wearing a red *sari*, a sleeveless blouse, and matching Nepali jewelry. She walked confidently with her head in an upright position rather than walking cautiously with her head bent down -- as brides do unfailingly on such occasions in Nepal. She looked straight at the crowd and greeted everyone with a cheerful smile and a *Namaste*. As everyone returned their greetings to Rekha, Dr. Shankar politely asked her to come and sit beside the groom. The living room was moderate in size and was getting really crowded.

After she was seated, Dr. Shankar and the groom's uncle moved in front of the TV. This was the best spot for everybody to see them. Dr. Shankar drew everybody's attention, and he and the groom's uncle started to explain how this relationship was forged. During the September 2005 annual convention of the Association of Nepalis in

Mid-West America, Dr. Shankar had casually asked the groom's uncle if he knew any suitable *Newar*⁹⁰ groom for a well-educated *Newar* girl. They were in the hotel lobby and he in turn had casually said "Oh yes, I know." Then he had pointed out at the groom, who was there, and had told Dr. Shankar, "That is the man," and then pointing at the groom's parents, who also happened to be hanging out in the lobby at the same time, had said "They are his parents. Now, you go and talk to them yourself." This was how, according to Dr. Shankar and the groom's uncle, it had all begun. Both of them praised the couple and thanked all of the invitees for coming and making the ceremony an august one. Then Dr. Shankar announced that the formal engagement ceremony would begin and requested Dr. Jitendra and his wife, who were standing almost at the back of the room, to come forward. As they came forward, the groom got up from his seat and offered them a bouquet each. They thanked him for the bouquets, welcomed him to their family, and hugged him. Then Dr. Shankar informed the invitees that the groom had brought an engagement ring to be put on the bride's finger. He jokingly said that from now on, the bride would be able to boast to her friends that she has worn the ring. The groom took out a small jewelry box from his jacket pocket, took out the ring, kneeled down on one knee--something unimaginable in a Nepali engagement or wedding setting--and put it on Rekha's finger.

The crowd cheered, and the priest from the local Hindu temple suggested that everybody shower the couple with flowers. Red roses were the only flowers around, and the petals were plucked and distributed to all the guests. When all had a bunch of petals

⁹⁰ The *Newars* are the indigenous people of Nepal's Kathmandu Valley. They are a linguistic community with multiple ethnicity/race and faith, and the term *Newar* applies roughly to the people who inhabited Kathmandu valley and its peripheries before the unification of Nepal and spoke *Newari*. According to Nepal's 2001 census, Newar's constitute 5.48% of Nepal's total population.

in their hands, the priest and Dr. Shankar chanted auspicious *mantras* and all showered the couple with rose petals. The priest, who had arrived just before the function began, gave a small speech of his own and emphasized the importance of girls in bringing two families together. He then blessed the couple and wished them a very successful life.

After the priest's blessings, Dr. Shankar asked Dr. Jitendra to address the assembled crowd. It was unmistakably apparent that he and his wife were brimming with immense joy on finding such a well-educated, established, and handsome young man for their daughter. Earlier that year, Dr. Jitendra had expressed his displeasure as well as distress about being just a step behind their children's steps after a dinner program at my house. He was a very strict dad and had done his best to inculcate strong Nepalese values in his children. In contrast to the American way of life where grown up children move out of their parent's house after high school, he had kept them in his own house even when the oldest one was a senior. He and his wife must have felt that their grip on their children was loosening. Though he did not mention which of his children he was referring to, it was obvious from his and his wife's discourse that they were extremely disturbed about the possibility of their daughter entering into a relationship with the wrong man all by herself in the free society of the U.S.

I have known Dr. Jitendra and his family for the last seven years and never had I seen him and his wife in such profound happiness as they were during this engagement ceremony. It was unmistakably palpable in their faces and body languages. Dr. Jitendra started his speech by jokingly saying that he never had imagined that he would be a father-in-law one day. He recalled his conversation with his wife that morning when he had asked her if they were really getting their daughter married. He nostalgically recalled

how small his daughter was when he was pursuing his Ph. D. about twenty years ago at MSU. Back then, they had talked about her getting married one day. But, Dr. Jitendra had told his wife to forget about it since it was something 20 years down the road. He said that he was extremely surprised, for that big day was today. He also said that in addition to his two sons, he now had one more son, a bonus one, for whom he did not have to put in any work. He ended his speech by thanking Dr. Shanker, the *Lami* (matchmaker) for initiating and successfully forging this relationship, and all others for braving the slippery roads and sub-zero temperature of the day. When Dr. Jitendra was done, Dr. Shankar asked his wife if she had anything to say on this auspicious occasion. She repeated most of the things said by her husband and again thanked the *Lami* for finding such a suitable match for her daughter, and all others for joining them on this joyous moment.

Then, Dr. Shankar asked the groom to address everybody. In flawless English, he thanked all for coming and specially thanked Dr. Shankar for helping him find his future wife, for which, he said he felt very much indebted. He also thanked his uncle and aunt for joining him for this trip and representing his parents on this auspicious day. He also said that he was sorry that his parents could not make it. Next, the bride was asked to address the crowd. At first, she tried to sneak away by saying that the groom had already said all she had to say. But, Dr. Shankar insisted that she address everybody and she also repeated what the groom had just said. She also thanked Dr. Shankar for all his efforts to make this relationship possible as well as all the guests for accepting their invitation and coming to join them on this event.

During all this, I also observed the expressions of people in the room. Some were simply enjoying the whole event and some were marveling at the luck of the family in

finding such an ideal groom who was: i) a Nepali, ii) came from the same social group, iii) young and four years older than the bride, iv) fair, tall, and handsome, v) a professional, and vi) established in the U.S. Three couples in the crowd had marriageable daughters of their own as well. Two of the couples, though scattered around in four different places, looked very serious, somewhat lost, and obviously engaged in deep thought. Both of the men were talkative and had the habit of cracking jokes all the time. But today, they looked like as if they were being tormented with the looming challenge of finding a son-in-law as splendid as that of Dr. Jitendra's for their daughters.

After Rekha's speech, Dr. Shankar informed everybody that the hosts had prepared lunch, and it was being served in the basement. An impromptu photo session followed and almost everybody clamored for a photo opportunity with the bride and groom. It was during these photo sessions that Rekha was radiating with immense happiness. After taking pictures, the crowd gradually shifted to the basement, where five huge round tables with chairs around were set up. A Nepali style buffet lunch with pulao, mutton curry, mixed vegetables, mixed-curry-style-pickle awaited everybody. Dr. Jitendra's wife had prepared all these items except the *palak-paneer* (spinach with cottage cheese) and *samosas* (fried vegetable dumplings), which were brought from a local Indian restaurant. The guests helped themselves with the lunch and, as it happens in most Nepali get-togethers, the women folk converged at one end of the room, and the men converged at the other. Conversations followed and in no time, the talk in the men's table was the on-going politics in Nepal. Within a few minutes, everybody was eating and talking. As per Nepali tradition, the hosts meticulously made sure that everybody had taken food, including their children, before taking themselves.

When everybody was done with their lunch, the host announced that the cake-cutting ceremony would take place. On one table at the corner of the basement, two guests were busy pouring champagne and sparkling wine in plastic wine glasses, and I found myself passing out these to the crowd. When everybody had a glass, Dr. Shankar proposed a toast to the couple and wished them a very happy married life. Everybody toasted and drank champagne or wine. Then Dr. Shankar said that the bride should cut the cake and the groom should serve the pieces. Though Dr. Shankar did not mean it literally, Rekha cut the cake and the groom obediently served it to everyone around the room.

It was already two in the afternoon, and some of the non-local guests were getting ready to leave. They were thanking the hosts for the invitation and again wishing all their best to the couple. Upstairs, in the living room, Dr. Shankar's son Madan, who is a computer engineer, was hooking up his laptop to the TV to show pictures of his engagement. As the pictures started to be displayed, everyone's eyes were glued to the huge screen. The engagement ceremony had taken place in Nepal and the bride was so fair that she could easily pass as a White American. In contrast, the groom was very dark and one of the lady guests, who knew Dr. Shankar and his family very well jokingly commented that the girl was unjustly fair for the groom. Madan, a very quiet person, was sitting on a sofa and knowing that the comment was justified, felt a little bit uncomfortable, but did not react. To console him, another guest, Dr. Meena quickly commented that despite being very dark, he was very handsome. Madan nodded his head in agreement and did not say anything.

Near the door, the groom's uncle and aunt were preparing to leave for Atlanta, and Madan, who was proudly showing pictures of his engagement, was the designated chauffeur. He was enjoying the company of the crowd, many of whom he had met probably after three years. It was apparent that he was not in a mood to drive to the airport. Though he had lived in East Lansing for 12 years, he was asking for directions to the airport and appeared confused. Dr. Jitendra was worried about sending his important guests in the hands of a man who was unsure about the directions to the airport. I jumped in and offered to drive the guests to the airport. A streak of relief immediately appeared in Dr. Jitendra's face and he said to the groom's uncle and aunt, "Oh yes, we have a very reliable man to drop you off now." Then Dr. Jitendra and his wife thanked the aunt and uncle for accompanying their niece to his engagement and bid them goodbye. I did not have plans to return that day, and thanked and said goodbye to the hosts and the just-engaged couple for inviting me for this occasion. We went out to my car, and the bride and groom followed us as well. Before getting into my car, the bride and groom thanked the aunt and uncle for their help, and hugged them and bid farewell. The groom was staying for three more days in East Lansing and told his uncle and aunt that he would see them later in Atlanta.

As we drove to the Capital Area City Airport, we introduced ourselves in a little more detail. The groom's uncle used to work for USAID while he was in Nepal, and had immigrated to the U.S. twelve years ago. He had been working primarily as an interpreter and then as an entrepreneur. He also asked me how I came here, what I was doing, and what I did in Nepal. It also emerged that his son had briefly attended the same high school I had attended in Nepal. His wife did not talk very much, and to engage her in our

conversation, I said that her other older brother was an electoral candidate from the constituency where I voted in the 1994 general election of Nepal. To this, she commented that her brother, who is currently a mid-level politician affiliated with the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), had chosen the wrong communist party during that election. Back then, he was an electoral candidate of another communist party and had lost the election. Soon, the topic shifted to the bride and groom, and the groom's uncle strongly asserted that Dr. Jitendra was extremely lucky for finding such an ideal young man for his daughter. Since it was understood that I was from the bride's side, I also politely said that the groom's parents were also extremely fortunate for finding such a beautiful, well-educated, and disciplined girl, as well as for having the opportunity to forge relationships with such descent, highly educated, and well-respected family. In the end, we agreed that the couple was a perfect match, and that luck had favored both sides. It was a short drive to the airport and in no time, we were there. As I unloaded their luggage, both of them thanked me for the ride and extended an invitation for me to visit them in Atlanta.

The sequence of events that led to the newly forged relationship, as well as the practices I observed during this engagement, were remarkable in several ways. First of all, despite being settled down in the U.S., these immigrant parents were giving continuity to the traditional Nepali practice of arranged marriage. What is noteworthy is that they succeeded in doing so even in a country where young adults overwhelmingly select their partners on their own volition. Moreover, the match-making was accomplished with the help of a *Lami*, as it usually happens in Nepal. And it was not only Dr. Jitendra and his wife who opted for an arranged marriage for their children. Dr.

Shankar also had done the same for all of his four children. He had found suitable partners (Nepalis from the same social group) for three of his children within the U.S. For the youngest one, he and his wife even traveled to Nepal.

Secondly, this event also revealed that the immigrant Nepalis have adopted some of the social/cultural norms of the US as observed earlier by Upadhyay (1995). Although some traditional Nepali cultural practices were observed (the *tika* [red dot] on the groom's forehead and the colorful garland, the showering of flowers and the chanting of auspicious *mantras* simultaneously), offering bouquets, hugging, the engagement ring and kneeling down to put it on, cake-cutting, and toasting are alien to traditional *Newari* as well as Nepali engagement practices. Had this event taken place in Nepal, it would have been marked or the marriage confirmed by the giving of 10 betel nuts along with fruits, sweets by the groom's family to the bride's family. The betel nuts symbolize a lasting relationship, one that does not easily disintegrate, but remains uniform and intact like the betel nuts for a very long time. It was also interesting to note that some of the traditional *Newari* cultural practices were conspicuously absent. For example, I did not observe a single instance of bowing down by the bride and groom to receive the "May you be fortunate" blessings from their limited - but present - consanguineal and affinal kinsfolk. This practice is not only reserved for special occasions, but routinely performed in Nepal. It seemed that the wedding ring had replaced the betel nuts, and hugging had replaced the practice of bowing down to elders for blessings. Another noteworthy aspect of this event was that despite the overwhelming presence of Nepali speakers, almost everybody except the bride's mother and the priest were addressing the crowd in English.

Thirdly, this event revealed the metamorphosed role and status of the educated immigrant Nepali women in the U.S. In stark contrast to the tradition-minded *Newars* and Nepalis who in general think that women should be subservient to men, particularly in public contexts, the bride exhibited an amazing level of self-confidence in front of all the gathered guests. The way she walked, presented herself, approached the crowd, and the happiness she expressed in her countenance would have been unimaginable, and a source of gossiping -- had this event occurred in Nepal the way it did in East Lansing.

Discussion

As discussed in chapter five, over 60% of my research subjects came to the US with a firm determination to return home once they were done with their academic programs or once they gained enough professional work experience in the US. A remarkable change in their earlier intentions to return home is one of the most interesting findings of my research project. As they continued with their studies, lives, and professional work, they continuously compared their present lives with their past lives in Nepal. Their past experiences in Nepal, their perceptions of what would have happened to them had they returned home as well as their new experiences in the US dramatically changed their perspectives on life, career, and earlier plans of returning home. During the time of this study and as discussed in chapter five, only 5% of the interview consultants and 12% of the survey participants reported that they would probably or definitely would return to Nepal after completing their studies or gaining enough professional experience in the US. And, it was not surprising at all when 86% of my most disenchanted group of survey participants, those who were Nepalese civil servants earlier, either agreed or

strongly agreed to the statement “I feel that Nepal is my *janmabhumi* and the US is my *karmabhumi*. ”

For almost all of my research subjects who were working professionals, entry into the professional workforce of the US was the most critical step in sealing their chances of returning home. In addition to opening doors to pursue their passions and giving them immense professional satisfaction, their jobs also guaranteed them permanent resident status in the US, and later citizenship as well. To avoid appearing too intrusive during the interview sessions, questions about their residential status in the US were not included in the interview protocols. However, it was apparent that most of the older consultants and those who had been in the US for quite a while had already become US citizens, and those who had arrived recently were already permanent residents or were in the process of becoming one.

It was also equally interesting to note the variations in the responses of my interview consultants when I had asked them about their long-term settlement plans. A great majority of those who were below forty reported that they were uncertain about settling down in the US or returning home. They also reported that they were staying primarily for the education and well being of their children. In stark contrast to these responses, my older consultants who were in their fifties (n=3) and those who were in their thirties or forties, but had been in the US for more than 20 years (n=2) reported that they were very much settled down in the US and that all of their children, a significant number of their relatives, siblings, as well as a great number of their friends were in the US and that returning to Nepal was simply not an option for them. The older ones further reported that their parents had already passed away and their most loved ones--their

children--were growing up as Americans, and that they could not imagine moving anywhere far away from them. In addition, they were very much attached to their work and life in the US. They simply did not see any point in returning to Nepal. Similar to what my interview consultants reported, 62% of my survey participants who were working professionals also reported that they had become used to life in the US and would miss it if they returned to Nepal. Sixty three percent of them also reported that they had good interpersonal relations among their colleagues, and 41% also reported that they would find it difficult to adjust to the way of everyday life in Nepal. If I or somebody else were to ask the same question 20 years later to my younger consultants who reported that they were primarily staying in the US for the education and well being of their children, I believe many of them would say exactly what my older consultants as well as those who had been in the US for more than 20 years had said during the time of my fieldwork. Despite the fact that about 40% of my research subjects reported that they were undecided about settling down in the US or had plans to return to Nepal after a couple of years, it was obvious that almost all of them would either settle down in the US, or return to Nepal only if the political situation of the country changed radically.

The strong desires of their spouses (especially wives) and grown up children to remain in the US strongly influenced the decisions of a great majority of my research subjects. In addition, the presence of siblings, relatives, and most of their friends in the US also made them socially comfortable in the US. One of my female consultants living and working in Boston commented that the city was like *Baneshowar*⁹¹, implying that there were so many Nepalese people there. Communal pot-luck picnics, annual celebration of *Dashain* and Nepali New Year, and private gatherings of close friends and

⁹¹ A residential section located in the eastern part of the city of Kathmandu.

relatives have become fairly common events. Furthermore, the increasing number of Nepalese in the US in recent years has enabled the parents/relatives of prospective brides and grooms or the brides and grooms themselves to find their partners (Nepali) themselves. However, what is remarkable is that unlike American parents who expect their grown up children to move out of the house and give their children the freedom to choose their own partners, the Nepalese parents were holding their children very close to their chests,⁹² proactively influencing the selection of their partners, actively giving continuity to traditional Nepalese cultural practices, and adopting some of the social/cultural norms of the US.

The tendency of immigrant Nepalese parents to continue the tradition of arranged marriages for their children in the United States is consistent with that of other South Asian immigrants⁹³. In general, South Asian societies consider the family background of a potential bride or groom to be as important as his/her individual personality. Often, it is a subject of careful scrutiny, and only when both sides are satisfied with each other, further steps are taken to establish a formal relationship. Earlier studies have demonstrated that arranged marriages are “alive and well” amongst immigrant South Asians in Western countries as well (Menon 1989; Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990; Chandra 1991; Gell 1994; Lessinger 1995; Foner 1997; Bellafante 2005). In her study of the Indians living in the Chicago area, Rangaswamy (2000) reported that a majority of her research subjects (71%) approved arranged marriages and 35% disapproved of their

⁹² Dr. Jitendra had expressed his approach to raising his kids as “*Jatti sakinchha, kasera rakhne.*” Translation: As long as you can, hold on to them real tight. Though my interview consultants did not express their feelings as lucidly as Dr. Jitendra, my general observation was that this was very much true with them as well.

⁹³ For example, the Indians--who are the most populous ones in South Asia--and the Nepalese celebrate the same festivals, have the same Hindu pantheon, share the same ancient epic and many cultural and religious practices, speak languages that evolved from the same root, and as a matter of fact, use the same script to write their languages.

child marrying an American. In an analysis of the Census Bureau's 2003 American Community Survey, Bellafante (2005) reported that fewer than 10 percent of South Asian men and women who were in their 20's and 30's and a vast majority of whom are foreign born, married outside their ethnic group.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, very few themes that contradicted my hypotheses also emerged during data analysis. These themes were coded as well, and revolved around racism in the United States, nostalgic feelings about Nepal and parents, and the perceptions that the Maoist insurgency would fade away, and the existence of immense possibilities in the private sector in Nepal. Though only 8% of all survey respondents either agreed strongly or strongly to the statement "I am tired of the racism I encounter in the U.S.," it was quite high for the women (21% vs. 4% for the men). This might be due to the fact that a great majority of the men were working professionals or graduate students, and spent most of their time in a professional setting where the chances of encountering explicit or overt racism were lower than in many other American contexts. On the other hand, a great majority of their wives were homemakers, and thus, more likely to encounter racism while shopping, or walking down the street, or visiting their children's schools. Compared to other immigrants with African ancestry or darker skins like the Indians, Nepalis come in different shades and facial features, and a great majority of the Nepali immigrants are relatively fairer. Due to the relative fairness of their skins, I believe that a lot of the Nepali immigrants experience low levels of racism in the US. During my fieldwork, I met and saw many young Nepalis, and many of them were fair. It would have been extremely difficult to identify many of them (as Nepalis) if they were

hanging out with a racially mixed group of college students. Many would have been easily mistaken as Hispanics.

Though I did not ask any specific questions pertaining to racism during the interviews and participant observations, it was apparent that racism was not an overriding issue for many of my research subjects. For example, the only two of my interview consultants who reported that they would definitely return to Nepal did not mention racism when I asked them: “What do you consider are the three important factors that work against your staying in the US?” Racism in the United States is definitely in the air, but I believe Nepalis did not experience and take it as strongly and as personally as immigrants from other countries do. For example, people organize race differently in the Caribbean. According to Waters (1999) people identified themselves on a continuum, and money had the power of “whitening” ones race. However, Waters noted that once West Indian immigrants were in New York they were surprised and deeply shocked by the overarching concern with race among Americans. Though they expected to encounter *structural racism*, they were overwhelmed by the degree of personal racism. The West Indian immigrants constantly encountered interpersonal racism in their interactions with Whites, and it was only after coming to the US that they realized that they were “the Other” and “Black.” Though many were well-educated in a British educational system, they viewed themselves as destined to remain “Blacks” no matter how much they succeeded in their lives. They were hassled, looked down upon as inferiors, assaulted for venturing into White neighborhoods, and obstructed from promotions and so on. Such routine encounters had made it impossible for them to ever “forget race.”

The racial encounter of my research subjects was strikingly different than that of the West Indians. Out of 46 interview consultants, only one had said without any prompting: “you will never be a part of this society”. Being a compelling statement, I had it included in my survey questionnaire where participants could agree or disagree with it at various levels. Interestingly, a majority of my survey participants (40%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (35% of them agreed or strongly agreed and the remainder 25% had remained neutral). Furthermore, two of my interview consultants hailed from two different ethnic groups of Nepal and three were *Madhesi* Nepalis. Out of these five, two of them reported feeling more at home in the US than in Kathmandu due to the racism of the hill people who looked down at them as inferiors. For them, racism was more of an issue in Nepal than in the US.

My older consultants, who were usually the first ones to come to the U.S. from their families usually talked about missing their childhood friends, with whom they could interact very intimately. Similarly, 70% of the survey respondents reported that they missed their family and friends in Nepal, and another 76% of them reported that their families were in Nepal and they wanted to be with them. This was particularly higher for those who came from upper class family backgrounds (88%). During my fieldwork, I had noticed that some of the wives of my middle-aged consultants who had emigrated primarily to work were not very well educated. They seemed somewhat lost, and did not have a clear understanding of the American scheme of things. This was reflected in the survey data as well. Fifty six percent of the survey participants who came to the US primarily to work reported that their spouses wanted to return to Nepal (25% for all survey data).

Conclusions

An increasing number of Nepalese professionals have opted to settle down in the US. Though over 60% of my research subjects came to the US with the intention of returning home, a great majority of them changed their minds as they stayed on. The near certainty that they would have to start from inferior positions in Nepal and the conviction that they would have marginal status in the Nepalese bureaucratic/university hierarchy had they elected to return home was a strong dissuading factor for many of those who had professional work experiences in Nepal. Being assigned inferior positions and accorded marginal status in the bureaucracy/university system of a country where employees with better personal connections with the ruling elite dictated the overall functioning of the various departments meant lack of opportunities and, even worse, stifling one's initiatives. This perception of US based professional Nepalese is very different from that of other professional immigrants. In a study of about one thousand master's degree business management students pursuing their studies in the United Kingdom and the United States, Baruch et al. (2007) concluded that the most influential factors in a foreign student's decision to return or remain were the perception of the labor market in the host country, student's adjustment process, and family ties of the students in both host and home countries. In other words, the possibility of being employed, the ease of adjustment, and presence of strong family ties in the host countries were the most significant predictors of their intention to stay in the United Kingdom or the United States. These three were also very characteristic of my research subjects. In addition, cultural attributes have also been identified as equally important reasons for emigration to highly developed countries by professionals. Lebanese society expected medical students

to be trained abroad (Akl et al. 2007), and in the African context, many professional African women, including the upper-echelon of women from highly educated, wealthy, and influential families, found it difficult to fulfill the cultural expectations for financial contributions to and financial management of their households, and thus, emigrated to countries like Great Britain, Canada, and the United States where they could find legal and structural guarantees of the right to financial privacy, control of their own earnings, and ability to use earnings to support children (Reynolds 2006).

Professional immigrant Guyanese who were living in the UK more than 25 years ago held views about not wanting to return home that were closest to the Nepalese professionals. About 50% of the former had indicated that they were dissatisfied with the national policies of the Guyanese government as well as with the political situation in Guyana (Boodhoo and Baksh 1981). Another view close to that of the professional Nepalese immigrants--who were closely observing the violence unfolding in Nepal during the time of this study--might be that of the Chinese professionals, who went through the aftermath of the June 4, 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Zweig (1995) reported that about 40% of his research subjects had indicated that the Tiananmen Square tragedy was either important or very important in their decision to stay in the US. Additionally, about 15% of them had reported that they either completely or somewhat mistrusted the Chinese government's 1993 *lai qu ziyou* or freedom to come and go policy. About 38% had also reported that they were uncertain about this policy.

In a recent article on the Iranian brain drain, Torbat (2002) argued that the Islamic Republic's suppression of democracy, its hostile attitudes toward the Western-educated, its inclusion of Islamic beliefs in the academic curricula, and the domination of its top

public positions by the mullah strata were the main reasons for the emigration of the country's professionals. Similarly, many restrictions, brutal suppression of pro-democracy activities, the uncertainties of life, and the frustrations over a lack of opportunities in Burma have also been reported to have compelled many students and professionals to travel on a one-way ticket abroad (Havely 1998; Moe 2006). Unlike China, Iran, and Burma, Nepal has neither been a communist nor a theocratic state. Nor has it ever been ruled by a military junta. Furthermore, most of the governments during the post 1990 era had democratic credentials. Successive Nepalese governments of the recent past, including the party-less *Panchayat* governments, were never as brutal as the current regimes of China, Iran, and Burma⁹⁴. In addition, a great majority of my research subjects had been living in the US for more than six years, i.e. long before the Maoist insurgency began to affect the everyday lives of the Nepalese people. However, a great majority of my research subjects' responses to why they were not willing to return to Nepal or what encouraged them to emigrate to the United States, resembled those of the Chinese, Iranian, and Burmese immigrant professionals who had extremely repressive governments back home.

In stark contrast to what many of my research subjects who had worked in a professional capacity in Nepal had experienced, the US offered countless opportunities to pursue their professional interests and ambitions as well as be satisfied with their professional work, income, and overall life. The overwhelming desire of their spouses and children to remain in the US, the presence of their siblings, relatives, and large

⁹⁴ The many *Panchayat* governments systematically suppressed the various political parties and their leaders. But, the people in general, were left alone. During the people's movement of 1990 (that toppled the *Panchayat* government), less than fifty people lost their lives. Similarly, 21 people lost their lives during the nineteen-day protest against king Gyanendra's direct rule in April 2006.

numbers of friends in the US also played significant roles in gradually changing their earlier intentions to return home. As Upadhyay (1995) has observed, it appeared that my research subjects too were not structurally assimilated in the United States. A great majority of them still hung out and shared moments of joy amongst themselves, helped each other out, and attempted collectively to give continuity to traditional Nepalese cultural practices. An educational quest undoubtedly became a one-way ticket for a great majority of my research subjects, and unlike what George Moore had said in the earlier part of twentieth century, a great majority of my research subjects had found in their *karmabhumi* what they could not find in their *janmabhumi*.

CHAPTER SEVEN: TRANSNATIONAL NEPALIS

*Api Swarnamayi Lanka, na ye rachte Lakshman,
Janani janmabhumi cha, swargadapi gariyasi !*

[O Lakshman! I do not find this golden Lanka at all attractive,
(For me) mother and motherland are dearer than heaven!]
-Lord Rama in *The Ramayan*⁹⁵

Chapter seven will examine the immigrant and transnational lives of the Nepalese in the United States. With data collected from my fieldwork, mailed survey, and archival research, I will illustrate how the immigrant Nepalese are striving to maintain an ethno-national identity in the United States, while at the same time, they are constructing and maintaining social networks and organizing activities that were rooted in place, but that transcend borders. Specifically, I will build this chapter on the conceptual frameworks of identity (Hall 1991, 1996; Bauman 1996,) globalization (Appadurai 1996, 2001, Kearney 1995; Featherstone 1996; Koslowski 2007; Ogelman 2007; Freedman 2007), and transnationalism (Schiller et al. 1992, 1995; Basch et al. 1994, Mahler 1995; Portes 1995; Guarnizo and Smith 1999; Portes et al. 1999, Gold 2002; Schiller and Fouron 2001, Smith 2007), and argue that despite creating and maintaining ethnic infrastructures in the United States, the immigrant Nepalis were attempting to “thicken” their membership in the Nepali nation-state by engaging themselves with democratizing tendencies and charitable works in Nepal.

⁹⁵ The *Ramayan* (Journey of Lord Rama) is a Hindu epic poem with 24,000 verses that was written by sage Valmiki around 3000 BC. This story is very rich with spiritual meaning, and has been told and retold down through the ages by saints, poets, scholars, and common folks in India and Nepal.

“The Nepalese Rise in the West”

In 2004, one of the leading proponents of the Non-Resident Nepali movement⁹⁶ estimated that there were about 250,000 Nepalis living in Burma, 220,000 in Saudi Arabia, 280,000 in other Gulf countries, 150,000 in Malaysia, 50,000 in Hong Kong, 80,000 in North America, and 50,000 in Europe (Udas 2004). He also observed that there were significant number of Nepalis residing in Japan, Australia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Brunei and other Asian countries. Though these figures were based on anecdotal evidence, it can be safely asserted that Nepalis have spread throughout the world. From Fiji to Vancouver and from Lesotho to Finland, Nepalis have reached almost every part of the globe and are working in various capacities, ranging from mercenaries to research scientists and carpet cleaners to lawyers. As mentioned in Chapter One, Nepalis started to emigrate to the West in the early fifties. The United Kingdom was the first Western country visited by a Nepali official⁹⁷ and due to its long diplomatic relationship with Nepal,⁹⁸ many Nepali professionals acquired their post-graduate training there. Unlike the United Kingdom, the United States’ relationship with Nepal is relatively new. Diplomatic relations were established only in 1947, and a US-Nepal General Agreement for a Technical Cooperation was signed in 1951 (Khadka 2000). Even though the Commission for Educational Exchange between the United States and Nepal (USEF-Nepal) was formally established in June 1961, quite a few Nepalis had managed to acquire their higher education in the US before then. Two

⁹⁶ The author defined the movement as “a movement initiated by Nepalis abroad, but a movement for the benefit of Nepal as a whole.”

⁹⁷ The first Rana prime minister Jung Bahadur Rana had visited Great Britain in 1850.

⁹⁸ The first British Resident was posted to Kathmandu in 1816 and the British remained the only foreign diplomatic presence in Nepal for well over a century.

(<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019041557693>) accessed (5/15/07)

Nepali students came to the US for the first time under the Fulbright scholarship program to study public administration in 1952⁹⁹. In addition to the increased activities in US-Nepal relations, Nepal also joined the United Nations in 1955 and sent its delegates to New York. As mentioned in Chapter One, it was around this time that the first Nepalis also started to settle down in the US. Compared to Indian, Chinese, Latino, and Korean immigrant communities, Nepalese immigrant communities in North America and Europe are relatively young, small, scattered and have largely remained in the cultural and social sidelines. Unlike his or her Indian or Latino counterparts, the Nepali immigrant is not a presence in the public life of the United States, and this collectivity has not been able to alter what Appadurai (1996: 33) calls the “ethnoscape” of the United States. Similarly, spatial microcosms like “little Kathmandu” or “little Nepal” have not emerged in the United States where the immigrant Nepalis could form their communities or associate with their Nepaliness--the way Jackson Heights of New York City has done for the Indians (Khandelwal 2002: 2; Shukla 2003: 81) and Chinatown of Vancouver in Canada has done for the Chinese (Anderson 1991). However, the number of Nepalis in the US recently has been increasing exponentially, and there are an estimated 150,000 Nepalis in the US (Sharma 2007), and about 30,000 in the UK (Humagain and Adhikari 2005)¹⁰⁰.

With increasing numbers and many being well-established in the professional work force of their host countries, a stronger leadership as well as a community that is very vocal about issues at home are emerging from the immigrant Nepali community. This phenomenon was aptly captured by the weekly magazine *Nepal*, which entitled its

⁹⁹ <http://www.nepalitimes.com/issue/149/Development/3360> accessed (5/15/07)

¹⁰⁰ The Nepali Sandesh Weekly, an online newspaper published in the Nepali language from the United Kingdom claims that about 50,000 Nepalis read their newspaper in the United Kingdom alone.

April 24, 2005 issue: “The Nepalese Rise in the West.” The authors of the cover story argued that the immigrant Nepalis were not only being successful in their lives and careers in the US and Europe, but were also progressively establishing their identities there. They recounted stories of those Nepalis who had emigrated to the US and Europe and had thrived there. Similar to what I myself have observed in the US, the magazine also reported that many highly educated Nepalis were emerging in prestigious positions in universities and international and multinational organizations. In addition, it also reported that many had started their own businesses, and some had even managed to expand their businesses to other countries, as well as to Nepal. The authors concluded that a community that had largely remained dormant due to being in countries with different languages and educational systems had finally started to rub shoulders on equal footing with other immigrant communities.

Organizing and Ascertaining the Nepalese Identity and Creating Ethnic Infrastructures

Voluntary Associations

A quick search in the internet for Nepali organizations worldwide reveals more than four dozen voluntary Nepali organizations in the United States, about a dozen in the United Kingdom, ten in Canada, eight each in Japan and Australia, six in Germany, three in the Netherlands and so on. The Non-Resident Nepali Association even has coordinating councils in very unlikely countries like Belarus, Cyprus, and Lesotho. It is apparent that the growing number of Nepalis throughout the world had made possible

the formation of such associations. Yeti¹⁰¹ Nepali Association, founded by a group of Nepali students in London in May 1960 is probably the first Nepalese organization to be formed by Nepalis in the Western world¹⁰². From its inception, it aimed to promote goodwill and co-operation amongst the Nepalese community, preserve Nepali culture and tradition, and voice Nepali aspirations in the UK. It started to gather Nepalis living in the UK by organizing functions like celebrations of the Nepalese New Year's Day, *Dashain* festival, summer outings, and annual Yeti Cup football tournament. The fact that it continues to do so even after about half a century since its inception suggests that the immigrant Nepali community in the UK is still very much alive. In addition to this pioneer expatriate Nepali organization, there are about a dozen other Nepali organizations in the United Kingdom. One such noteworthy organization is the Nepalese Doctor's Association-UK that has 94 registered members¹⁰³. It was established in 1985 and defines itself as a "non-political, non-racial, non-profit making voluntary organization" that aims to contribute in the development of health services in Nepal as well as to sponsor charities in Nepal and the UK. The America-Nepal Medical Foundation is a similar organization¹⁰⁴. Though it is extremely difficult to know the exact number of Nepali or Nepalese American doctors in the US, two members of ANMF's board of directors estimated that there were about 200 of them¹⁰⁵. As the

¹⁰¹ *Yeti* is the Nepali term for abominable snowman, that is said to be an apelike cryptid inhabiting the Himalayan region of Nepal and Tibet. Most mainstream scientists, explorers and writers consider current evidence of the *Yeti's* existence to be weak and better explained as a hoax, legend or misidentification of a known species. However, the names *Yeti* and *Meh-Teh* are commonly used by the people indigenous to the region, and are part of their history and mythology. It was popularized in the Western world by the Belgian writer and illustrator Herge through his classic 1960 comic-strip album "Tintin in Tibet."

¹⁰² <http://www.yeti.org.uk/frontpage/about/about.htm#History> (accessed 5/17/07)

¹⁰³ <http://www.ndauk.org.uk/main.php?id=aboutus.html> accessed (5/15/07)

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.anmf.net/about.htm> (accessed 5/15/07)

¹⁰⁵ Email communication with Dr. Murari Suvedi. (9/6/07). This number is very significant because Nepal had about 4,000 doctors and 10,000 hospital beds in the fiscal year 2001/02 for a total population of 23

primary organization of Nepali and Nepalese American doctors in the US, ANMF aims to promote the advancement of medical training and practice in Nepal, with a focus on improving the quality of medical care, medical education and medical research. Over the years, it has evolved as an educational agency for Nepalese medical practitioners, provider of medical equipment for Nepalese health care facilities, and funding agency for existing health care services in Nepal¹⁰⁶. It raises its funds from membership fees and donations, and supports projects like “Pediatric and Neonatal Intensive Care Nursing and Pharmacy Training,” “Managing Genital Prolapse in Rural Nepal,” “Medical Education Unit,” “Anesthesia Machine,” “Training and Equipment in Renal Histopathology.” Individuals as well as institutions can make online requests for assistance to a medical project in Nepal, and are funded either partially or fully if they are approved after a careful review. So far, it has assisted over 40 projects, has 5 ongoing projects (one of them had a budget of US\$ 20,000, and is being fully funded by ANMF), and is raising funds for 4 more.

Founded in July 1983 in New York and incorporated in Washington D. C. as a non-profit tax-exempt organization, The Association of the Nepalese in the Americas (ANA) is the largest and oldest Nepali organization in the US. Since its inception, it has organized 25 annual conventions in various US and Canadian cities and has evolved as the overarching Nepali organization in the US. Its official website claims that ANA is an exclusively educational and charitable association whose purpose is to “promote the preservation of Nepali identity and culture in the Americas, to foster cordial relations

million, i.e. 5870 persons per doctor and 2343 hospital beds per patient. These were the most recent figures I could find.

<http://www.cbs.gov.np/Nepal%20in%20figure/nepal%20in%20figures%202006.pdf>

http://www.searo.who.int/EN/Section313/Section1523_6865.htm

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.anmf.net/projectlist.htm> (accessed 9/6/07)

among Nepalis and Americans, and to demonstrate the effectiveness of the participation of Nepali-Americans in the communities they live in.”¹⁰⁷ In addition to organizing very sophisticated annual conventions that are attended by several thousand immigrant Nepalis, it also organizes Nepali poetry festivals in collaboration with the International Nepali Literary Society (INLS), has published the first Nepali cook book in the US, sponsors cultural troupes from Nepal to perform in the annual ANA conventions or in US cities with significant Nepali populations, ships medical equipments to Nepal, organizes various fund raising events for the Nepal Education and Cultural Center as well as for various philanthropic purposes in Nepal. It even managed to establish a Nepal Scholarship Program in 1989 for Nepali students to study at Fairmont State University.¹⁰⁸ In addition to ANA, there are about four dozen other Nepali organizations in the US that strive to bring together the immigrant Nepalis. Like the pioneer Yeti Nepali Association in the United Kingdom, these organizations also organize *Dashain* and Nepali New Years day celebrations, summer outings, pot-luck picnics, and various games. With the increasing number of Nepali immigrants in the US, more parochial organizations formed around narrower ethnic and regional identities have also emerged in the recent years. For example, the major ethnic groups of Nepal: the *Sherpas*, *Newars*, *Magars*, *Gurungs*, *Kirat Rai*, and the *Terai* group have their own associations in the US and the UK. All of them have their own web portals, have very similar mission statements promoting their identities as well as ethnic, linguistic, and cultural heritage, and strive to serve the social and cultural needs of their members. It is equally

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.anaonline.org/about/> (accessed 7/11/07)

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.fairmontstate.edu/international/scholarships/Nepal/default.asp> (accessed 7/11/07)

interesting to note that this trend of Nepalis organizing themselves along ethnic and regional identities also prevails in Canada, Japan and Australia.

Nepal Abroad in Print, on the World Wide Web, and on the Air

As a relatively young community in the West, the Nepalese immigrants have only recently produced their own publications. The first journal to be published by immigrant Nepalis in the West was probably the “*Yeti Patra*” (Letter from the Yeti – the name “Yeti” was probably chosen because of its uniqueness, and partly, to be funny), published annually by the Yeti Nepali Association-UK. In the United States, the history of Nepalese publications dates back to the establishment of the Association of Nepalis in the Americas in 1983. It published and circulated the paper-based ANA newsletter among a very limited readership. Since there was not much going on within the Nepalese community in the US *per se*, the ANA newsletter resorted to publishing news from around the world as well as from Nepal.¹⁰⁹ However, in the past few years, there has been an unprecedented surge in the number of news outlets and other means of mass media that target immigrant Nepalis. These news media, informational outlets, and community web portals also serve as forums where members of the Nepali community share information, debate contemporary issues, as well as share their common cultural identity and heritage. For example, the website of *Nepali Samaj UK* (Nepalese Society UK) describes itself as “a non-profitable, non-political online Nepalese community...with the goal of promoting and preserving Nepalese culture and identity and uniting Nepalese people around the world as well as anyone else interested in Nepal.

¹⁰⁹ Telephone conversation with Mr. Shailendra Shukla, ex-editor of ANA newsletter. 8/9/07

NepaliSamajUK aims to provide a forum for discussion related to Nepal and the Nepalese community around the globe and intends to provide information about Nepalese functions and events throughout the UK.”¹¹⁰

The Virginia based International Nepali Literary Society (INLS) began a literary ‘list-serve’ web-journal entitled *Antardrishti* (Insight) for the very first time in 1991. It started to issue a print version in 1992 as well, and remarkably, continues to publish its journal that has become a quarterly (Sharma 2007). It aims to preserve and promote Nepali culture by encouraging the writing, reading, publication, distribution, translation, and study of Nepali language, literature, art, music and dance (INLS Hand book). It plans to establish a community-based Nepali language education project in the Washington DC metropolitan area first, and then transfer the model to establish similar projects in other US cities as well as other countries with significant numbers of Nepalis via INLS representatives and chapters. It has chapters in 11 different Asian countries, 5 European countries as well as in Australia and Canada. In the United States alone, it has chapters in 15 different states. It routinely organizes various literary functions coinciding with the birthdays of Nepal’s major literary figures. So far, it has published over 25 books authored by Nepalis living in different parts of the world, including one that won Nepal’s most prestigious literary award, the *Madan Puraskar* in 2004.

Online Nepali journalism in the West started only a year after nepalnews.com¹¹¹ was launched from Nepal in July 1998. Another Nepal-based and widely popular web based news portal kantipuronline.com was launched in February 2000. Initially launched as newslookmag.com in 1999, it later became nepalmonitor.com. Editorially based in

¹¹⁰ <http://www.nepalisamajuk.com/aboutus.asp> (accessed 7/4/07)

¹¹¹ An independent Nepali news portal.

Statesboro, Georgia, it focuses on public affairs and social change, but also covers any issues that are significant to the public, whether they are governmental, community-related or entrepreneurial.¹¹² Its editors call it a “weblog publishing platform” and they cull news pieces related to Nepal from various sources as well as welcome contributions from professionals and serves as a forum for experts to sharing their views among themselves and with the wider public. Similarly, samudaya.org, another news/discussion web portal published by US based young and liberal Nepalis provides commentary, debate, and literary analysis. Both of these news/discussion web portals are activist in nature, reflect the sensibilities and political interests of immigrant Nepalis, and offer alternative viewpoints to the discussions that appear in mainstream Nepali media. In addition, the first web based Nepali language news magazine “*Nepali Post*” was also launched from Washington D.C. in September 2001, and the second one (*Nepali Sandesh*) was launched from the United Kingdom in September 2004. The relatively latecomers in the Nepali Diaspora’s mediaspace, *Nepali Awaz* and *Nepal Abroad* (both weeklies) started publishing from New York and Washington DC respectively only in 2006. In addition to the community based web portals, all of these newspapers also offer a quick digest of the week’s events in Nepal, notices of Nepali community and cultural events in the US, immigration information, and congratulatory messages to Nepalese-American children who won prizes or scholarships from American Universities.

Prior to the publication of *Antardrishti*, a Nepali online forum www.gbnc.org had already begun in 1989 along with the founding of the Greater Boston Nepali Community (GBNC). It was later renamed sajha.com, meaning “common” to encourage wider participation, and is still one of the most popular Nepali online forums where

¹¹² <http://www.nepalmonitor.com/about.html> (accessed 7/5/07)

members can start new discussions or engage on any ongoing ones. In addition, it also offers the latest news on Nepal, announces community news and events, as well as information on immigration, travel, pre-paid calling cards to Nepal, IT/computer help, restaurant reviews, partner search, links to other Nepali associations, and so on.

Members also post jokes, poems, travelogues, pictures, videos, and individual blogs. A majority of the websites of the various Nepali organizations throughout the globe are fashioned along the design, content, and interactivity of *sajha.com* and primarily serve as a form of communication between Nepalis residing in a given locality.

In addition to establishing a print culture in the West, primarily in the United States, the immigrant Nepalis have also managed to establish and run three Nepali Radio stations in North America. One is based in Washington DC (*Radio Dovan* 700AM), another is in Dallas/Fort Worth (*Everest Radio* 104.9 FM), and the other one is in Toronto (*Namaste Radio* 101.3 FM). All of them air news, Nepali music, and other educational and informational programs in the Nepali language for Nepalis residing in their respective areas. All of the radio stations broadcast their programs for about an hour every week and aim to preserve and promote Nepalese language, culture and music as well as represent the voice of the Nepalese communities. In addition to these radio stations, the Washington DC based Sagarmatha Television has also been broadcasting Nepali Television programs since 1997. Its promoters claim that it is the first Nepali television program ever produced and broadcasted outside Nepal. It airs its programs every Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. through cable in the Washington D. C. and certain areas of Maryland and Virginia, and through DirecTV and Dish Network throughout the US. The program consists of community news and updates, legal

discussions, Nepali television serials, interviews conducted with prominent Nepalis visiting the United States, and miscellaneous shows. Its aims and goals are very similar to that of the three radio stations described above.

The emergence and surge of Nepali print and other media in the West is evidence of what is now a commonplace dictum, from the seminal work of Benedict Anderson (1991), that a newspaper is another technology for imagining a nation. For him, a nation is by definition an “imagined community,” that is a community, the members of which are aware of each other's existence but, even for a lifetime do not meet or come to know a substantial number of the rest of the members of that community. Yet, through a number of media, they acquire a sense of belonging to this larger group because the nation is “always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (p. 7). As with other immigrant groups, the establishment of various Nepali media sources abroad--news portals, newspapers, community websites, literary activities, radio and television stations--also marks their self-awareness and their consolidation in the lands they are living. These media sources and spaces construct the nation of Nepal, the nationality of Nepaliness, and Nepalese culture as a collective consciousness of the immigrant Nepalis, primarily by organizing and expressing their shared interests, aspirations, and experiences.

Association of Nepalis in the Americas (ANA) Conventions

Every year during the July 4th holidays, approximately two to three thousand Nepalis from all over North America gather in a US city to participate in their biggest gathering. Soccer and basketball matches are organized between various competing

Nepali teams, and issues of the home country, non-resident Nepalis, youths and so on are discussed in the various forums. The mood in these four-day conventions is very upbeat, and three evenings are reserved for DJ night, cultural program, and live concert. Nepali DJs, Nepali cultural troupes and popular Nepali singers from Nepal entertain the ecstatic crowd that actively engages itself with the tone and beat of the performers.

The 2005 annual convention of the ANA was held in the Las Colinas Marriot of Dallas. From the parking lot to the lobby, the whole hotel was swarming with Nepalis, and the organizers estimated that about 2500-3000 Nepalis from the world over participated in that convention.¹¹³ As I walked into the lobby around 9 a.m., I observed a very festive mood in many of the faces of those who were present there. The crowd was comprised mostly of middle-aged men, women and children. Most of the young people were participating or watching the various sports activities that were occurring simultaneously at this time in different locations. Some were in small groups greeting and chatting with their relatives, friends, or long-lost friends whereas some were wandering around hoping to spot a familiar face. Groups of people who were either friends, relatives, or families were also posing together for pictures. The first floor of the hotel, where most of the conference halls were located, was reserved for the event and quite a few Nepalis were also hanging around there. There were about 20 makeshift stalls on the hallway with banners and posters. But, at this particular time, most of them were empty.

At around one in the afternoon, the young people returned from the games and lunch, and many of the gathered Nepalis converged on the first floor. All of the stalls were suddenly occupied, and they were promoting Nepalese jewelries, Nepali hip-hop

¹¹³ <http://www.anaonline.org/conventions/ana2005.php> (accessed 7/8/07)

and rock audio CDs, Nepali movies in DVD, Nepali newspapers and magazines, books, money transfer services, travel services to Nepal, a Nepali restaurant and a Nepali grocery store, and even dissident and philanthropic movements. There was also an art exhibition in one of the smaller halls. It became so crowded and there was so much noise that it quickly resembled an open-air Bengali fish market where fishermen advertise their wares and the potential buyers bargain for a lower price at the same time. There wasn't much going on at this time, except for the screening of Nepali movies in one of the halls, and this chaos prevailed for about two hours. After that, people either retreated to their rooms or moved on to attend other programs, like the ANA executive committee meeting and the poetry festival.

In spite of so many activities going on, the convention was formally opened only on the second day. The Mayor of Irving was the chief guest, and he and other important personages--like the Nepalese ambassador to the United States, the president of the ANA, and president of Nepal-America Council--were welcomed by *Panchakanyas*¹¹⁴ who offered each a bouquet each as they stepped to the podium. The president of the Texas Nepali Society, who was also the chair of the convention, welcomed all the guests. Then the Mayor of Irving welcomed all the participants, said that he felt honored that the convention was being hosted in his city, and offered his best wishes for a memorable and successful convention. Then the ANA president briefly talked about the ANA tradition, its history, and the meaning of the convention. The Nepalese ambassador to the US and the president of the Nepal America Council thanked the organizing

¹¹⁴ *Panchakanya* means five virgins or maidens. Being welcomed or being bid farewell by five virgins or maidens is considered a sign of auspiciousness in Nepal. Members of Nepal's royal family and the Prime Minister are welcomed by *Panchakanyas* at every public event they attend. In addition, visiting dignitaries as well as heads of state who are on visits abroad are always welcomed and bid farewell by *Panchakanyas* at Kathmandu's international airport.

committee members for all their hard work. A Texan tap dance was performed during this ceremony to introduce Texan tradition to the participants.

The convention catered to the needs of a very diverse audience. There was something for everyone. The younger crowd overwhelmingly participated and attended the sports and musical programs whereas the older ones attended and participated in the poetry festival, different meetings, book reading program, and forums like “Peace and Unity for Prosperity: Crisis Resolution and Post Conflict Resolution of Nepal,” and “Social and Economic Development of Nepal.” There was a kid’s camp too, and I also observed about 30 women entering one of the halls to participate in a forum entitled “Women's Concern Toward Gender Equality.”

I attended the “Peace and Unity for Prosperity: Crisis Resolution and Post Conflict Resolution of Nepal.” There were four panelists and a moderator in this forum, but the organizers announced that they would first screen a 23 minute documentary film to help everyone understand what was going on in Nepal. It was entitled *Andolan Jaari Chha* (The Struggle Continues) and was made after king Gyanendra had initiated direct rule in Nepal. Through a hidden camera, the filmmaker had captured scenes of street-level protests in Nepal and of the clampdown by the Nepalese police. I was disturbed by the film’s bias. It only included images from one side of the scuffle, and an anonymous narrator speaking in somewhat broken English repeatedly blamed the Nepalese monarchy for the country’s current state of affairs.

After this, a Nepali student, who was doing his PhD studies at the RAND institute, presented a brief paper that projected possible political scenarios of post-conflict Nepal. It was not very convincing, and his projection was based on the

assumption that there would be peace in Nepal in a very short time. Another speaker was a faculty member from Western Michigan University, who was also a Nepali, and he stressed the need to practice inclusive democracy in the *Chhetri* and *Brahmin* dominated politics of Nepal. The next panelist offered his own version of the prevalent crisis in Nepal, laid all the blame squarely on king Gyanendra, and also said that he challenged him (king Gyanendra)--without explaining what the challenge was about. The last speaker was a representative of the then Nepalese government, and he politely explained and defended king Gyanendra's move of February 1st 2005.

There was a question and answer session at the end, but even before the second question was asked, the organizers announced that they had used up the allotted time and had to vacate the hall for the next scheduled event. This forum had provided a space for four diverse opinion holders, but it was quite disappointing to see that there wasn't much room left for intellectual debate. As usual, the focus was excessively on the politics of Nepal instead of on issues such as the pains of resettling in a new country.

On the third day, there was a Non-Resident Nepali (NRN) forum, and I attended it with the same expectations. However, the one-hour discussion centered on acknowledging the growing Nepali community in the U.S., the need to maintain Nepali cultural heritage in the U.S., and the opportunities and challenges for NRNs to invest in Nepal.

Though many of my interview consultants and research subjects talked about their bitter work experiences in Nepal (as discussed in Chapters Four and Six), it was indeed quite surprising that the experiences of living abroad or the experiences about being forced to leave Nepal were not discussed in any of the forums I attended. Nor do I

think that they were discussed in the youth and the women's forums, which I did not attend. As I have mentioned earlier in this section, the mood of the many participants during the convention was very festive and the whole atmosphere was like that of a pre-*Dashain* Nepal, where family members gather and make preparations to celebrate the festival. My general feeling during the entire convention was that many of the Nepalis I met and saw there had made the U.S. their home far away from home. They might not have totally put away their past or forgotten Nepal, but many appeared satisfied with where they were and whatever they were doing. Perhaps, the scheduling of forums and events like "Immigration and Investment in the U.S. Forum," "NRN Forum," "Cultural Committee Strategy Meeting," and "Kids Camp" (where Nepali youths raised in the U.S. were given a crash-course on speaking Nepali) reflected what many of them were concerned about.

In addition to these, there were reunion programs for the alumni of Nepal's five leading high schools. I attended mine and was astounded to find about 70 of my fellow alumni in that hall. We all introduced each other, and the president of the North America chapter of my school's alumni association informed everybody about the mostly philanthropic work it was doing in Nepal and requested everyone to extend whatever help they could offer.

One of the most visibly striking facets of this particular convention was the way the Nepalese women, specially the young and US educated ones, presented themselves. While most of the older Nepali women wore saris and matching Nepalese jewelries, a great majority of the younger ones had dressed up casually like young American women and many had their clavicles exposed--which would have been very unusual and

embarrassing in Nepal. Many of them actively participated in the games and a great majority of them attended the rock concert, DJ night, danced along with the young men, and cheered for the performing artists. There was a bar adjacent to the main lobby and on the second day of the convention, I observed several groups of well-dressed and professional looking young women sitting around the tables, talking, drinking beer and smoking like experienced smokers--inhaling slowly, keeping the smoke in their lungs for a considerable time, and exhaling very slowly. Though some of them pretended to be oblivious to or totally unconcerned about the surrounding crowd or what the opinion of the crowd would be on what they were doing, but they were unmistakably trying to gauge the crowd's reaction to their extraordinary actions by Nepali standards as well as spying on those who were watching them closely. Being in the United States had changed their lives and outlook towards life. They would not be the typical Nepalese women who would walk three steps behind their men. As South Asian women, they might be absent from the dominant discourse of the United States as asserted by the editors of "Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora" (1993: vii). But, the womanhood of these Nepalese women was also not "passive and insulated" as Dasgupta (1998: 2) had observed about South Asian women in the United States. To paraphrase Dasgupta (1998: 15), "they were (who) they were": assertive, demanding, and their identities were profoundly affected by their "location and relocation in a physical as well as psychological worlds."

A banquet was scheduled on the evening of the third day. Well-dressed and mostly middle-aged and older Nepalis and their children filled the hall. Winners of the poetry festival as well as winning teams of the various competitive games were honored

with their awards here. The president of the convention thanked everybody for their participation, help, and encouragement and expressed his happiness for making it a successful one. Then the ANA chairperson, Mrs. Amrit Tuladhar expressed the feeling of being honored and thanked everybody for the opportunity provided to serve the Nepalese community. It was very striking that the chair was female, because women hardly reach any power positions in the patriarchal society and polity of Nepal. As a team, she also said that ANA would aim to fulfill its goals and set new ones for the future, and also would aspire to build trust, interest, and membership. She thanked the outgoing team of ANA and the election committee for all their hard work, as well as to the Texas team for organizing such a great convention. She concluded her speech by announcing that the venue for next year's ANA convention would be New York. ANA Representatives from New York were invited to the stage, and she requested everybody to extend their support to the New York team for the next year's convention.

Though only the winners of the poetry contest and the various competitive sports activities were honored with prizes during this particular convention, the ANA had recognized high-achievers in its 20th convention held in Washington DC in 2002. It was perhaps the most significant aspect of all the ANA conventions organized in North America so far. That year, it bestowed six "Making Our Mark" awards (out of 10 nominees) to immigrant Nepalis who had made noteworthy accomplishments and helped establish Nepalis as an independent, successful, and an increasingly vibrant group in the US (Pradhan 2002; Nash 2002). The ten nominees represented significant accomplishments in corporate business, information technology, performance art, literature, journalism, sports and diplomacy. One of the recipients of the award, Mr. Kul

Chandra Gautam, was a top official at the United Nations. At that time, he served as an Assistant Secretary-General and deputy executive director of UNICEF. Another recipient, Mr. Arun Banskota was a senior vice president of El Paso Energy International. Kiran Bhakta Joshi headed Walt Disney's Feature Animation Division at that time, and his screen credits included "The Beauty and the Beast," "Aladdin," "The Lion King" and so on. Samrat Updhayay, the first Nepali fiction writer to be published in the U.S. and the author of "Arresting God in Kathmandu" and "The Guru of Love," was another recipient. In addition to these men, two Nepali women, Sudha Shah and Kiran Chetry were also honored with the award. Sudha Shah was a sales executive for the German software giant SAP and was considered by her employer to be the second most successful salesperson in nation-wide U.S. sales. Kiran Chetry was the anchor of Fox Hourly News Update at that time, and later, moved on to CNN. During the Making Our Mark award ceremony, all of the recipients had vowed to work for Nepal, and promised to always remember the contributions of the motherland in their progress. In addition to these Making Our Mark awards, the ANA also awarded four "Nepali pioneers in the North America" awards. One of the recipient of this award was Mr. Ram Kharel, who initiated the Sagarmatha Television (discussed earlier) in the U.S. Another recipient, Mr. Raj Kapoor Paheli, a professional dancer from Nepal, was honored for popularizing traditional Nepali dances in North America. Similarly, Mr. Ravi Adhikari was the first Nepali journalist to enter professional journalism in North America, and specialized in South Asian issues. Another recipient was Debindra Thapa Magar, a super-bantam weight category boxer who was ranked 16th by World Boxing Organisation and whose fights were covered live in ESPN sports channel. On the same occasion, the ANA also honored three non-Nepalis for their

contribution to Nepal and Nepalis. William Zeke O'Connor was honored for his activism in preserving nature in Nepal, Mary C. Carroll for mobilizing resources for education in Nepal, and Antonia Neubauer for building libraries in Nepal.

The British government has also honored two Nepalis for their outstanding work recently. Dr. Surya P. Subedi, professor of International Law at the University of Leeds, was made an honorary Order of British Empire (OBE) in 2004 by Queen Elizabeth II for his services to international law and Britain-Nepal relations. At the OBE presentation ceremony, Mr. Jack Straw, the then British Foreign Secretary had stated that Professor Subedi was "dedicated to advancing international friendship and understanding", had "made a highly distinguished contribution to our understanding of international law, and to its evolution" and his work in international law had "spanned almost every aspect of it - with a special focus on issues such as trade, investment, development, and the environment, which make a real difference to people's lives."¹¹⁵ His publications included six (single authored or edited) books and more than 50 articles in British and other international law journals. Similarly, Dr. Raghav Prasad Dhital, another Nepali working and living in the United Kingdom was also conferred the OBE in 2007 for his relentless contribution towards UK-Nepal relations.¹¹⁶ A medical practitioner by profession, Dr. Dhital had been involved with many social and charitable organizations for almost three decades in the United Kingdom. He had served as the chairman of the Yeti Nepalese Association-UK for seven terms, was a founding member of the Nepalese Doctors Association-UK, had represented the Nepali diaspora in the UK when the Non-Resident

¹¹⁵

<http://www.law.leeds.ac.uk/leedslaw/StaffProfile.aspx?TabID=1&MenuID=7&SubMenuID=144&Username=subedisp> accessed 8/16/07

¹¹⁶ <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?nid=107300> accessed 8/17/07

Nepali (NRN) Association was set up there, and had been working as an advisor to its UK Chapter. In addition, he had played an instrumental role in founding the Yeti London Welfare Foundation that had collected over £ 80,000 to establish a Nepali community center there.

In the absence of a “Little Nepal” or “Little Kathmandu” in North America, attending the annual ANA or other regional conventions perhaps, offered immigrant Nepalis an opportunity to associate with their Nepaliness. They also might be attempting to avoid being completely incorporated into the US racial social system. It was indeed very interesting to note that 30% of my survey participants reported attending such conventions every year or more than once a year, and 32% reported doing so once in every two to three years. I observed many middle-aged women wearing colorful saris and matching Nepali jewelries, and their counterparts wearing traditional Nepali caps. Younger men and women were more fashionable, and many of them were unmistakably there in search of a Nepali partner.¹¹⁷ Many older couples with eminently marriageable sons or daughters, I believe, were also there in search of a suitable bride/groom for their children. As discussed in Chapter Six, it was during such conventions that Dr. Jitendra and his wife had observed the family of his would be in-laws, and had initiated the process of their daughter’s marriage.

¹¹⁷ Though I did not ask anyone why they were attending the ANA convention, some of my high school juniors who were still single candidly told me that they came primarily to meet friends and in search of a potential partner.

The Nepal Educational and Cultural Center (NECC)

“Our future generations’ needs will be continuously met” and “Our cultural festivals will be celebrated in a common place known as Nepal Education and Cultural Center with Lord Buddha and Lord Pashupati Nath temple” were how one of the past presidents of ANA had described the vision and end state desired by all ex-presidents of the ANA (Giri 2002). With a growing concern for maintaining Nepali cultural and social traditions in the United States, the ANA contributed US \$ 250,000.00 in 1996 to purchase a 3.4 acre property in Lanham, MD with the aim of building a Nepal Education and Cultural Center on it. It is perhaps the most ambitious undertaking of the ANA. It has plans to build a Nepali center on this property with temples dedicated to lord Buddha and lord *Pashupati Nath* at the two ends of the building, and a meeting hall for Nepalis to get-together and celebrate festivals, classrooms to educate Nepali youth, and halls to display Nepali cultural and religious artifacts. Traditional Hindu *Bhumi Puja* or “worshipping the land” was performed by an Indian priest on October 18, 1996 since there weren’t any practicing Nepali priest in the United States at that time. The property came along with a small house, and on September 30, 2000, ANA formally inaugurated the NECC and celebrated it with a milestone event of *Murti Sthapana* (erecting the statues) for the dedication and worship of lord Buddha and lord *Pashupati Nath* (Giri 2002). A team of Nepali architects designed the architectural layout of the building and surroundings and the design has already been finalized by the ANA. In 2002, it was estimated to cost 1.5 million dollars to complete the project. Due to lack of funds, the construction work has been delayed and ANA is actively raising funds for the project. Since its inauguration, the NECC has hired a Nepali priest, and has organized the

celebration of every major Hindu and Buddhist religious events¹¹⁸. When opened for the public, it would serve as a window on Nepal, Nepali art, music, crafts, and a centre for Nepali religious activities (Giri 2002).

Similar attempts were being made by Nepalis on other parts of the globe as well. In June 25, 2007, The *Nepali Sandesh* reported that Nepalis residing in Greenwich, London had started a *Satsang*¹¹⁹ program¹²⁰. In 2005, it had formed a committee to establish a Nepali temple there. Accordingly, the committee had registered the temple as a charity, opened a bank account to collect funds, and had collected some funds as well. Like their counterparts in the United States, the London based Nepalis also planned the temple to be a blend of Hindu and Buddhist traditions. In addition, the committee had scheduled programs to observe many Nepali religious events and festivals until December. The resident Nepali priest was reported to have helped Nepalis living in Myanmar and Thailand in the establishment of Nepali temples there as well.

The activities of various Nepali organizations and individuals I have described in the sub-sections above are what Portes et al. (1999) call “socio-cultural enterprises” of the transmigrants. According to him, they are oriented towards the “reinforcement of a national identity abroad or the collective enjoyment of cultural events and goods” (p.221). The collective practices of Nepali immigrants amply demonstrate that they are emerging as an organized and assertive force in the United States. Being a relatively new ethnic community in the US and compared to other immigrant communities, Nepalis are

¹¹⁸ <http://www.anaonline.org/necc/recentevents.htm> accessed 8/16/07

¹¹⁹ Satsang is a Sanskrit word and means “true company.” Indian philosophy describes it as 1) the company of the “highest truth”; 2) the company of a guru; 3) the company with an assembly of persons who listen to, talk about, and assimilate the truth. This practice also takes the form of listening to or reading scriptures, reflecting on, discussing and assimilating their meaning, mediating on the source of these words, and bringing their meaning into one’s daily life. [Is the above definition a quotation?]

¹²⁰ <http://www.nepalisandesh.com/> (accessed 7/4/07)

still on the cultural sidelines, widely scattered, and small in numbers. However, Nepali organizations and media throughout the Western world have attempted to bring together fellow Nepalis with the common objective of giving continuation to Nepalese cultural practices, traditions, and languages. Scholars of immigrant communities have noted that some immigrant groups reconstruct and assiduously maintain ethno-national identities, often as a way of resisting being integrated into the stigmatized minority racial categories of the United States (Fernandez-Kelly and Schauffler 1996; Foner 2001; Levitt 2001; Waters 1995). Similarly, many phenomena I have described in this chapter-- like forming voluntary associations, rise and growth of Nepali media, organizing and participating in annual ANA conventions, honoring prominent Nepalis, and attempts to construct a Nepal Educational and Cultural Center in the US--are the Nepali immigrant community's attempts to reconstruct and maintain an ethno-national Nepali identity as well as ways of avoiding complete incorporation into the US racial social system.

In his essay that follows the concept of identity through time, Bauman (1996: 19) has noted that modernity introduced identity building as a means to give life meaning. Bauman invokes the image of the pilgrim and argues that pilgrimage was no longer a choice of a mode of life in the modern society, but a necessity to avoid being lost, to give life a purpose (p. 22-3). As identity-builders, the world of pilgrims according to Bauman had to be orderly, determined, predictable, ensured; but above all, it had to be a kind of world in which footprints were engraved for good, so that the trace and the record of past travels were kept and preserved (p. 23). The life strategies of Nepali immigrants as described in the sub-sections above were remarkably like those of the pilgrims: 'identity-building' and 'saving for the future' (Ibid). Bauman (1996) also notes that individuals

think about identity “whenever one is not sure of where one belongs” (p.19). The increasing number of Nepalis in the United States and their excessive focus on the creation of ethnic infrastructures like voluntary associations, media sources, colorful annual gatherings, and cultural centers, and maintaining a cultural identity might suggest their collective attempt to place themselves “among the evident variety of behavioral styles and patterns, and how to make sure that people around would accept this placement as right, proper, so that both sides would know how to go on in each other’s presence” (Ibid). In addition, these practices are also the strongest indicators that a great majority of the immigrant Nepalis in the United States do not constitute a Diaspora community in the sense that they do not see their ancestral home as a “place of eventual return” (Safran 1991, quoted in Clifford 1994: 304). Rather, their collective efforts suggest that many intend to live a transnational life, but settle down permanently in the United States.

Worrying about the Motherland

Protesting at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza

As discussed in Chapter Four, a rally was organized at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza Park, New York, on 16th September 2005 by members of the Nepali Diaspora in North America to protest king Gyanendra’s takeover of the country on February 1, 2005, as well as to draw the attention of world leaders to the worsening situation in Nepal. Just across the street, about 170 heads of states and governments or their representatives were participating in the World Summit being held at the United Nations Headquarters. I reached the Dag Hammarskjold Park about 15 minutes before the scheduled demonstration was to begin. There was a crowd of about 350 Nepalis, most of whom

were young, and a quarter of them were women. Almost everybody was busy talking or greeting friends, and a few activists were organizing banners, a sound system, and placards. I scanned the crowd for familiar faces, saw some and plunged into the largely unfamiliar crowd to reach them. About five of them were my high school juniors and about a dozen were people whom I had met in Dallas during the 2005 ANA convention. After a while, Dr. Gautam's wife and another consultant I had interviewed in Boston during my first leg of fieldwork, arrived with suitcases in their hands.

The crowd had gathered at the 1st Avenue side of the plaza. There was heavy police presence between the 1st Avenue and the United Nation's Building. This side of the plaza was corralled, and there were several designated spots for protesting groups. In addition to the gathered Nepalis, two Burmese nationals carrying placards reading "Free Aung San Suu Kyi" as well as pictures of her, and about 20 Lebanese nationals were also protesting with banners and placards that called for a united Lebanon. Three banners that read "World Leaders: Condemn the autocratic regime of king Gyanendra of Nepal," "Nepali Diaspora rejects king Gyanendra's military dictatorship and supports Nepali people's movement for democracy and sovereignty," and "World Leaders: Show your support to campaign for democracy in Nepal" were prominently displayed on the barricades that faced the United Nation's building. Just before the protest program was to begin, the sound system came up and Mr. Anil Shahi, a Nepali cab driver in New York sang a parody deriding king Gyanendra. His parody captivated many and won amused applause.

Soon it was noon, the sound system was up, and through it one of the coordinators of the rally requested all to converge on the east side of the plaza. He welcomed all to

New York City, announced that some protestors had traveled from as far away as Florida and Texas, and asked everybody to applaud them. He also announced that they had only one hour for the whole program and requested all of those who would be speaking to limit their speeches to two minutes. Then he asked one of the coordinators of the protest program and the president of the US based Alliance for Democracy and Human Rights in Nepal, Mr. Sanjaya Parajuli, to deliver his speech. Mr. Parajuli welcomed the protestors and thanked them on behalf of the New York Nepali community for joining them in the protest program. He claimed that their consistent effort had foiled king Gyanendra's attempt to represent Nepal in the year's annual UN General Assembly¹²¹. Then he asked the protestors "How could king Gyanendra face the international community after initiating such an autocratic rule?" As he started to speak, he became very emotional and his voice changed from his normal to a very angry one. In a rhetorical tone, he strongly asserted that the Nepalese people were suffering immensely in their struggle for the restoration of democracy in the country. He also asserted that they were being kicked around by soldiers and being shot at with plastic bullets. He went on to say that the king's actions had become unbearable and that the movement to restore "complete democracy" in Nepal would continue until it achieved its goal. He also claimed that though the gathered Nepalis were physically present in the US, they were emotionally attached to

¹²¹ King Gyanendra had planned to attend the UN General Assembly Meeting, but had cancelled his trip at the last moment. No reasons were given as to why the trip was cancelled, and instead of the king, the then Foreign Minister of Nepal led the Nepalese delegation. However, the then US ambassador to Nepal had earlier said that it was very unlikely that President George W. Bush would meet with the monarch. It can be safely concluded that the unwillingness of President Bush to meet king Gyanendra during his visit to the US was the primary reason for the cancellation of his trip. In addition, various US based Nepali organizations had lobbied US senators to block the king's visit and the seven-party alliance in Nepal had written to the UN saying that the incumbent royalist government had "no competence, authority and legitimacy to represent and speak on behalf of the sovereign people of Nepal."
<http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2005/sep/sep06/news01.php> (accessed 8/23/07)
http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2005/sep/sep06/Full_Text_of_the_Letter.php (accessed 8/23/07)

Nepal. He acknowledged the limitation of time and ended his speech by thanking everybody for coming to New York to participate in the protest program.

Then the announcer informed everyone that the New York protest rally committee had written a letter to all the heads of states of the world denouncing king Gyanendra's takeover and said that he would read it out for the benefit of the gathered crowd. The letter accused king Gyanendra of derailing the multi-party system of governance in Nepal, imposing absolute rule, and asserted that the king did not have any popular support and was consolidating his powers ever since he ascended the throne in 2001. The letter urged the world leaders to boycott the "illegitimate representatives of the royal regime" at the United Nations and other international forums, pressure King Gyanendra to restore democratic rights and civil liberties in Nepal, and support the Nepali people in their struggle for full democracy and freedom. Then the announcer announced that sloganeering was a part of the program and instructed everyone to say "*chaindaina*" (we don't need it) and "*masna paindaina*" (you can't wipe it out) after he said "*nirankansuhtantra*" (Tyranny) and "*prajatantra*" (democracy). This sloganeering of "*nirankushtantra chaindaina, prajatantra masna paindaina*" (absolute autocracy: we don't need it; democracy: you can't wipe it) went on for a couple of times.

After this, several poems that castigated king Gyanendra's moves were recited. Some were cautionary and satirical, whereas others were outright derogatory¹²², fiery, and called for an end to monarchy in Nepal. There were about half a dozen other speakers who also largely denounced king Gyanendra's actions. One of them who referred to himself as a democrat claimed that king Gyanendra was not a people's king, but that of a

¹²² One of the poems referred to him as "*Mahila Dai*" (a term used by common Nepalis to refer to the second brother. By extending this term to king Gyanendra, the poet was reducing the monarch to a commoner), and the other compared his actions to that of a "mad dog."

handful of oppressors, feudal lords, and gangsters. He also accused king Gyanendra of being absolute, “kicking” democratic forces in the country, called for his banishment, and also accused that the people behind the king were Nepal’s biggest terrorists. Another speaker was a human rights activist as well a civil society leader from Nepal. He praised the Nepali Diaspora for its efforts to restore a democratic form of governance in Nepal. He also added that their actions in the West gave energy to the ongoing movement in Nepal and made it more vibrant. In a rhetorical tone, he claimed that the Nepalese people have been fighting against feudalism for the last sixty years, and the four kings of Nepal who reigned during this period had repeatedly demonstrated that they were not ready to recognize the citizens as the true sovereigns of the country. He also asserted that Nepal had reached a turning point in its history and that the Nepalese civil society, human rights groups, and political parties were united. But, he stressed that the international powers believed that the king was fighting a leftist insurgency. The truth, according to him, was that the king was trying to eliminate the democratic forces in the country. Then he requested the Nepali Diaspora to help uncover the illusion of king Gyanendra fighting insurgency and added that the king should not get any form of assistance, recognition, or military aid. In addition to delivering a fiery speech, his body language was also very intense. Throughout the human rights activist’s speech, he swiftly moved his right hand left to right, right to left, and back to front with the index finger raised. Through his body language as well, he was trying to convey the message that the situation in Nepal was very dire and that it needed urgent attention, action, and support from all freedom loving Nepalis.

In between the speeches and poetry recitals, the announcer kept on reminding everyone that sloganeering was also a part of the program and encouraged all to follow after him in slogans like “*Loktantra: Zindabad*” (Long live: people’s democracy), “*Nirankush raja: chhaindaina chhaindaina*” (A tyrant king: we don’t need him...we don’t need him). Most of the people participating in this sloganeering were young. I observed many of the older and middle aged ones standing at the periphery of the demonstration area and silently observing the happenings. In addition to the sloganeering, many of the protestors were carrying placards reading “US taxpayers: Do not fund king G’s private army,” “Keep tyranny out of Nepal,” “No absolute monarchy, no obsolete Maoism,” “Our desire is a republic Nepal,” “Dictators silence us, democracy represents us,” “A new Nepal is possible, repression must go,” “Deadline for monarchy has passed, *Narayanhi* now belongs to the people”¹²³ and so on. About a dozen young men and women were wearing “Another Nepal is Possible” T shirts. After a few rounds of sloganeering, the announcer informed that it was time to move to the front of the corral facing the UN and continue it there. This part of the sloganeering involved a little drama as well. While the rest of the protestors remained in the corral, Mr. Anil Shahi, the cab driver who sang a parody as soon as the sound system came up, stood on the sidewalk. He was impersonating king Gyanendra, and was wearing the official Nepali dress, a makeshift crown, and dark glasses. In addition, he had a placard hanging from his neck that read “Please help! Lost everything...including my mind...seeking asylum --Nepali Royal Institution.” When everybody seemed settled, the lead sloganeer said “*Nirankush raja*” (A tyrant king), and the rest of the crowd followed him with “*chhaindaina*

¹²³ Translation of a rhyming phrase “*Rajtantrako pugyo miti, janata kai ho Narayanhi*.” *Narayanhi* is the official residence of Nepalese monarchs.

chhaindaina” (we don’t need him...we don’t need him). Upon hearing this, Mr. Shahi put up a frown in his face, pretended to be scared, and took several steps back cautiously as if to amplify that fear. Then the crowd would again raise the slogan, and Mr. Shahi would put his hand by his ear and walk a few steps forward as if that would give better reception, put up a frown after hearing it, pretend to be scared, and then take a few steps back. This went on for a couple of times until a police officer stepped forward and told Mr. Shahi to stop it, for his actions were obstructing other pedestrians. Mr. Shahi obediently stopped his actions and stood by the curbside. However, the sloganeering continued for a while.

In addition to the drama of a monarch impersonator hearing people’s voices, frowning with disagreement, and fearing the people’s power, there was another drama of chaining and dethroning the king impersonator as well. After a few rounds of sloganeering directly across from the United Nation’s building, the crowd then converged at the open section of the Plaza. Here, the mock king was brought and symbolically shackled with several metal chains. About six or seven people held on to the end of the chains and symbolically, pulled him from side to side, then forced him on the ground, kicked him, and finally the makeshift throne was kicked out of his head. At this moment, the crowd cheered, clapped and some raised derogating slogans like “*Gyane chor, desh chhod*” (Gyanendra thief, leave the country). One of the organizers crowned the just dethroned king with a garland made of empty plastic bottles and another picked up the throne, raised it up, waved it like as if it was a victory cup, and said that the crown now belonged to the people. Then a microphone was handed to the “dethroned” king and he recited a satirical poem that lamented his past actions and predicted a bleak future for

himself where he would be working and eating like a poor Nepali peasant. His poem rhymed perfectly and this made it sound even funnier. His poem was enjoyed by many and the crowd laughed heartily at many points. The symbolic dethroning of king Gyanendra concluded the protest program.

This protest program organized by members of the Nepalese immigrant community in the United States is a classic example of what contemporary scholars of transnationalism call “long-distance nationalism” (Schiller and Fouron 2001) or the “globalization of domestic politics” (Koslowski 2007; Ogelman 2007; Freedman 2007). According to these scholars, polities may have a political system with significant participants spread across several states other than that of the homeland, similar to firms that have an integrated production system of factories and research facilities in states other than the states in which corporate headquarters are located. Globalization of domestic politics, according to these authors, is driven by: increasing migration, which increases the number of potential political actors; revolutions in transportation and communication technologies, which enable emigrants to maintain close contact with their home countries; and increasing democratization, which creates a favorable environment for political activities in both the host and home countries. Nepalese politics are no exception and within days after king Gyanendra initiated direct rule on February 1st 2005, immigrant Nepalis protested his move by staging demonstrations in the capitals of almost all industrialized countries.

Organizing a Workshop for Nepali Political Parties in Washington D. C.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, I was doing my fieldwork in Washington, D. C. about a month after the New York rally. In collaboration with the Washington D. C. based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the Liberal Democracy Nepal (LDN), a University of New Mexico based think tank, had organized a two-day workshop entitled “Opportunities and Challenges for Nepali Political Parties.” Representatives of Nepal’s six major political parties, a leading Nepali human rights activist, prominent Nepalis living and working in the United States as well as several graduate students attending US universities were invited to participate in this workshop. The workshop consisted of four moderated thematic sessions dealing with monarchy and Royal Nepal Army; dealing with the Maoists; managing the movement for democracy, and parties managing themselves. The delegates, LDN moderators, invited members of the Nepali Diaspora discussed several aspects of the themes, including the restructuring of the state, social justice, and inclusive party polity.

On both days, the discussions were overwhelmingly dominated by the representatives of the six political parties and one independent human rights activist. They focused mostly on presenting their respective party’s views on the themes and as discussed in Chapter Four, they concentrated mostly on self-criticism, accepting past mistakes and claiming that they had learned their lessons, highlighting some of the serious extant flaws of their own parties, and saying that from now onwards, they would work together to create a new and prosperous Nepal where there would be “complete” democracy. Quite a few of them said that the king was benefiting from their collective weaknesses and accused him of being instrumental in breaking up political parties. Mr.

Jhala Nath Khanal, a prominent leader of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist Front, went further and said that king Gyanendra had gone against the constitution and that the “autocratic monarchy” was the main problem in Nepal. The moderators and other participants did not say much, but whenever they did, they raised issues like capping leadership terms, democratic decision making process, transparency in financial issues, focus on economic development and economic stability, and so on.

In addition to the four moderated thematic sessions, there were also two sessions that revolved around Nepal. The first one was on the resources available in North America for conflict resolution and democracy in Nepal. The second one analyzed the Nepali crisis and suggested a possible UN role in the resolution of the ongoing conflict. During the first session, four immigrant Nepalis gave 10-15 minute presentations. Dr. Alok Bohara, a Nepali immigrant as well as a professor of economics at the University of New Mexico, talked about the Nepal Study Center that he had helped to establish there. The centre was created in 2004 and dedicated to fostering intellectual collaboration with a focus on the socio-economic and political issues of the Himalayan region and the countries in South Asia. It aimed to connect scholars around the globe with policy research backgrounds and an interest on Nepal, Himalayan region, and the countries in South Asia. In addition, graduate students enrolled in the departments of political science, economics, and sociology at the University of New Mexico could focus their studies on development, democracy, conflict and the environment of South Asia.

The centre was formally launched in July 2005, and it was working with its first batch of graduate students. Dr. Bohara informed everyone that the centre and the UMN were ready to establish and teach public policy. Being just three months old, the centre

had not accomplished much. However, Dr. Bohara clearly outlined the centre's future plans. One of the aims of the centre was to create a research repository where academic research work on the Himalayan region, Nepal and other countries in South Asia would be archived and distributed across the globe to hundreds of universities. Another was creating, running and moderating an online discussion forum (Liberal Democracy Nepal) in collaboration with members of the North American Nepali Diaspora. This site, according to him, would be dedicated to discussing a full range of issues and disseminating ideas that would be germane to creating liberal democracy in Nepal. In addition, the centre planned to publish its own journal, organize its own conferences, workshops, and talk programs.¹²⁴

Mr. Murari Raj Sharma, Nepal's ex-ambassador to the United Nations, then spoke about the current Nepali crisis. He read a diatribe against king Gyanendra and the institution of the Nepalese monarchy. He did not mention the failures of the political parties during the post 1990 era, but asserted that the Shah dynasty should take most of the responsibility for Nepal's predicament and also added that it had completely failed the Nepali people. The third speaker in this session was Mr. Aditya Jha, who was a co-founder and CEO of Osellus Incorporated, a Toronto based firm that specialized in providing enterprise-class software. He had founded another software company, Isotopia Inc. in Canada, and it was acquired by Sun Microsystems Inc. in July 2001 for US\$ 100 million. In addition to being a successful software developer and business person, he is

¹²⁴ Initially, I thought that Dr. Bohara's plans were too ambitious. However, while writing this chapter, I checked out the Nepal Study Center's website (<http://nepalstudycenter.unm.edu/index.htm>) and found that the centre had lived up to its ambitions as laid out by Dr. Bohara during the Washington D. C. workshop. It had published three issues of the Himalayan Journal of Development and Democracy, had organized its first Himalayan Policy Research Conference in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin's Annual Conference on South Asia, and had invited two prominent Nepali nationals for talk programs at the University of New Mexico.

also actively involved in charity work and founded a charitable foundation named POA Foundation (www.poafoundation.org) in Canada in 2002. This foundation supports projects that promote accessible and high-quality education, that nurture entrepreneurship, and that strengthen global civil society and governance¹²⁵. So far, his charity had endowed about 800,000 Canadian dollars at several Canadian Universities. It was also running a unique initiative in the area of venture philanthropy (Project Beyshick) that strives to nurture entrepreneurship within the first nation community of Canada, and was supporting the Vancouver based Nepal Library Foundation that aims to improve public library resources in Nepal . The POA Educational Fund had even provided financial support for this very workshop. One of the future goals of POA Educational Foundation is to establish an Institute of Information Technology in Nepal with the aim of producing highly trained software engineers. During the January 2005 Doha Regional Non-Resident Nepali Convention, Mr. Jha had floated the idea of the Nepal Venture Fund. According to him, Non-Resident Nepalis would raise US\$ 100 million, and then use it to purchase troubled Nepali government owned companies like the Royal Nepal Airlines, manage it professionally for seven years, and then again, sell it for a profit, parts of which would be reinvested, divided amongst investors and fund managers, and used for capacity building¹²⁶. During this particular presentation, he talked about the prospects of launching a knowledge-based economy in Nepal. In stark contrast to the earlier speaker, he accused the post 1990 era Nepalese leaders of being excessively obsessed with the political rather than economic agendas. He urged the gathered leaders to use their intellects to create a favorable environment to provide services, and this,

¹²⁵ http://www.poafoundation.org/the_foundation/about_us.html (accessed 10/7/07)

¹²⁶ <http://www.nrn.org.np/regconfalok.php> accessed (10/7/07)

according to him, would give value or give the country an opportunity to make its own earned income. He argued that a knowledge economy was based on making more once a product or service was used by more and more people (like Microsoft windows). He emphasized the contribution highly skilled people could make in national development and asked the leadership of the political parties to invite them, if they needed assistance. He ended his presentation by saying “Let’s make Nepal.” All of the representatives of Nepal’s political parties present there nodded in agreement to what he said and some were busy taking notes. Dr. Minendra Rizal, one of the ideologues of Nepali Congress-Democratic indicated to Mr. Jha by raising his finger that he would talk to him about it after he was done or during the break.

The last speaker was the president of the Nepali American Public Affairs Council, Dr. Shyam D. Karki, and he presented the Nepali Diaspora’s views on Nepal’s struggle for democracy. Dr. Karki informed everyone that there were approximately one hundred thousand Nepalis in the United States and briefly highlighted the work of some of the Nepali organizations that were helping Nepal. He also described the various rallies and seminars organized by the Nepali Diaspora in the United States (after king Gyanendra took over the country in February 1, 2005) to support the movement for the restoration of democracy, civil liberties, and human rights in Nepal. In addition to organizing rallies and seminars, Dr. Karki also said that members of the Nepali Diaspora had lobbied the US Congress and accomplished many things that would help the ongoing movement in Nepal.¹²⁷ In addition, he claimed that their relentless lobbying played a key role in the

¹²⁷ Senator James Walsh and eleven other Congressmen had sent a strongly worded letter to king Gyanendra that condemned any effort to suppress democracy in Nepal. It also extended full support to the Nepal America Public Affairs Council’s initiatives towards restoring peace, human rights and democratic processes in Nepal. (http://www.napac-usa.org/napac_update.htm) (accessed 8/31/07). Similarly, Senator

United States government's suspension of military aid to Nepal and the White House's refusal to schedule a meeting between President Bush and king Gyanendra during the trip the latter had initially planned in order to attend the United Nation's General Assembly Meeting in New York. Future lobbying would continue, according to Dr. Karki, and would be aimed at curtailing the Royal Nepalese Army's involvement in UN operations, denying entry visas (to the US) for government officials involved in human rights violations, freezing bank accounts of high government and security officials, denying World Bank and International Monetary Fund loans, and legal action for indictment of violators of human rights. In a very forceful tone, Dr. Karki also told the visiting politicians what the Nepali Diaspora expected from them. Specifically, he said that the Nepali Diaspora expected the Nepalese political parties and their politicians to acknowledge their past errors, stand united for democracy, have a coherent plan for the future, practice internal democracy within their respective parties and exhibit transparency in their operations, strive for good governance, discourage corruption, nepotism, and opportunism, take action against corrupt party members, publicly disclose the properties owned by party leaders and high ranking government and security officials, and make no compromises with those agreed principles. The room was eerily quiet when Dr. Karki spelled out these elements of democratic values, honesty, and accountability--elements that have largely been absent even in the supposedly democratic era of the post 1990 Nepal--and some of the visiting politicians simply nodded their heads in agreement.

The workshop was coming to a close, and one of the moderators of the session, Dr. Ambika Adhikari, who was an urban planner with the city of Phoenix and a faculty

Patrick Leahy had issued a statement and referred to king Gyanendra's takeover of the country on February 1st 2005 as a "tragic blunder" and that the Nepalese people were paying a heavy price for it. (<http://leahy.senate.gov/press/200507/072805b.html>) (accessed 8/31/07)

associate at Arizona State University, announced that he would read out the main conclusions/recommendations of the workshop. Unlike the tumultuous and shrill slogans that were raised against king Gyanendra in New York about a month ago in New York City, the conclusions/recommendations presented by the moderators and organizers of the workshop were very astute, and demanded honesty from all sides to end the imbroglio the country was in at that time.¹²⁸ These conclusions/recommendations definitely did not please many of the representatives of the six political parties that were agitating against king Gyanendra's takeover of the country at that time. It was so palpable in their faces that when Dr. Adhikari was done reading, almost all of them were quite motionless, seemed to be lost in deep thought, and wondering why it failed to condemn the king's actions. The only delegate who had a comment on the conclusions/recommendations was Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, a person who had held the portfolio of Nepal's finance minister many times in the past. He requested the moderator to add "The workshop extended full support for the ongoing people's movement for democracy" in the second point, and being a reasonable request, it was instantly accepted. Perhaps, the Nepali Diaspora's expectations for Nepal's political parties and politicians, as spelled out by Dr. Karki, were too harsh and blamed them too much for the country's woes, but I was really surprised that none of the visiting politicians dared to ask the organizers and moderators

¹²⁸ The conclusions/recommendations were as follows:

1) Concerted efforts needed to protect human rights and civil liberties in Nepal; 2) The workshop demanded immediate restoration of multi-party democracy in Nepal, and extended full support for the ongoing peoples' movement for democracy; 3) National sovereignty should rest fully with the people of Nepal; 4) Sovereign people should themselves decide the role of the monarchy; 5) The CPN (Maoists) should commit to laying down arms and pledge unconditional commitment to multi-party democracy, and pluralism, and respect for human rights; 6) The political parties should commit themselves to full internal democracy, inclusive people-centered politics and healthy democratic practices; 7) A negotiated settlement is necessary to end the current conflict; and 8) All possible support should be extended to bringing the three protagonists together for a peaceful resolution to the current conflict.

to add a sentence condemning king Gyanendra's February 1st takeover of the country. It was very apparent that they were just uncertain about it being entertained.

The second session on Nepal included a keynote speech by a career UN diplomat Mr. Kul Chandra Gautam--a Nepali citizen who was also honored with a "Making Our Mark" award during the 20th annual convention of the ANA--and a presentation on how the UN's experience on conflict resolution could help Nepal by the UN's conflict expert, Mr. Samuel Tamrat. Mr. Gautam was the Assistant Secretary-General of the UN as well as Deputy Executive Director of the UNICEF at that time, and his talk was entitled "What might the political parties do to create conducive environment for peace, reconciliation, and democracy?" He was a short and frail man in his sixties who had just recovered from a major surgery. He spoke slowly, but his tone, body language, and demeanor was that of an infuriated father who was pointing out the persistent and frivolous mistakes of an errant son. As he continued to speak, he started to move his hand in a banging motion on the table, with his fist firmly clenched. Though he did not bang even once, his body language demonstrated how angry he was with the performance of the political parties in the post 1990 era. Earlier, I had a brief opportunity to talk with him and had found him to be a very polite, sensitive, and a soft spoken person. But, the language he used in his keynote speech was very blunt and demanding. He told the delegates to practice democracy: not just espouse it, be intolerant of corruption, take affirmative actions, be responsible opposition groups, take politics as a political civil service to the nation, keep campaigning finances transparent, and work out an agreement on issues of the Maoists and the king. He lamented the fact that these had hardly been achieved in Nepal. He also argued that the young leaders of the political parties needed to

come forward and challenge the old ones who were so reluctant to hand over the leadership of their parties. This was perhaps the strongest and painful slap the delegates and their respective political parties had taken in their lives from a fellow Nepali. During the entire speech, the delegates remained unusually attentive. As Mr. Gautam was offering his suggestions in a demanding way, I observed most of them staring blankly in front of themselves, avoiding eye contact with anyone, including their own colleagues. After Mr. Gautam's speech, the room, once again remained eerily quiet for a few seconds, and none of the delegates dared to ask any question. Mr. Samuel Tamrat, the UN's conflict expert was the next speaker, and the moderator requested him to offer his opinion on the UN's experience in conflict resolution. The visiting politicians were still lost in deep thought as Mr. Tamrat was speaking, and I believe, many did not hear what he was saying.

Soon after, the workshop was formally over. Earlier, Mr. Kul Chandra Gautam had extended an invitation to everyone to attend a dinner program at a Chinese restaurant in Georgetown. While the organizers were closing things down, the rest of the crowd gathered at the lobby and were talking amongst themselves. Since moments like these were excellent opportunities for me to cultivate further contacts, my attention was diverted towards it, and did not see Dr. Minendra Rizal (who had earlier indicated to Mr. Jha that he would talk to him later while the latter was proposing a project to initiate knowledge economy in Nepal)) and Mr. Aditya Jha talking. Nevertheless, Mr. Jha had given me his business card as well as his home and cell phone numbers, and had told me to feel free to contact him should I have any questions or need any help. I called him while writing this chapter. After a brief formality, I reminded him about this incident,

which he remembered very well, and then asked him if Dr. Minendra Rizal or other leaders who were attending the Washington D.C. workshop had contacted him later to discuss about what he had proposed during that workshop. He told me that he had met and talked with Dr. Minendra Rizal and Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat several times during his trips to Nepal, and that they were his good friends and had good conversations with them. However, when I asked him specifically if any one of them had encouraged him to initiate a knowledge economy in Nepal, his answer was a pessimistic “Nepal is not easy.” He also added that there were many smart people in Nepal, but they just talked too much, and the problem, according to him, was that no one focused on outcomes and accomplishments. He also told me that one should think big and do little, and that would be enough for Nepal. In a sarcastic tone, he also said “maybe, the fault is all mine, because I am not doing anything.”¹²⁹ And this was a noteworthy sarcasm from a visionary immigrant Nepali, who had become a highly successful business person in the West and had done so much for his adopted land, and who also had concrete and workable plans for the economic betterment of Nepal.

Helping Nepal

Help Nepal Network (HeNN)¹³⁰

“Don’t drink a can or a bottle of beer every month. Instead, donate that money to Help Nepal Network” was how Dr. Mochan approached me when I met him at the 2005 annual conventions of the Nepalis in the Americas in Dallas. He informed me in detail

¹²⁹ Telephone conversation with Mr. Aditya Jha on October 7, 2007.

¹³⁰ <http://www.helpnepal.net/index.htm> (accessed 5/2/07)

what the charity was doing in Nepal and seeing their commendable work, I could not say no to his modest request and promptly paid my first year's dues. There were many other US based charity organizations that were helping Nepalis in Nepal, and some of their representatives were promoting their work and seeking assistance from Nepalis living in the US during the 2005 ANA convention. I had heard about some others, but had never heard about HeNN before. Dr. Mochan and his friends, who were also mostly professionals, were the active volunteers of the US chapter of HeNN. They had traveled all the way from Boston to promote it amongst the immigrant Nepalis and raise funds during the 2005 ANA convention.

“One Dollar a Month Fund for Nepal” is the slogan of this London and Kathmandu-based charity simultaneously established in 1999. Within six years, it had expanded its network in over a dozen countries. Its chapters in the US, Australia, the UK, Sweden and Nepal operate either as registered charities or as non-profit organizations, and it also has active groups or representatives in Austria, Canada, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Russia and Saudi Arabia. Its stated vision is to “encourage Nepalis and those who love Nepal around the world to contribute to Nepal” and its mission is to “provide support in the areas of community health and education, and support emergency/disaster relief efforts (in Nepal).” This charity is fully managed and operated by volunteers who hail from all walks of life. During my fieldwork in the Boston area, many of the Nepalis I met there were active supporters as well as volunteers of HeNN.

Help Nepal Network was launched by a group of immigrant Nepalis to demonstrate how “a collective effort of every Nepali and others interested in the country

could make a difference in the lives of many in Nepal.”¹³¹ They also had realized that it was mostly non-Nepalis and almost all of the donor-funded non-governmental organizations who were doing something to help Nepal and its people, despite the fact that many Nepalis were in a much more privileged positions (in the Western countries). It was in these contexts that the charity was initiated to encourage the large and resourceful pool of Nepali immigrants to contribute something for the well-being of Nepal and Nepalis. Though any help from non-Nepalis is warmly welcomed, Nepalis are at the centre of the Network' s activities.

Fifteen Nepali individuals living in the US, Russia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Australia and Nepal, as well as one British national, had contributed US\$ 4,000.00 each to help establish an administrative trust fund that would sustain HeNN and help run the Network's two-member Kathmandu office. This charity primarily raises its funds in the Western countries through membership, donations, as well as by organizing various activities. In 2006, it organized a US tour of renowned Nepali comedians Mr. Madan Krishna Shrestha and Mr. Hari Bansha Acharya and raised about US\$ 11,000.00 to help construct and run a health post in a village in Southern Nepal where about 13,000 people previously did not have access to any health care facilities or services. In addition, three Nepali women (all members of Help Nepal Network USA) ran the November 2006 ING New York City and Philadelphia Marathons to help raise the additional funds required for the health post. They successfully raised over US\$ 8,000.00. Fund raising activities of HeNN are equally impressive in the UK, where there is a large Nepali community. To construct shelters for Nepal's conflict-orphaned children, Nepal Balbatik Trust (NBT), a UK based and registered charity, raised US\$ 35,000.00 with the help of a group of British

¹³¹ http://www.helpnepal.net/about/about_us.htm (accessed 5/2/07)

musicians who set world records by playing at the world's highest altitude (above Mount Everest's Base Camp) and longest gigs (almost 44 continuous hours in a bar in London's Soho district)¹³². The funds raised were handed over to HeNN in February 2006, and construction of the shelter has already begun, with an expected date of completion of December 2007. Since the network's administrative costs are met by the administrative trust fund, HeNN claims that every donated penny is channeled to welfare activities in Nepal.

The funds raised through such activities are used to support various community health and education projects as well as to support emergency/disaster relief operations in Nepal. According to HeNN's website, HeNN-Nepal generally invites proposals from various groups. The proposals are then screened to ensure compliance with the objectives of the charity, the commitment and dedication of those who come up with the proposal assessed. Selected proposals are forwarded to the HeNN Project Team, which consults, clarifies confusions and then makes a decision. Proposals that have strong local participation component are usually the winners, and HeNN-Nepal monitors all of HeNN's projects to ensure local participation and effective utilization of funds. By partnering with a local youth club, it established a health post in one remote village of Nepal's Mugu district in June 2004. It has been actively seeking funds as well as other resources to keep it running. As stated above, another health post is in its pipeline, and it is also constructing a shelter for children orphaned by Nepal's conflict. In addition to these, HeNN has also been routinely constructing new schools, reconstructing dilapidated ones, and providing them with books, furniture, and staff training. It also has been providing medical equipments to Nepalese hospitals, supporting projects that encourage

¹³² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4403760.stm> (accessed 5/7/07).

the use of solar-powered electric lights in remote areas, organizing free health camps (along with medicines and lab services) in remote villages, supporting construction of water supply systems in rural areas, providing funds for natural disaster victims and so on. Within the last six years, HeNN has successfully executed more than 30 projects that have benefited the poor and needy in Nepal. Voluntary organizations like HeNN are what Appadurai calls “a series of social forms” whose practices proceed unconstrained by the actions of corporate capital and nation-states, and that contest, interrogate, and attempt to reverse the parochial quality of the globalization debate and the estrangement of the poor and their advocates from discourses and debates concerning them (2001: 3). In Appadurai’s terms, the philosophy and activities of HeNN also “rely on strategies, visions, and horizons for globalization on behalf of the poor that can be characterized as ... “globalization from below” (Ibid).

The collective activities of Nepali immigrants I have described in the sub-sections above show that like other contemporary immigrants, they too behave in significantly different ways than earlier immigrants. They were anchored "at multiple sites" and had established “social fields that cross geographical, cultural, and political borders” (Schiller et al. 1992: ix; 1995: 48). Gold (2002) notes that transnational communities “embody and exchange concerns, relationships, resources and needs immersed in multiple settings” (p.3). Organized events in the United States like the protest program held at the Dag Hammarskjold Plaza Park, the workshop for Nepali political parties, and efforts like that of Help Nepal Network are examples of such processes, and the revolutions made in communication and transportation technologies have facilitated and reinforced their flow. The intensified world-wide social relations brought about by the recent phenomenon of

globalization have linked distant localities, and this research demonstrates that happenings/events occurring in Nepal shape and influence the transnational activities of my research subjects and vice versa. As Featherstone (1996) has noted, the previous notion of locality and localism did not hold true in the case of Nepali immigrants as well. Appadurai (1996) asserts that transnational relationships like these are created in the context of global flows of capital, labor, media images, and ideologies, or what he refers to as “ethnoscapes,” “mediascapes,” and “ideoscapes”. Similarly, Basch et al. (1994:7) refer to activities like these as transnationalism and define them as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” and transnationals as “those who develop and maintain multiple relationships-familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political-that span borders.”

The events and activities I have described in the sub-sections above also demonstrate that, unlike the third generation black Caribbean men and women in the United Kingdom who had a sense of ruptured relationship with their homeland, were not sure about their identities, and who had to “search for roots” to discover where they came from or attempt to recover lost languages and histories, my research subjects were still very much connected to their homeland, and had “some ground, some place, some position on which to stand” (Hall 1991: 52). Having a continuous common history and a common cultural repertoire, as well as an understanding of the politico/bureaucratic processes of Nepal, they were constructing a “counter-politics” (Ibid) that challenged the hegemony of the Nepalese state. Unlike Bauman’s (1996) imaginary figures (the stroller, vagabond, tourist, and player), which he uses as metaphors to describe the postmodern

lifestyles led by individuals who espoused commitment-avoidance and disengagement from others, many of my research subjects were actively engaged in the politics of democratizing their homeland as well as extending material, financial, and institutional support to communities in need. In the words of Basch et al. (1994: 7), they were “taking actions, making decisions, and developing subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connected them simultaneously to two or more nation-states.” The demonstration organized against king Gyanendra’s move, the lambasting of the visiting Nepalese politicians, and the support extended to marginalized communities in Nepal were some out of many ways they went on about resisting their exclusion and marginalization (by the Nepalese state), and constructing and deploying a “strategic and positioned identity” (Hall 1996: 3).

Transnationalism is intimately associated with the conditions of late capitalism, or what David Harvey (1989) refers to as globalized regimes of “flexible accumulation” that have created deterritorialized nation-states and “hyperspaces” where production, consumption, communities, politics, and identities are detached from local places (Kearney 1995). As a result of these labor movements and the globalization of media and capital, there has been a rise in the emergence of new forms of immigrant participation and representation in the nation-state across national borders (Basch et al. 1994; Mahler 1995; Portes 1995). Transnationalism also implies a cultural-political dimension, and is signaled by its resonance with nationalism as a cultural and political project (Kearney 1995). In her study of the transnational political network of the Taiwanese in the United States, Lien (2007) argues that Taiwanese were able to earn sympathetic hearings from the US Congress and other players in the international arena, and constituted a critical

node that accounted for the successful liberalization and democratization of their ethnic homeland. Similarly, the lives of many of my research subjects as well as other immigrant Nepalis transcended the geographical boundaries of the US, and were actively engaged in influencing the outcome of political processes in Nepal as well as helping improve the lives of their fellow countrymen. Though many participants of the New York rally, organizers of the Washington D.C. workshop, and people involved in charitable work in Nepal have autonomous existences in varied professional, non-professional and different social worlds, they were “bound together by perceived shared interests and meanings” (Guarnizo and Smith 1999), and a democratic and just Nepal was what many aspired for. The deteriorating situation in Nepal aroused so much interest and concern among the immigrant Nepali community in the United States that the nation-state, as suggested by Basch et al. (1994) and Appadurai (1996), continued to play a central role in creating and reinforcing their transnational involvements. What is really interesting about all these ethno-national movements and transnational practices is that the Nepali nation-state continues to be created abroad and plays a central role in shaping the purposes, activities, and identities of immigrant Nepali communities. (For additional discussion of the interview and survey results on this issue, see Appendix II, section 7.1)

Conclusions

The quote at the beginning of this chapter is one of the most popular verses from the Hindu epic *Ramayan*. This epic narrates the story of a prince, *Rama*, who was forced to go into exile for twelve years by his jealous step-mother. During the course of his journey, his wife was abducted by *Ravana*, the demon-king of golden *Lanka* (Ceylon).

He leads an army to *Lanka*, defeats *Ravana*'s army, and in the end, kills *Ravana* as well. After the death of *Ravana*, *Lakshmana*, prince *Rama*'s younger brother and *Vibhishana*, younger brother of *Ravana* who had defected to the side of *Rama*, plead with *Rama* not to return to *Ayodhya* (their country), but stay back in *Lanka* where there was abundant wealth, and be its new ruler. *Lakshmana* also says that many years had passed since they left *Ayodhya*, and that, many people might have forgotten them. But, prince *Rama* declines to do so by saying "O *Lakshman*! I do not find this golden *Lanka* at all attractive, (For me) my mother and motherland are dearer than heaven!." Though a verse from a mythical epic, the second part of it has been the national motto of Nepal since 1907¹³³, and has taken deep root in the Nepalese as well as the wider Hindu psyches. Almost every ruler--from the mythical lord *Rama* to the Maratha king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in India, and from the first Nepali king Yalambar¹³⁴ to the present king Gyanendra--have exhibited a deep sense of belonging to one's country of birth. The dominant Hindu society, i.e. the Indian society often emotionally refers to India as "*Bharat Mata*" (Mother India) and Nepalis also do the same by referring to Nepal as "*Nepal Aama*" (Mother Nepal). This devotional reference to one's country of birth as "mother" is in recognition of the fact that the land nurtures the people as lovingly as

¹³³ The phrase "*Janani janmabhumi-shcha, swargadapi gariyasi!*" appeared in a set of Nepalese postage stamps that were issued in 1907 during the reign of Chandra Shumsher (1901-29), one of the hereditary Rana prime ministers of Nepal. Despite being a hereditary and an autocratic ruler, Chandra Shumsher had studied at Calcutta University and is credited for formally abolishing slavery and *sati* (the custom of widow burning in the funeral pyre of her husband) systems in Nepal, and establishing the Tri-Chandra College--Nepal's first college--in Kathmandu in 1919 (Whelpton 2005). I believe he adopted this phrase as the national motto of Nepal, and was included in the coat of arms of Nepal in 1962. Many governments ruled Nepal from 1907 to the present, but this motto continues to be adopted as the national motto and is prominently printed in the country's coat of arms.

¹³⁴ According to official Nepalese history, *Yalambar* was the first king of Nepal who ruled the Kathmandu Valley around the 7th or 8th century BC. Very little is known about him and his subjects, but he is the first remembered Nepali king. Nepal's early history is so intertwined with legend, that it is sometimes almost impossible to separate fact from myth. Legend credits him with meeting *Indra*, the lord of heaven, who ventured into the Kathmandu Valley in human guise. He also had the dubious honor of being slain by lord *Krishna* in the epic battle of *Mahabharata*, in which gods and mortals fought alongside each other.

their own mothers would do. For the average Nepali, the motherland is as venerable as his or her own mother.

The high levels of concern for the overall well being of their motherland, the strong nationalistic feelings, the high levels of news (related to Nepal) reading habits, the higher levels of participation in charities that supported causes in Nepal, and organizing and participating in events like the New York protest program and the Washington D. C. workshop, are all consequences of this feeling deeply rooted in the Nepalese psyche. However, as stated earlier (in Appendix 7.1), 43% of my interview consultants circumvented my question on how they felt about being a professional or a highly educated person, and at the same time, being a Nepalese American or a Nepali residing in the U.S., but said that they had “immense potential to contribute for the country.” By implication, they did not see any favorable environment to return and apply their skills for the benefit of Nepal and Nepalis. As discussed in Chapter Four, many with professional work experiences in Nepal had experienced marginalization in Nepal’s bureaucracy, and those who did not, had perceived being marginalized if they returned. Mr. Aditya Jha’s statement “Nepal is not easy” and the indifference exhibited towards his proposed projects--which were astonishing by all accounts--by key policy makers of Nepal’s democratic political parties epitomizes the marginal status of Nepalese professionals in Nepal’s polity and bureaucracy. One can simply imagine what could happen to a fresh US college or university graduate who returns to Nepal with a naïve, but strong desire to contribute his or her share in the country’s development process.

This type of interplay between professional Nepalese immigrants in the United States and some members of Nepal’s ruling elite (and by extension, the Nepalese

government) I observed during the course of this dissertation research is very much similar to what Smith (2007) had observed between the Mexican government and the Mexican immigrants in the United States. According to Smith, the Mexican government made attempts to institutionalize a weak and “thin” form of Diasporic membership for Mexican nationals living abroad. It attempted to control and channel the deterritorialized conduct of Mexican politics in the US. It succeeded to some extent, but ended up creating a transnational public sphere with greater democratic contestation and new membership practices. In striking contrast, the Mexican immigrants living in the United States strove to “thicken” their membership in the Mexican nation-state by engaging with democratizing tendencies in Mexico. When juxtaposed with the Nepali phenomenon, the recent decision of the House of Representatives of Nepal to exclude Non-Resident Nepalese (NRNs) from voting in the historic constituent assembly elections (as discussed in Chapter Four) and the indifferent attitude exhibited towards the proposals of persons like Dr. Saurav and Mr. Jha are unmistakable examples of the Nepalese ruling elite’s intention to institutionalize a weak and “thin” form of Diasporic membership for Nepali nationals living abroad. On the other hand, the strongly worded statements by prominent members of the immigrant Nepali community in North America on practicing democracy, accountability, transparency, and non-tolerance towards corruption in front of key members of Nepal’s ruling parties who were on a visit to the United States, as well as the many Nepal-centered philanthropic activities immigrant Nepalis are involved in, are examples of the immigrant Nepali community’s desire to “thicken” their membership in the Nepali nation-state.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS

*Himal chha, pahad chha, yi sabai taal chha,
Buddha janmeko deshma, buddhi bhayeka netaharuko anikaal chha.*

[We have the mountains, hills, and all other resources,
[but] in the land where the enlightened [the Buddha] was born, there is a famine of leaders with
common sense.]¹³⁵

-A Nepalese truck driver

Nepal is held hostage by a group of people who call themselves leaders but cannot match lesser
mortals in vision, values and priorities they hold.

- Devendra Raj Panday (2001)

Former Nepalese bureaucrat, government minister, and currently, a prominent civil society leader.

Highly developed Western countries now compete with each other to attract and retain talent from all over the world, and Nepal's two giant neighbors, India and China follow Japan, Korea, and Taiwan's earlier lead in encouraging the return of their highly educated and highly skilled citizens living abroad (Schlatter 2005; Zweig 2006)¹³⁶. Yet, many professional Nepalis with professional work experience in Nepal and living in the United States during the time of this study, had experienced marginalization in Nepal's professional workforce. Using the anthropological concepts of the "Self" and "Other," this ethnographic study explores the identity construction processes of the professional Nepalese cadre, and details how the construction of a marginalized identity was primarily responsible for dissuading the Nepalese professional cadre, either studying or working in

¹³⁵ This quote was printed on the rear bumper of his truck. A picture of his rear bumper appeared in many Nepali websites sometime in 2005.

¹³⁶ In India's case, its private firms are trying to attract Western talents in addition to their own (Ahmed 2006; Vaswani 2007). Prior to encouraging their highly skilled citizens to return home, the Indian government since the early 1980s had singled out non-resident Indians in North America and Europe as a kind of "third force" to invest money in Indian industry (Lessinger 1992). As part of its outreach, the Indian government offered to treat non-resident Indian investors as special, favored subcategory of foreign investors, and the State bank of India offered non-resident Indians interest rates significantly higher than those available in U.S. banks. Lessinger notes that this policy of the Indian government has created a new transnational business class that has settled abroad, but return to the land of their birth as capitalist investors.

the United States, from returning home. Grossberg (1996: 90) notes that ‘Most work in cultural studies is concerned with investigating and challenging the construction of subaltern, marginalized or dominated identities...’ and this study fits well in the larger trend. This dissertation also examines the notions of comparative satisfaction of the professional Nepalese cadre with their careers and overall life in Nepal and the United States, and their perceptions of the ongoing leftist insurgency in Nepal, and details how these two factors also influence their decisions to remain in the United States or return home.

A set of important questions guiding this dissertation have been: why do highly skilled Nepalese professionals permanently immigrate to the U.S. in increasing numbers? And why do most Nepalese students pursuing graduate degrees in U.S. universities decide to remain in this country after completing their studies? In striking contrast to existing literature that attribute contemporary brain drain on the immigrant’s personal aspirations, the structural determinants (the inability of developing countries to absorb all of it’s professionals in its workforce and the corresponding shortage of highly skilled workers in the developed countries) of both the sending and receiving countries, and the immigration policies of the receiving countries, I have argued that the unique attitude of Nepal’s ruling elites towards its highly educated citizens--many of whom had traveled to the United States on their own to pursue advanced degrees--is largely responsible for the latters’ decision to emigrate to or remain in the United States. Their past, present, and perceived experiences of being marginalized in Nepal’s professional work force and the indifferent attitude exhibited by Nepal’s ruling elites towards their potential contribution

in the overall progress of the country play the most important role in encouraging many highly educated Nepalis to take up long term residence in the United States.

The migration of professionals from the developing to the developed countries is much more extensive than what it was two or three decades ago (Docquier and Marfouk 2006). It is perhaps the most important element of contemporary migration streams and is characterized by a high concentration of the skilled migrants in a few destination countries. It is estimated that about 50 percent of the skilled migrants live in the United States, 20 percent in Canada and Australia, and 15 percent in Great Britain, Germany, and France (*ibid.*). While these immigrants make significant contributions to patenting and innovation in the United States (Chellaraj et al. 2006) and by extension, in other developed countries as well, many source countries lag behind in economic and social development. More than anything else, this movement is one of the clearest reflections of the inequality that exists between developed and developing countries. However, anthropology has contributed little to the analysis of this disturbing magnitude and trend in the international migration of professionals (see Zhang 2003; Docquier and Marfouk 2006; Chellaraj et al 2006). To help remedy this disciplinary neglect, I have examined two linked factors that were suggested by my preliminary field research of 2001 to have played the key role in the decision of many Nepalese professionals to emigrate to the United States or not return to Nepal after completing their studies in the United States. My preliminary research had suggested that many members of the Nepalese professional cadre, though highly nationalistic, viewed themselves as marginalized in their homeland. In particular, they felt that the entrenched and self-serving Nepalese ruling elite was, at best, indifferent to the potential contributions of the professional cadre to alleviate

Nepal's socioeconomic conditions. By examining the history and contemporary politics of Nepal in the context of increasing emigration of Nepalese professionals to the United States, and with data collected during the course of my dissertation research, I demonstrate how the construction of a marginalized-professional "Self" plays the key role in their decision to emigrate to the United States or not return to Nepal even after completing their studies in the United States. I also show that the notions of comparative satisfaction with one's career and overall life in Nepal and the United States, as well as the violent leftist insurgency that has engulfed the country also play an important role in dissuading the professional Nepalese cadre from returning home from the United States.

As Chapter Three suggests, a romantic vision about the United States had fueled the desire of many of my research subjects to pursue their advanced degrees in this country. While coming to the United States was a venture into the unknown for many of my older consultants, a great majority of my younger research subjects had followed the trails of their siblings, relatives, and friends. Early in their lives, many of my younger research subjects had expected to attend US academic institutions and had planned accordingly. Migrating to the United States has acquired an aura of opportunity in the psyche of middle-class Nepalis. The past experiences of my research subjects who earlier had worked most closely with the Nepalese ruling elites, i.e. the professional Nepalese civil servants, were the most revealing. A great majority of them reported feeling marginalized at their work units. Many had joined the Nepalese civil service to serve the nation, to apply their skills for the benefit of the wider society, to grow and feel extended professionally, as well as to advance their careers. However, many expressed feelings of being extremely dejected in their previous jobs. The Nepalese environment did not allow

them to realize even the least of their aspirations. This in turn, had left many of them extremely frustrated with their careers, life, and income, and had paved the way for exploring other avenues.

Nepal has failed to move its masses out of poverty even after five and a half decades of “development” programs supported by massive international aid infusions. Low household incomes, increasing food deficits, increasing unemployment, growing dependence on foreign aid, increasing migration of its youth for foreign employment and the associated dependence of households on remittances, the never-ending political instability, pervasive corruption, and breakdown of public services and utilities characterize contemporary Nepalese economy and society . Government lethargy and inaction are permanent features of Nepali politics and administration (Baral 2000), and the persistence of poverty and political instability in Nepal have been attributed to the ‘dysfunctionalism of the state’ (Kumar 2000). While examining the reasons behind Nepal’s lagging development efforts, Kernot (2007) identified inefficiency, corruption, and lack of commitment and foresight--that are endemic in Nepal’s political and governing bodies--as the pre-eminent factors. In addition, many scholars have recognized the largely adverse role played by Nepal’s ruling elites in the direction of Nepal’s development efforts (Mihaly 1965; Zaman 1973; Blaikie et al. 1980; Shaha 1982; Mishra and Sharma 1983; Bista 1991; Shrestha 1993; Pandey 1998; Dahal 2000; Kernot 2007).

Many of my research subjects had experienced unfathomable marginalization within Nepal’s bureaucratic apparatus. In Chapter Four, I demonstrate through personal narratives, a discussion on the conduct of post 1990 era ruling elites of Nepal, and three representative narratives how individual experiences of marginalization in the

professional Nepalese work force provide the impetus for emigrating to and/or remaining in the United States. I also demonstrate with data collected from my fieldwork and another representative narrative (and in Chapter Seven as well) how the Nepalese ruling elite continue to treat professional Nepalis indifferently, and how unconcerned they are about the potential contributions the latter could make in the country's development efforts. "Whatever you are doing here is commendable," and "We hope the children of the Nepali Diaspora will return to Nepal" were how several prominent Nepali politicians responded when a student participant of the Washington DC workshop asked the visiting Nepalese delegates what their respective political party's policies were towards encouraging the return of highly educated Nepalis from the United States.

Almost all of my interview consultants who previously had been members of the professional Nepalese cadre told compelling stories about either being discouraged or marginalized, or treated unfairly by the superiors and/or colleagues of their own departments. Although my consultants possessed the necessary academic qualifications and skills to solve problems and innovate in their respective fields, the very Nepalese organizations they had joined to serve deprived many of them from the flexibility and independence to do so. An overwhelming majority of my survey participants who were also members of the professional cadre attested the existence of a small group of decision makers, who were entrenched in the various departments, and primarily served their own, their followers', and their political masters' interests rather than that of the people and the country. This deeply rooted Nepalese culture of marginalizing and excluding non-*afno manches* (one's own people) is still alive and well in the Nepalese bureaucracy and polity. The feeling of being excluded or marginalized from active and productive

participation in the nation's development efforts, and the realization that their aspirations and ambitions could not be fulfilled by continuing to be a member of the professional Nepalese cadre were the primary reasons many of my research subjects who earlier had been Nepalese civil servants to explore other avenues, with emigration to the United States as the most alluring alternative to the unjust domination by the entrenched ruling elite of Nepal.

Another goal of this dissertation has been to examine the influences of the notions of comparative satisfaction in the US and Nepal, and the ongoing Maoist insurgency and political uncertainty on the decisions of professional Nepalis to emigrate to or remain in the United States. Almost all of my research subjects were very ambitious, and the work they were doing or were planning to do was very important for them. They intensely feared not being able to continue what they were doing in the United States if they elected to return to Nepal. Joining the US professional work force allowed many of my research subjects who had professional work experience in Nepal to compare and contrast their work experiences in Nepal to that in the United States, and the relative satisfactions they derived from their professional careers. Many saw returning to Nepal as a professional dead end, and the absence of result-oriented work ethics in Nepal's professional work settings was an overriding issue. A large majority of my research subjects who were Nepalese civil servants earlier feared having difficulties adjusting to Nepal's highly politicized work settings. In stark contrast to their past experiences in Nepal, a great majority of my research subjects who were working professionals during the time of this research were extremely satisfied with their jobs, careers, and household income in the United States. Many of my research subjects, including those who were the

most disenchanted while they were working in Nepal, were satisfied by their American professional life. They felt included in their work settings and considered that their professional contributions were valuable and recognized. Very few of my interview consultants had plans to return home.

I also found that the ongoing Maoist insurgency in Nepal is one of the factors that dissuaded many from returning home. The political instability in Nepal was a big concern, and many had taken “a step back” because of it. Relatively inexpensive telephone calls to Nepal allowed many to discuss the current state of affairs of Nepal with their families, relatives, and friends more intimately. As a result, these emigrants were constantly reminded about the uncertainties that had plagued the entire country. This was very similar to what many Chinese studying in US universities had felt in the aftermath of the June 1989 Tiananmen massacre (Chang and Deng 1992). Students were often discouraged by family members from returning, and the students found the advice and suggestions of their own family members more trustworthy and convincing than the opinions of the Chinese government.

One of the remarkable findings of this dissertation research is that, after living in the United States for a while, a great majority of my research subjects dramatically changed their earlier and firm determinations to return home. Many knew what awaited them if they had opted to return home, and some even expressed the feeling that they would go mad if they had to return to their previous jobs in Nepal. In contrast, the US offered them countless opportunities to enhance their professional careers, promised bright futures for their spouses and children, and satisfaction with their incomes, and overall life. Many of my research subjects had amazingly big circle of relatives and

Nepali friends in the United States. As their relatives and friends increasingly shifted to the United States, there was less reason for my research subjects to return to Nepal. As Chapters Six and Seven suggest, a great majority of my research subjects consider the United States their new home. It has become their place of residence, work, cultural reproduction, as well as a platform to launch projects to aid the people of Nepal and movements to democratize the Nepalese polity.

Many highly educated Nepalis living in the United States are nostalgic about Nepal, have retained collective memories of the country they left behind, and often organize themselves to launch initiatives to help Nepal. Nevertheless, the possibilities that many of them will return to Nepal and work there for the progress of the country are dismally low. This phenomenon, which is also widespread among Nepalis living in other developed countries, is one of the biggest tragedies of contemporary Nepal--a country that is endowed with breathtaking natural beauty, immense natural resources, and a capable professional cadre who could have drastically altered the Nepalese economy and society had they been provided with the opportunities and resources to do so.

As I have briefly mentioned in Chapter Four, there are countless possibilities to initiate a largely self-sufficient economy by utilizing the existing resources of Nepal. However, the imaginations of the ruling elites of Nepal, both during the *Panchayat* and the post 1990 democratic eras, were largely fixated on the national project of “development” and the associated aid that came into the country. Significant progress was made in the transportation, communication, and educational sectors, but serious efforts were not made to make the country self-sufficient. During the *Panchayat* era, development was construed to be a near exclusive domain of the state, something

delivered (by the state and its bureaucracy) to the people, rather than practiced, reflected upon and achieved (Mishra 1997). At the village level, however, development had a different and profound meaning. *Bikas* or development meant quantifiable and connoted things like new breeds of goats and chickens, water pipes, electricity, videos, schools, commercial fertilizer, roads, airplanes, health posts and medicines. When thinking about how to achieve "development," villagers were not concerned with how to achieve new behaviors and attitudes, but with how to bring schools, electricity, etc. to their villages. For them, *bikas* was something that came from outside, and could not be produced locally (for an excellent exposition, see Stone 1989, and Pigg 1993).

Development "depoliticized" everything it touched, and unnoticeably expanded bureaucratic state power (Ferguson 1990) in Nepal, as in other nations. In Nepal, the state-led development practices were undemocratic as well (Mishra 1997). The politicians and bureaucrats conceived the many "development projects" financed largely by external agencies as excellent opportunities for the distribution of largesse (Bhattachan 1997; Mishra 1997; Pandey 2001). Nepalese planners, policy makers, and bureaucrats often turned deaf ears to the people's demands and were not interested in promoting promising programs that could have alleviated poverty (Bhattachan 1997). With so much attention concentrated on the project of state-delivered development, the *Panchayat* and post 1990 era Nepalese ruling elites rarely if ever focused on utilizing the country's resources, including its highly skilled professional cadre, to initiate locally suited and inward-oriented development processes. The supposedly democratic Nepalese leaders and bureaucrats of the post 1990 era, who promised radical changes in the country, rarely attempted to retain the country's highly educated and skilled citizens, and

seldom let the latter generate what Ozden and Schiff (2006) call ‘positive externalities’¹³⁷ for the society and country. Leading Nepalese newspapers routinely report about the shortage of doctors and specialists in many hospitals, and cartoonists cleverly mock the absence of skilled personnel and the breakdown of public services. My dissertation research demonstrates that many members of Nepal’s professional cadre emigrated to the United States or decided to remain here because they felt marginalized in Nepal’s professional workforce. Without a highly motivated, visionary, and accomplishment-oriented professional cadre, the nation of Nepal is little more than its snow-capped mountains, gigantic rolling hills, pristine tropical forests, and roaring snow-fed rivers. As long as Nepal is ruled by leaders who even do not have “common sense”--as the truck driver had said--and who are unwilling to shed their predatory *modus operandi* and the deeply rooted culture of marginalizing non-*afno manches* in Nepalese society and polity, this exodus of Nepal’s finest minds will continue unabated, and Nepal will possibly never have a contingent of highly dedicated professionals capable of generating and sustaining the positive externalities that are the most essential prerequisites for the progress of any country and society. The country as such may drag on, but might not have any hope for the future.

Directions for Future Research

In world-system terms, Nepal is literally on the extreme periphery, land-locked and sandwiched between two giant regional powers, with limited land resources,

¹³⁷ By positive externalities, they mean a) the positive effects on the productivity of colleagues, employees, and other workers; b) the provision of key public services with positive externalities, such as education, health, c) the fiscal externalities associated with the fact that the taxes they pay are larger than the value of the public services they consume and the public funds invested in their education; and d) their contribution to the debate on important social issues and their impact on policy and institutions (p. 10).

overpopulation, a remittance and subsistence agriculture dependent economy, overseas labor migration, and reliant on external sources - other states, multilateral lending organizations, private business, and charity organizations - for investment capital. In addition to highlighting the dynamics of Nepal's brain drain to the United States, this study also raises numerous important questions and issues that could be illuminated by further ethnographic research. The first issue pertains to Nepal's development efforts. The failure of Nepal's development efforts has become a commonplace dictum by now, and scholars have called for the politicization, and radical and piercing democratization of development in Nepal (Mishra 1997), as well as for a "radical development manifesto based on the principle of indigenous development ...carried out by the local people in compliance with local needs and local resources" (Shrestha 2000). Given the "apparent state" status of Nepal, the unstable political situation, and the deeply ingrained self-serving attitude of Nepalese politicians and bureaucratic elites, we can be fairly certain that many of the country's professional cadre living abroad may never return to Nepal. In addition, for a very long time, the Nepalese state probably will not reach out to its citizens living in the thousands of villages across Nepal that still do not have access to basic modern amenities like running water, electricity, health-care, and communication services. However, as discussed briefly in Chapter Four, many of these villages, where a great majority of underserved Nepalis live, can potentially initiate indigenous development processes that could effectively address local needs by utilizing local resources. As I have discussed earlier, such indigenous initiatives initiated by Nepalis have proved to be sustainable as well as capable of triggering other smaller projects, which together could eventually lead to greater prosperity and self-sufficiency.

International funding and development agencies like the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and the United Nations promote multi-million dollar projects to help alleviate poverty throughout the world. However, Appadurai (2001: 19) argues that “one of the biggest disadvantages faced by activists working for the poor in fora such as the World Bank, the U.N system, the WTO, NAFTA, GATT is their alienation from the vocabulary used by the university-policy nexus to describe global problems, projects, and policies.” To help close this gap, he suggests that a strong effort is needed to compare, describe, and theorize “globalization from below.” Ethnographic research on the “globalization from below” practices initiated by local Nepalis with little external assistance might be a fruitful topic for future study. Such research might be of great interest to development practitioners, policy makers, transnational citizens, local and international funding agencies, as well as academics.

The second issue pertains to transnationalism. In this dissertation, I have briefly sketched some of the transnational activities of my research subjects who were living in the United States. Though many had settled in the United States, many were transmigrants, and lived their lives across borders, sending money and gifts back to family, participating in the activities of a land they still call home, and so on (Schiller and Fouron 2001). An ethnographic study devoted exclusively to the experiences of transnational migrants and their connections with the country they left behind would enrich existing literatures on long-distance nationalism (Schiller and Fouron 2001) and globalization of domestic politics (Koslowski 2005). In addition, the creation of an ethnic Nepali identity and infrastructures in the United States, the reconstitution of family, changing gender roles, and the experiences of the second generation Nepalis in the US

racial social system would be interesting topics for those who want to better understand
Nepalis living in the United States.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: THE NEPALESE CLASS STRUCTURE

Class is a complex concept and sociologists differ in how they conceptualize it, and I am not going to try to summarize them here. What matters for this study is how to identify the class background of my research subjects. One of the goals of my analysis is to locate the significant differences in the impetus to emigrate to the United States by class. To establish a map of the class structure of Nepal, I will first discuss and present the range of ways the class structure of Nepal have been identified previously by other scholars. Then, I will offer my own conceptualization of the class structure of Nepal by including the most relevant traits that define and determine social class in the particular context of Nepal.

The fascination of ethnographers and other scholars--both Western and native--with the different caste and ethnic groups of Nepal has resulted in the almost total exclusion of questions of class. However, caste and ethnic identity in Nepal are not synonymous with class, nor is educational attainment or wealth. The caste system is still the pervasive dominant ideology and members of the same caste or ethnic group may occupy different positions in the class structure. For example, the *Chhetri* (warrior) caste "comprises aristocratic, middle-class and peasant-class elements, each of which forms part of a social class consisting not only of *Chhetris* but also members of other castes equally stratified according to economic and political criteria" (Furer-Haimendorf 1966: 5). Given the immense diversity in Nepal's population in terms of caste, ethnicity, religion, language, geography, educational attainment, wealth, and access to power, any attempt to conceptualize Nepalese class structure is a formidable task in itself.

In their seminal book "Nepal in Crisis: Growth and Stagnation at the Periphery," Blaikie et al. (first published in 1980, first reprint in 2001:81) have described the class structure of Nepal as follows:

- 1) The hereditary aristocracy: involved heavily in the army and administration, it remains a substantial landowning group--although some members have taken advantage of their privileged position to invest in hotels, import-export businesses, tourist agencies, and other lucrative enterprises in Nepal and India ... The aristocracy is closely-knit in the extreme and predominantly of Chhetri caste.
- 2) The ruling class: more diverse in ethnic and caste background and more widely dispersed throughout the country...most members maintain close relation with the government service and many have houses in Kathmandu ... even when predominantly absentee landlords, they maintain a strong local attachment ... many of these large landowners are active in local and regional politics and usually carry considerable weight with the local and regional administration.
- 3) Modern bureaucrat: relatively small in number and uncertain position in the power structure, are in high positions in the administration ... recruited from somewhat diverse backgrounds than other high officials and have in common their relatively advanced education and technical expertise ... some come from the

- middle class, the majority are the sons of landowners who have received their education at university in Kathmandu or abroad.
- 4) The bourgeoisie: a distinct fraction of the ruling class, almost exclusively larger merchants ... involved in tourism and construction ... industrial development is limited and it is quite impossible to speak of a national industrial capitalist class or capitalist farmers.
 - 5) The middle class: almost completely separated from substantial landholding and employment (as employer or laborer) ... educated and professional self-employed, the bulk of university and college teachers, journalists and those in gazetted posts in the administration and who receive adequate non-agricultural incomes.
 - 6) The petty bourgeoisie: small commodity producers and shopkeepers, petty officials, school teachers, and the so-called 'middle level' trained personnel.
 - 7) Peasants: a vast majority of Nepal's population possessing their own means of production (land, livestock, implements) and producing primarily for their own consumption.
 - 8) The rural proletariat: a free labor force with no ties to the land and no other means of livelihood but the sale of its labor, is relatively limited in size.

Mishra and Sharma (1983) visualized Nepal's class structure as follows:

- 1) The upperclass: a generic category which subsumes four major subclasses, the aristocracy, the land-owning nobility, the urban administrative, technical and business elite and the national and local level politicians.
- 2) The underclass: petty traders, wage laborers, tenants, the mass of marginal and sub-marginal farmers and the landless of rural Nepal.

Ghimire (1992) describes Nepal's class structure as follows:

- 1) Dominant group I: the monarchy, members of their royal family and their relations who derive their i) social status from the Hindu religion and the caste system; ii) wealth from taxation and foreign aid; and iii) political and bureaucratic power from control over means of coercion/partyless Panchayat system.
- 2) Dominant group II: Brahmins, Chhetris, and Newars who derive their i) social status from the Hindu religion and the caste system (in the case of Newars, from their strategic location); ii) wealth from ownership of land or other large concerns/ industries/ owners of urban properties/ hotel/ tourism/ import-export businesses; and iii) political and bureaucratic power from MPs and senior level bureaucrats who largely hail from this group and are in decision making positions.
- 3) Middle groups: middle castes and tribal/ Mongoloid people who do not have much social status, are petty bourgeoisie (merchants, traders, government officials etc.), and derive their limited political and bureaucratic power from its members who are involved in district level Panchayat politics or are regional/district level government officials.
- 4) Low groups: members of low castes (untouchables) who are either small land-owners or artisans or petty traders or urban based skilled workers or agricultural laborers or casual urban unskilled wage workers and derive their whatsoever political and bureaucratic power from its members who are either local level Panchayat politicians or local level government officials.

Blaikie et al. (2002:81) caution readers to note that the historical divisions between different ethnic and caste groups in Nepal have not been obliterated over the centuries, and these differences are important for a majority of the population and they usually serve to obscure the class divisions. Furthermore, the country's civil codes and constitutions continue to sanctify status ranking by birth (Gurung 1998: 125). However, in general, the *Chhetris* and *Bahun*s dominate politics, *Bahun*s and *Newars* dominate the academia (Gurung 1998: 125), and all of these three (*Bahun*s, *Chhetris*, and *Newars*) dominate the country's bureaucracy (DREFDEN 1992:4-6).

Even though 80% of Nepal's population is engaged in agriculture, a great majority of my research subjects were from middle and upper class backgrounds. Therefore, it would be quite inappropriate to define the class structure of Nepal as Beteille (1974: 33) had suggested, "in agrarian societies, class can probably best be defined as the relation of households to the means of agricultural production, that is as dependent primarily on ownership, control and use of land," because, in Nepal, political power and income are not necessarily always closely tied to landownership. For the purposes of this dissertation, and based on the above discussion and conceptualizations of the Nepalese class by others, I have visualized the class structure of Nepal as being made up of three classes: the upper, the middle, and the lower.

Since life chances are positively correlated with one's social situation (Cockerham 2004), I have included those who have more access to sources of power, and thereby to education, wealth, and social prestige in the upper class. These include those who reported their family backgrounds to be the ruling class (having close association with the royal palace, or the leadership of major political parties, or having or having held executive level positions in Nepal's civil, military, police and parastatal services), landlord class, and high ranking civil/military/police cadre. Similarly, those who have some level of access to power--but who are quite well educated and respected--like the middle ranking civil/military/police cadre or university teachers or school teachers, self-employed professionals like engineers and physicians, journalists, educated private sector employees, and those who can have some access to power, prestige, and education based on their wealth like businessmen have been included in the middle class. Families that do not have any significant access to power, who do not have any significant wealth and prestige, and whose members had to or have to struggle for their education have been included in the lower class. Included in this class are the small land-owning farmers (who own the means of production and produce primarily for their own consumption), lower level Nepalese government employees and technical workers, tenant farmers, and wage laborers.

APPENDIX II: DISCUSSION OF THE SURVEY RESULTS

Section 3.1

About 75% of my research subjects reported that they were from upper or middle class family backgrounds. Eleven percent of the survey participants had come to the US in their early twenties, 52% in their twenties, and 32% had come in their thirties. Twenty two percent of my interview consultants reported that their parents themselves had acquired their higher education in the US or other developed countries. It was not surprising that 24% and 62% of my interview consultants reported that they were from upper and middle class family backgrounds respectively. Similarly, 19% and 53% of my survey participants reported that they were from an upper or middle class family. However, 14% of the interview consultants and 18% of the survey participants reported that they were from lower class backgrounds.

It's interesting that when talking about their families, approximately 37% of my research subjects reported that they already had a sibling in the US while they were still in Nepal. In addition, about 65% of the interview consultants and 53% of the survey participants reported that they had a relative or a close friend in the US when they were still in Nepal. During the time of my interviews, about 33% of my consultants still had a sibling in the US and 38% of my survey participants also reported so. About 70% of my interview consultants and 78% of my survey participants were males. About 70% of my research subjects were in the 20-39 age group, and the remainder were in the 40-59 age group.

Only 11% of the interview consultants had attended undergraduate schools in South Asian or Asian countries at their own expenses. About 35% of my consultants did their undergraduate work in Nepal, 33% did so in other Asian (mostly South Asian) countries, and 28% had done so in the United States itself. However, over 75% of them had attended or were attending graduate schools in the US. About 15% of the consultants were preparing to enter the professional workforce in the US, and only about 10%, who were still young, had not been to graduate school so far. Similarly, 56% of my survey participants had gone abroad after completing their Intermediate or O/A level studies in Nepal, and 54% of those who went abroad had done so on scholarships. Thirty three percent of the scholarship recipients went on the Colombo Plan scholarship, and 10% went on other scholarships provided by the Nepalese government. Eighteen percent of them had gone abroad on scholarships provided by other governments or universities of countries other than the United States.

Sixty seven percent of my interview consultants had some professional work experience in Nepal and 15% of them reported that they had returned to Nepal after acquiring a professional degree in a developed country. About 25% had worked either for the government of Nepal, or Tribhuvan University, or other largely government-owned public service enterprises. Ten percent of the consultants had worked for private enterprises, another 10% had very mixed work experiences, and about 7% had worked for the multilateral or bilateral or international non-governmental organizations (donor community) in Nepal. About 15% of them had worked as temporary hires or interns.

Similarly, 56% of the survey respondents had a professional job in Nepal, and 25% of them reported that they had returned to Nepal after acquiring a professional degree from a developed country. Thirty three percent of those who had a professional job were university teachers, 26% were Nepalese government officials, 16% were employees of the private sector, and 15% were employees of the donor community based in Nepal. About 60% of those who had professional jobs in Nepal had worked there for 1-5 years and 30% had for 6-10 years. During the time of the fieldwork, about 40% of my research subjects were working in the engineering and related fields, 33% in medical and related natural sciences, 20% in the social sciences and fine arts, and the remainders were in the fields of finance, accounting, and law.

Section 5.1

Over seventy percent of my survey participants reported that they felt that the general situation of law and order had deteriorated in Nepal, and that the political situation was very volatile. Even though only 46% of the survey participants indicated that they felt that the Maoist insurgency would escalate and that Nepal would not be a safe place to live in, this figure was significantly higher for those who had spent a considerable part of their lives in Nepal, i.e., those who came to the US to pursue graduate studies (60%), and those who were university employees in Nepal (75%). In a striking contrast to those who had spent most of their lives in Nepal, 74% of those who came to the US as undergraduate students (n=36) felt that the ongoing Maoist insurgency would fade away (the figure for all data was 47%). Only 17% of all the survey participants felt that Nepal would have an authoritarian totalitarianism in the near future. But, it was interesting to note that 31% of those who came from upper class families felt so. Thirty percent of all the participants reported that their elderly parents strongly wanted them to remain in the US. This figure for those who hailed from upper class families and females were significantly higher (47% for both), and might suggest the heightened fear of the parents for the safety of their children.

Section 5.2

An analysis of the survey data also revealed a strikingly similar pattern. When the responses to the various *contextual* statements that might have dissuaded their return to Nepal were analyzed, 80% of my survey participants who were working professionals reported that they had a secure job in the US, and 90% of them also reported that they were satisfied with their current jobs. The percentage figures for these two statements of those survey participants who had lived in the US for more than 11 years were significantly higher. They were 97 and 100 percents respectively. Eighty one percent of the working professionals reported that they were satisfied with their household income. Again, the figures for this statement were quite high for those who came to the US as undergraduate students and those who had lived here for more than 11 years. They were 88 and 87 percents respectively.

Section 5.3

Fifty three percent of all the survey participants and about 70% of the graduate students felt that they would not be able to find a job suited to their qualifications and training if they returned to Nepal. Sixty four percent of all the survey participants and about 73% each of those who came to the US as graduate students and those who were university employees in Nepal reported that there was an absence of result-oriented work ethics in Nepal's professional work settings. If they were to return to Nepal, 57% of all the survey participants and about 80% of those who were Nepalese civil servants earlier felt that they would not be able to adjust to the highly politicized work places and that it would continue to be an issue. Seventy four percent of all the survey participants felt that Nepal had not created a climate for attracting and retaining talent. This was particularly felt strongly by the women (88%) and those who had worked for the donor community earlier (100%). About 60% of all the survey participants and 74% of those who hailed from the middle class family backgrounds felt that nobody in Nepal (other than their family members and friends) cared whether they returned or not. What is really interesting about these perceptions of my research subjects is that, they were almost diametrically opposite of what they were experiencing in the US. What is also equally interesting to note is that 83% of my most disenchanted survey participants--those who were civil servants in Nepal earlier and were extremely dissatisfied with their, jobs, careers, and income--were working professionals during the time of my research, and indicated high levels of satisfaction with their jobs and income.

Section 6.1

Eighty nine of all the survey participants and 100% of those who came from upper class backgrounds felt that there were tremendous prospects in their professional fields in the US. Similarly, 68% of all the survey participants felt that they could pursue their innovative ideas independently in the US. This figure was significantly higher for those who were graduate students (77%), those who came to the US to work (92%), those who had worked for the donor community in Nepal (82%), and those who had worked for the private sector in Nepal (90%). Seventy two percent of all the survey participants also felt that they had higher job mobility in the US. This figure was significantly higher for those who were working professionals (83%), those who came to the US as undergraduate students (89%), and those who had been in the US for more than 11 years (100%). In striking contrast to all of these responses, 83% of those who had worked for the university system in Nepal felt that there was an inadequate academic environment (in Nepal), and the country lacked research facilities.

Section 6.2

Fifty percent of my survey participants felt that their spouses had more opportunities to develop a professional career in the US and 55% of them also felt that they (their spouses) also had more opportunities to support them financially in the US.

Moreover, 42% of the survey participants felt that their spouses would have difficulty finding a job suited to his/her qualification in Nepal. It was interesting to note that 38% of my survey participants who had come to the US as undergraduate students (n=36) reported that they were married to US citizens (21% for all survey data) and that their spouses did not want to move to Nepal. They also reported at significantly higher levels that their spouses had become accustomed to a free life and might have difficulty adjusting with other members of their families in Nepal (61% vs. 35% for all data), and that they and their families enjoy popular American culture (47% vs. 27% for all survey data). Similarly, 47% of all the survey participants reported that their spouses had greater freedom from control of senior family members or kinship obligations in the US. This figure was significantly higher for those who hailed from upper class family backgrounds (56%), those who were Nepalese civil servants earlier (73%), those who were employed in the private sector in Nepal (68%), and those who had lived in the US for more than 11 years (74%).

Section 7.1

During my fieldwork, many of my consultants talked about Nepal very passionately, and, at times, very nostalgically. Seventy eight percent of my interview consultants and 96% of the survey participants reported that they were either very much or to some extent concerned about the ongoing political developments in Nepal and the overall well being of the country. Furthermore, despite being highly educated Nepalis or Nepali Americans and being physically present in the United States, 52% of my survey respondents considered themselves to be very nationalistic (on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being not at all and 10 being very nationalistic).¹³⁸ This figure was quite high for the men (54% vs. 43% for the women), those who had earlier worked in Nepal as civil servants (63%), university teachers (67%), or employees of multilateral and bilateral agencies (64%), and those who had spent more than 11 years in the United States (61% vs. 46% for those who had spent 1-10 years). In stark contrast to their high levels of concern for Nepal and nationalism, 43% of all the interview consultants and 60% of all the survey participants reported that they either did not feel any guilt at all or did not feel guilty in being in the United States. The slightly lower percentage of not feeling guilty for being in the US amongst my interview consultants might be due to the very personal nature and method of data collection. Rather than giving a categorical answer, 43% of them said that they felt so much for Nepal and if they had the opportunity, they had immense potential to contribute for the country. It is also interesting to note that some of my consultants had explicitly said (as discussed in Chapter Four) that their being in the US was not all their fault. It was indeed very surprising that only 11% of the interview consultants and 14% of the survey participants reported that they felt somewhat or very guilty for being in the United States. Furthermore, 25% of the survey participants reported that they felt indifferent about being in the United States.

¹³⁸ For the purposes of the study, those who checked between 8 to 10 on the scale are considered very nationalistic.

Figures 7.1-a-c. The Mailed Survey: Connection with Nepal

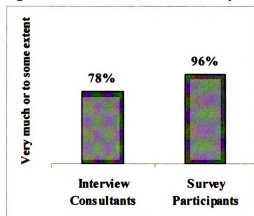


Fig. 7.1-a. Concern about the political developments in Nepal and the overall well being of the country

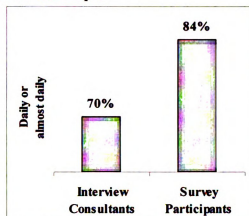


Fig. 7.1-b. Nepal related news reading habits

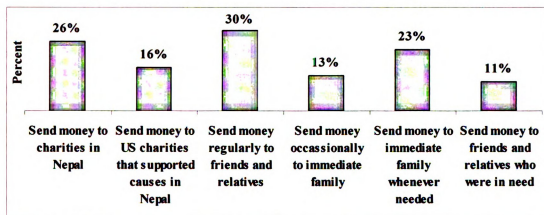


Fig. 7.1-c. Charity/aid practices: Survey Participants

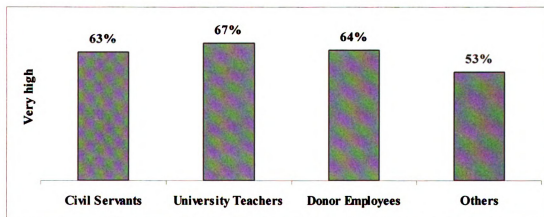


Figure 7.2 Levels of Nationalism: Survey Participants

Note: Total number of survey respondents=132. The number of people who responded to each question varies.

Their concern for Nepal was very well reflected in their news-reading habits and involvement in philanthropic charity as well. Seventy percent of my interview consultants reported that they followed news from Nepal either daily or almost daily, or two to three times a week. Though the web-based Nepali news portals were their primary sources of information, I also observed Nepalis routinely discussing and analyzing the happenings in Nepal in their frequent get-togethers. Similarly, 84% of my survey participants reported that they accessed Nepali news websites daily or almost daily, and there weren't any significant differences in their responses by sex, class, previous job experiences in Nepal, or the number of years they had spent in the US. About 64% of the survey participants reported reading the featured news very closely, and 30% reported reading the headlines of the major dailies and weeklies and following up with the news that interested them. Sixty seven percent of the interview consultants reported sending money or other forms of aid back to Nepal quite frequently. Similarly, 61% of all of my survey participants also reported doing so. Twenty six percent of them reported sending money to charities in Nepal and 16% reported sending money to US based charities that supported causes in Nepal. The figures were quite high for working professionals (68% vs. 44% for graduate students), those who hailed from the lower class backgrounds (71% vs. 62% for upper and 55% for middle classes), and those who had lived in the US for more than 11 years (81% vs. 58% for those who had lived between one to 10 years). Fifty six percent of all my survey participants reported that they engaged themselves either quite frequently or frequently in fund raising or other activities that supported causes in Nepal. In addition to donating to charity, 30% of my interview consultants also reported that they regularly sent money to friends and relatives. Similarly, 13% of the survey respondents reported that they occasionally sent money to their immediate family members, 23% of them reported that they sent money whenever it was needed by their immediate family members, and 11% reported sending money to relatives and friends who were in need.

APPENDIX III: SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Individual Interview Protocol for subjects who had worked in a professional capacity in Nepal and are currently working in a professional capacity in the U.S. or pursuing an academic degree.

1. Hi, in order to protect your confidentiality, I'll identify you as Mr/Ms # ... for this interview. Well, would you please tell me something about yourself, stuff like where you were born and grew up, as well as about your family?
(Probe: parent's educational, occupational, caste, and class backgrounds)
2. Which high school did you attend in Nepal?
3. Would you tell me something about your academic history after high school, stuff like which college/s you attended, the highest degree you attained in Nepal or from neighboring countries, the scholarship(s) you received, your present area of expertise?
4. Would you tell me something about how you came to the United States? For example, what was your original purpose for coming to the U.S.? When did it occur to you that you should go to the United States?
5. Did any social, cultural, or personal factors influence your decision to come to the U.S?
(Probe: Academic/skills enhancement opportunity, scholarships, financial, work related, and personal and family factors and how these affected his/her decision).
6. Would you tell me something about your professional work experience in Nepal? Stuff like where you worked, your position and job assignments, your accomplishments, your contribution to the unit where you worked, your role in decision-making, how satisfied you were with your job, the opportunities you had for skills enhancement/promotion, your relationships with your colleagues and superiors, how many years you worked there, how suited it was to your qualification?
(Probe: If the job was well suited, why s/he still decided to leave and come to the United States)
7. Before you came to the United States, did any one (especially your immediate boss or colleagues) ever tell you that you should pursue higher education in a developed country? Did any one tell you that even if you go, you should return after achieving your original goal?
8. Did you have any close friends or relatives living in the U.S. before you came here? Did their presence in any way influence your decision? Did they help you to come here?
9. Are you married? If you are married and if your spouse is with you, what does s/he think about being here? Did s/he work in Nepal? Is s/he working now?
10. What did your immediate family members think about you coming to the United States? Did their attitude have any influence in your decision to come here?
(Probe: parents' and spouse's opinions)
11. If you are working now, would you tell me something about your current professional work experience? Stuff like where you work, your position and job

- assignments, your accomplishments, your contributions to the unit where you work, your role in decision-making, how satisfied you are with your current job, the opportunities you have for skills enhancement/promotion, your relationships with your colleagues and superiors, how many years you have worked here, how suited it is to your qualification?
12. Would you compare your present job to your last job in Nepal?
(Probe: Similarities and differences)
 13. Before you came to the United States, what were your intentions about taking long-term residence in this country?
 14. Now that you have lived in the United States for quite a while, what are your plans about taking long-term residence here or returning to Nepal?
 15. **[If the interviewee plans to return to Nepal to settle permanently]** Would you tell me what factors attract you the most? What do you consider are the three important factors that work against your staying in the United States?
 16. When you think about returning to Nepal, what comes to your mind as the things that you will adjust to easily?
 17. If you do return, what would be the most positive and negative things of your return?
 18. Do you think that you will be able to find a suitable job in Nepal?
 19. **[If the interviewee is undecided or has no intention of returning]** When you think about returning to Nepal, what comes to your mind as the major things (related to Nepal) that has dissuaded you or will dissuade you from returning?
(Probe for personal, family, financial, work related, and social and cultural issues)
 20. Have you visited Nepal after coming to the U.S.? If yes, would you tell me how you felt about the overall situation of the country after that visit?
(Probe: Did it affect your attitude about returning to Nepal or remaining in the U.S.)
 21. After getting a professional degree from the U.S. or other developed country, did you ever return to Nepal with the intention of living and working there?
(Probe: why s/he returned and why s/he came back again)
 22. If I ask you to name three most important factors (related to life in the U.S.) that keep you here, what would they be?
 23. Do you know any Nepali professional(s) or graduate student(s) who has/have returned to Nepal after completing his/her/their work contract or studies? How have they responded or reacted to that return?
 24. How would you compare your overall living standard and general economic situation in the U.S. to your situation in Nepal?
 25. **[If the interviewee is married and has his/her spouse and kids (if any) are with him/her]** What are your spouse's and kid's current views about working and remaining in the United States? Do their attitudes influence your decision to remain here?
 26. How often do you follow the happenings in Nepal? How do you follow or keep track of them?
 27. How concerned are you with the current situation as well as with the overall well being of Nepal?

28. How do you feel about being a professional or a highly educated person, and at the same time, being a Nepalese American or a Nepali residing in the U.S.?
29. Do you send money or other forms of aid back to Nepal? If yes, to what extent and in what forms? (e.g. money, charities/donations/scholarship funds, educational and medical equipments etc.)
30. Would you tell me something about your circle of friends in the U.S.?

Thank you very much for your time and patience. The information you have just provided was very important and will be extremely helpful for my research.

APPENDIX IV: SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Please Note: This questionnaire is being distributed to Nepalese graduate students and professionals working and residing in the United States. It has been designed to elicit information from individuals with diverse professional backgrounds, life-experiences, and who are in different stages of their careers. Please answer the questions to the best of your knowledge and ability. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. Some of the questions and answers provided might not apply to you. If they are not relevant to you, please skip them or jump to the next indicated question.

Biographical Information

1. **The year you were born:** _____
2. **Your age when you came to the U.S. from Nepal** (If you had visited the U.S. several times before, please indicate the age when you last entered the U.S. either as a student or as a skilled worker) _____
3. **You are:** ☐ Male ☐ Female
4. **Your caste/ethnic group (check \sqrt one):**
☐ Brahman ☐ Chettri ☐ Other Caste Group
☐ Newar ☐ Gurung ☐ Magar ☐ Other Ethnic Group
5. **Current marital status: (check one)**
☐ Never Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed
☐ Married ☐ Living with Partner ☐ Separated
6. **Number of children you have?** _____
7. **Check your highest level of education:**
☐ Completed Undergraduate School ☐ Attended some Graduate School
☐ Masters' Degree ☐ Ph. D. ☐ Post Doctorate
☐ Other _____
8. **You are currently a:**
☐ Working Professional* ☐ Graduate Student
☐ Other (Please specify) _____

(* Any person who has completed at least sixteen years of formal education is considered a professional in this study. For example, a physician with an M. B. B. S., an engineer with a B. E., or anybody holding a Masters' degree from Nepali and Indian universities, and Bachelors' degree from U.S. and British colleges/ universities.)
9. **Check your major field of expertise or study (if you are a graduate student):**
☐ Information Technology ☐ Engineering ☐ Natural Sciences
☐ Social Sciences ☐ Medicine ☐ Humanities and fine arts
☐ Business or management ☐ Other (Please specify) _____
10. **Check your household's annual income range (the total amount of money coming into your house):**
☐ \$19,999 or less ☐ \$20,000 to \$39,999 ☐ \$40,000 to \$59,999
☐ \$60,000 to \$79,999 ☐ \$80,000 to \$99,999 ☐ \$100,000 or more

Family Background

11. **From which area of Nepal do you come from?**
☐ Kathmandu area ☐ Eastern Region ☐ Central Region
☐ Western Region ☐ Far Western Region
12. **What are or were (before retirement) your parents' main occupations?**
- | | |
|--|--|
| Father | Mother |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Executive level civil/military/police or parastatal service | <input type="checkbox"/> Executive level civil/military/police or parastatal service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High ranking civil/military/police service | <input type="checkbox"/> High ranking civil/military/police service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> University service | <input type="checkbox"/> University service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle ranking (gazetted civil/ military/ police or officer level parastatal service) | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle ranking (gazetted civil/ police or officer level parastatal service) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-gazetted civil/military/police or junior level parastatal service | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-gazetted civil/military/police or junior level parastatal service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> School Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homemaker | <input type="checkbox"/> Housewife |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____ |
13. **What were your parents' highest levels of education?**
- | | |
|---|---|
| Father: | Mother: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never attended school | <input type="checkbox"/> Never attended school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completed primary school | <input type="checkbox"/> Completed primary school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attended some secondary school | <input type="checkbox"/> Attended some secondary school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school graduate | <input type="checkbox"/> High school graduate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attended some college/technical school | <input type="checkbox"/> Attended some college/technical school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors' Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors' Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Masters' Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Masters' Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ph. D. | <input type="checkbox"/> Ph. D. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Post Doctorate | <input type="checkbox"/> Post Doctorate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____ |
14. **Which of the following choices best describes your family background?**
- ☐ Ruling class (i.e., having close association with the royal palace, or the leadership of the major political parties, or having or having held executive level positions in Nepal's civil, military, police and parastatal services)
 - ☐ Land-lord class
 - ☐ High ranking civil/military/police cadre
 - ☐ Middle ranking civil/military/police cadre
 - ☐ Intellectual (university service)
 - ☐ School teacher background

- ☐ Business background
 - ☐ Land owning farmer
 - ☐ Tenant farmer
 - ☐ Other (Please specify) _____
 - ☐ Don't know
15. **How many brothers/sisters do you have?**
 Brothers _____ Sisters _____
16. **Are any of them in the United States?** ☐ YES ☐ NO
17. **If you answered YES, how many of them are here?** _____
18. **Were any relatives or close friends in the U.S. before you came here?**
 ☐ YES ☐ NO
19. **If you are married, is your spouse with you in the United States?**
 ☐ YES ☐ NO
- (If you are not married, please go to question # 23)**
20. **If you answered YES, what does your spouse think about being here?**
 ☐ very happy to be here
 ☐ happy to be here
 ☐ indifferent
 ☐ somewhat unhappy to be here
 ☐ very unhappy to be here
 ☐ hasn't been in the U.S. long enough to have an opinion
 ☐ don't know what my spouse thinks

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