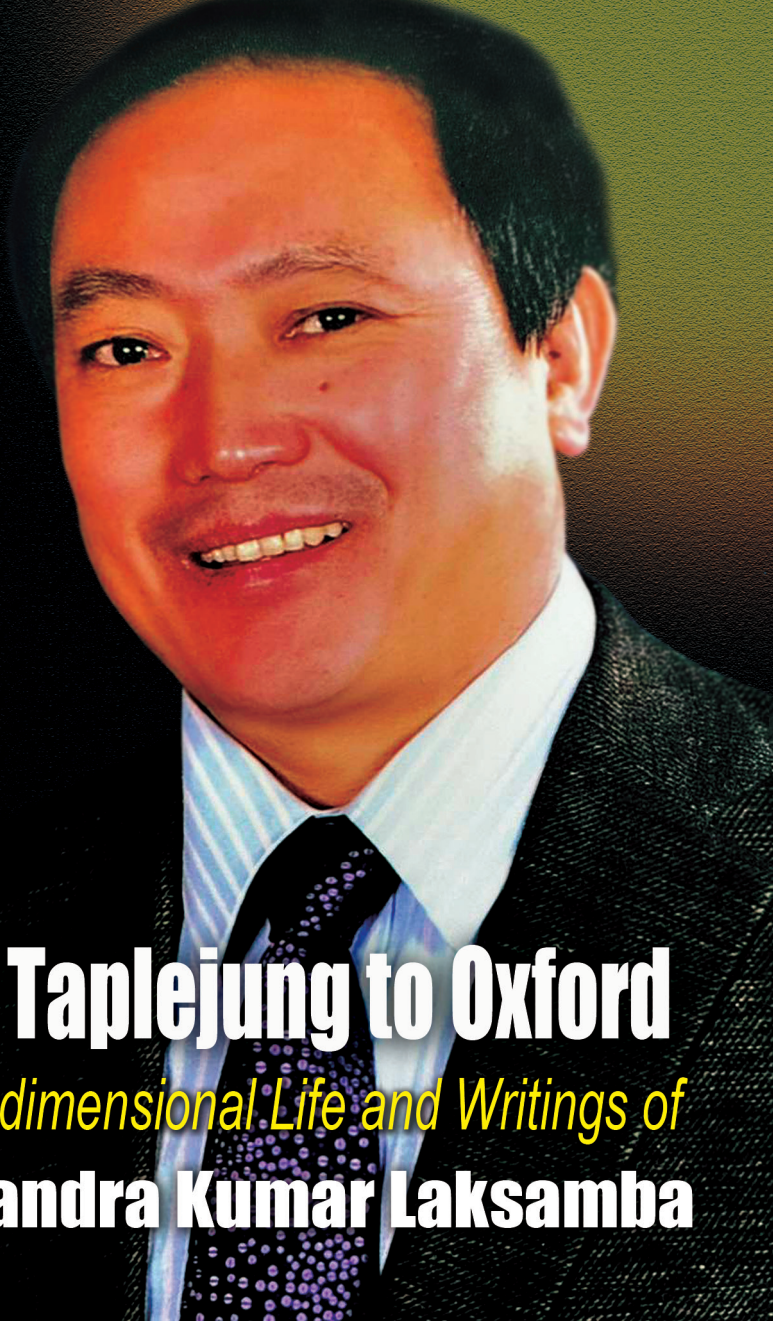


ताप्लेजुङदेखि अक्सफोर्डसम्म

डा. चन्द्रकुमार लक्सम्बाको बहुआयामिक जीवनी र आलेखहरू



From Taplejung to Oxford

The Multidimensional Life and Writings of

Dr Chandra Kumar Laksamba

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Editors:

Dr Krishna P. Adhikari
Naresh Khapangi Magar
Lokendra Purush Dhakal

Centre for Nepal Studies UK
(with support from the Laksamba family)



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Preface

Dr Chandra Kumar Laksamba passed away on the 26th of January 2021 at the age of 59. This was both unexpected and untimely. He still had many important dreams to pursue. Despite this, he had enormous achievements to his credit already. This book is an effort to bring together events and achievements of his life as remembered by the people who were closely associated with him at one or other period.

This publication may be seen as part of a growing tradition in Nepal to record and publish memorial volumes, known as *smriti grantha*. These memories help celebrate the life and significant contributions of individuals to their communities and beyond. These collected memories serve a special function of creating and preserving people's life histories.

Memorial books, which bring together offerings from numerous contributors, by their nature are bound to have a lot of repetition in contents, and to lack standardisation. Claims made in individual accounts are taken as given; their veracity is frequently difficult to verify. We have tried to limit repetition by being selective in the authors of the book, but we must note that we had to be flexible in order not to omit any significant person in Chandra's life.

One important aspect of this book is that the collection of memories makes up only half the contents of the book. The second half is a collection of his own writings, which represent his contributions, views and theories on various issues concerning Nepali society. Leaving four books and reports aside (Laksamba, 2005; Laksamba et. al, 2013 and 2019; and CNSUK, 2019), we have reproduced all his major works (including co-authored), written both for academic and for general purposes.

The book includes contents written in both Nepali and English. Our aim has been to present the memories in Nepali so far as was practicable. This is to make the content accessible to Nepali

language readers, who cared for Chandra, so they could understand various aspects and perspectives of his life as experienced by different individuals. Other pieces, mostly written by non-Nepali friends and colleagues, are in English. Chandra's own writings are also primarily in English. The introduction chapter, which is an adaptation of an obituary originally written in Nepali by Dr Krishna P. Adhikari in January 2021, is here expanded in English capturing the different dimensions of Chandra's life and his writings. The purpose is to provide a comprehensive summary of his life to non-Nepali readers.

We are grateful to various publishers and co-authors for their permission to reproduce Chandra's published works. Many of Chandra's papers (including co-authored papers) collected here were written at different times, based on data collected through different projects. No attempt has been made to update them here. We have corrected only minor errors. However, since a version of each paper was originally published in a different format (book chapter, journal paper or media essay) under different publishers, papers in this volume carried a variety of styles (particularly the citation and referencing). We have attempted to adapt them to a uniform format as a single document. There has been some complications in the citation and referencing of Chapter 45 due to issues with the original publication. We have applied British spellings to all English texts, and have attempted to follow the Nepal Academy's latest guidance with regards to the Nepali texts. Since there is an elaborate classification of the contents in the Table of Contents, we have not produced a separate index.

We would like to thank all the contributors to this volume for taking the time to reflect and share their memories and experiences. This publication is an outcome of the collaboration between CNSUK and the Laksamba family. CNSUK would like to extend its deep gratitude to the family, namely, Kalpana Laksamba (Chandra's wife), Basanta Laksamba (Chandra's son), Yojana Gurung Laksamba (Chandra's daughter-in-law), and Bahar Laksamba (Chandra's son), who not only penned down their memories, but also helped identify and follow up with the contributors and helped in checking the work. It is due to this collaborative effort that we have been able to produce this publication in a fairly short period of time. We would like to put on record that the publication of the book has been possible through

the financial support received from the Laksamba family.

At the CNSUK, Dr Krishna P. Adhikari provided editorial leadership, with Lokendra Purush Dhakal offering managerial and administrative support and Naresh Khapangi Magar providing editorial assistance, particularly taking care of the Nepali contents. The Laksamba Family read the contents and offered feedback and comments. Prabhat Kiran Adhikari read the English sections and helped correct errors. Also we would like to extend our gratitude to Prof. David Gellner for advice and comments. The editorial team takes responsibility for any errors and omissions that remain. We look forward to comments and feedback from our esteemed readers in the days to come.

Editors

Dr Krishna Adhikari
Naresh Khapangi Magar
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26 January 2023

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1

Introduction: Remembering a Remarkable Gentleman

Krishna P. Adhikari

This publication *From Taplejung to Oxford: The Multidimensional Life and Writings of Dr Chandra Kumar Laksamba* is an effort to introduce and remember a remarkable man who originated in Taplejung, a mountain district in Eastern Nepal. In doing so we attempt to bring together memories treasured by Chandrajee's family, friends and colleagues and reproduce his selected writings. These materials collectively exhibit his life events and also his perspectives in understanding and analysing the Nepali society. To introduce the book, I reprint a translated and expanded version of the obituary ('Dr Chandra Laksamba in my memory: A resolute, multi-faceted personality') which I wrote on 26 January 2021 and published in *onlinekhabar.com*. Chandrajee lived a significant part of his life in both Nepali- and English-speaking contexts, which is mirrored in the contents of this book too. As such, there will be users of the book who can read only one or other of the languages. Most of the memories collected in this book are in Nepali. However, this chapter aims to offer a comprehensive summary in English for the benefit of non-Nepali speakers. The second section of the chapter outlines the organisation of the book.

OBITUARY: Dr Chandra Laksamba in my memory: A resolute, multi-faceted personality

The shocking last few days

In the last few weeks (Dec 2020, Jan 2021), I had been chatting with Chandrajee (Dr Chandra Kumar Laksamba; for simplicity, I call him Chandra hereinafter) almost every day. The topics of

our conversation would vary randomly, touching upon different subjects of common interest. Sometimes we talked about the Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNSUK), the institution that we founded together some 15 years ago, and at other times about Nepal Open University (NOU), the institution in which he had been teaching for the past couple of years. We would talk about the well-being of our families and mutual friends and would rarely forget to discuss political developments in Nepal. Various aspects of the UK Nepali community, particularly, news and events related to culture, migration, (ex-) Gurkhas, education, professional and economic progress, social mobility, conflicts, Covid-19, and government policies also regularly featured in our chats.

In 2019, Chandra shifted to Nepal. His move was daring, but not necessarily surprising: daring, because many people who have settled in the UK (or other advanced countries) often express such a desire to return to homeland but only a few act on it. It is not surprising because it was a part of his long-held plan. For reasons that I will allude to below, he had two obvious fields in Nepal to choose from: politics or academia. He chose the latter. As part of this plan, in 2018, he started teaching online at the NOU. His fascination for serving Nepal and pursuing a teaching career there was continuously growing. Eventually, with the determination to serve the country for the rest of his life, he decided to leave behind everything in the UK and to make a fresh start. In the UK he had a rewarding job, property, and much-loved family (including grandchildren). To make such a permanent move at this stage (in his late fifties) was one of the biggest decisions to make, and one that he did not take lightly. His wife Kalpana and younger son Bahar also followed him. He bought a house in Sunakothi, Lalitpur, which was not too far to commute to his university office in Jawalakhel.

In February 2020, Chandra and his wife returned to the UK to visit their family: the older son, Basanta, daughter-in-law, Yojana, and grandchildren, Greeshma and Amaya. At almost the same time I left for Nepal to carry out fieldwork. So we missed each other. The Wuhan (China) originated '2019 novel coronavirus', later named Covid-19, travelled across international borders faster than expected. It quickly took the form of a global pandemic. This

triggered stringent responses from governments across the globe, including frequent lockdowns and travel bans. We got stuck in our respective places: Chandra in the UK and I in Nepal. I eventually managed to come to the UK in August 2021 although regular flights to Nepal were still not allowed. A series of lockdowns, either in Nepal or the UK, forced him to change his flight booking to Nepal several times. Eventually, he was ready to leave for good on the 6th of January 2021. He was not vaccinated yet because the UK government vaccination programme was only rolled out in December 2020 and he was not yet in the priority group. Hence, there was no requirement by then to show any vaccination proof for international travel. Unfortunately, around that time, a new variant of Covid-19 named Omicron was spotted in the UK and the Nepal government, in its turn, banned all flights from the UK. This again compelled him to remain in the UK. The next flight was planned for February, to which he was keenly looking forward. In the meantime, he continued teaching his students and performing administrative roles online.

In the morning of the 2nd January, Chandra called me unexpectedly, asking for a favour. He said, “Tomorrow I am planning to organise a proposal defence programme for two of my MPhil students. May I ask you to become an external examiner?” To persuade me, he added, “Since you are from Oxford, what you would do could help us set up a system too.” He informed me that the current system in place was too harsh and students were receiving insufficient encouragement and constructive feedback for improvement. I was working to a deadline to read and submit proofs of a book chapter. As usual, he was very persistent. We negotiated a middle way to organise the examinations, one at a time, and they were done on the 3rd and 4th January. He was grateful and conveyed me this feedback: “The students were excited, as was the Dean Sir (Prof. Ramchandra Poudel), who has also promised to adopt this as a model procedure.”

Chandra was acting as the MPhil Social Sciences (comprising of sociology, political science and economics) course coordinator and teaching MPhil students at the NOU. It was perfectly possible for him to furnish his duties online. Protracted lockdowns had hugely

disrupted many educational institutions across the world. However, as I assume, it was not necessarily so much disruption for the NOU. I guess, unlike other institutions, the NOU did not require a big transition as they had already been relying on an online platform (though they might have taken the benefit of more efficient online platforms that emerged later). In 2019, when he asked me to engage with his students online, there were students from different parts of the country, even from remote hills, attending the class. I was impressed to see the online system working fairly well. The only difficulty teaching his students from the UK was that he had to work at odd hours due to the time difference between Nepal and the UK and classes in Nepal would take place mostly in the evening. Seeing him extremely busy all the time, in one early January WhatsApp call, I asked him, “Why are you keeping yourself so busy, even after working for so many years and retiring with two pensions?” He replied, “Yes, perhaps I will soon pack up everything and retire independently to my own native village (Kunjari in Taplejung).”

On the 8th January, CNSUK organised a Zoom meeting. The meeting was convened to discuss the role CNSUK was expected to play in the 21st March Census in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The meeting also appointed Naresh Khapangi Magar as a Research Associate to represent the CNSUK in the census campaigns, and to carry out other research activities. On behalf of the CNSUK, Chandra and I had organised a special campaign in the Nepali community during the 2011 UK census. This organisational speciality and legacy had to be continued. However, this time, he was too busy teaching in Nepal and his focus had also largely shifted. Hence, he said, “I will only listen to the discussion, and speak when I feel necessary [in the meeting].” Chandra had liaised with the Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen Organisation (GAESO) for the publication of the Nepali version of the CNSUK's Gurkha pension policy book. He updated the meeting that only £500 of the £4,000 contracted amount had been received from GAESO. The idea was to use the proceeds from the sale of the book towards creating an endowment fund for the CNSUK's Motilal Singh Masters Dissertation Scholarship in Nepal. The scholarship scheme had begun in 2017 and was becoming irregular due to funding problems.

The other point we discussed was the planned publication of the *Journal of Global Nepali Diaspora*, in which Chandra was originally engaged. We agreed that Covid-19 travel restrictions meant that we had an opportunity to resume and conclude this unfinished work. He was very excited about this project. We agreed to write a joint paper on the lives of the elderly Gurkhas based on the SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Family Association) commissioned study carried out in 2019. He agreed to do the groundwork. It was decided to hold a Zoom meeting on 18th January to review progress.

In the morning of the 17th January, I received a WhatsApp text message from Chandra. It said: “Dear Krishnaje good morning. Sorry, not able to answer your call. Besides, I do apologise for this week's programme. Please convey my apology to Lokendrajee, and other CNSUK's friends as well. For your information, I am in Frimley Park Hospital. I am doing well. Best Chandra.”

He had been at home the previous time when I spoke to him. At that time, unfortunately, all the family members had Covid-19. He was coughing. When I enquired how he was, he said, “Everything else is fine, but I do not find energy. I need to stop and take a rest even on my way to the toilet and back.” He looked very tired. It was concerning to think that even whilst working at home all the time, he had caught Covid-19.

Covid-19 and the Nepali community had been a regular subject of our chats since early 2020. In April 2020 while I was still in Nepal, Chandra was in the UK. Until then, as we understood, the Nepali community in the UK on the face of it had not been affected by the Covid-19 to the extent that other communities had. However, this was to change later. He had told me that the UK Nepali community would benefit for their special physical and mental properties rooted in their upbringing in harsh mountains and in difficult circumstances. He believed they inherited the ability to endure hardship. At that time this was a widely shared hypothesis. The situation changed slowly, and there were reports of disproportionate suffering of ethnic minority communities, particularly the South Asians. Nepali news portals carried frequent

reports of deaths in the UK Nepali community. The elderly Gurkha group was thought to be more vulnerable. On one occasion later, we did a mental mapping of the reported death incidences in the Nepali community. We concluded that the death rate among Nepalis was still not greater than the overall UK average. As early as December (2020), we had also seriously reviewed the situation of Covid-19 pandemic in Nepal.

On 20th January 2021, Chandra called me on WhatsApp from his bed at Frimley Park Hospital. On my point about the Covid-19 attacking even strong a person (a healthy retired soldier) like him, he replied, “Oh, yes, one needs a lot of strength. I realise how much this bug drains your energy. I tried breathing without being on additional oxygen, but it did not work. Otherwise, things are going well. I will probably go home on Saturday (23rd).” We continued to have brief conversations. Despite frail health, it appeared that he was in touch with his students and facilitating them. In one call, he informed me that his students were keenly awaiting for detailed comments from me on their MPhil transfer assessments.

After this, it became hard to get hold of Chandra and I relied on his family for updates. On 25th January, Kalpana (bhauju, Mrs Laksamba) suddenly called me and said, “Sir, he has had a major stroke!” With this, she broke down and could not continue. I was shocked by the news. She passed the phone to her daughter-in-law, Yojana. Chandra was placed on a life support machine (ventilator) after suffering a brain haemorrhage. A brain scan was sent to a specialist hospital in London to determine the scale of the damage in order to decide whether an operation could be performed. There was excessive bleeding inside his head. I kept on thinking about him and praying for good news.

The next morning I spoke to Yojana again. The hospital had received a report and I was heartbroken to learn that the doctors had decided that operating him at that critical situation was not a viable option. At around 2:15 pm, the hospital notified the family that there was no means to save him. The family was called in and the decision was made to turn off the ventilator. This was the only time the family had seen him in person since he was hospitalised. It was the last

time they were to see him alive. Chandra was in a deep coma. His ventilators were switched off. And, just like that, he was suddenly no more. These fast-paced developments occurring within 10-12 days were like a tragic stage drama, and a reminder of how quickly things can go very wrong.

Losing Chandra this way at such an active age has had lasting impact on me. I have lost so many close people, some even at a much younger age, but I have rarely felt such lasting grief. Coming to terms was very difficult and took a long time. Chandra and I had both good and bad moments, but at his death I had a realisation that they were all part of a deep friendly relationship. It was and will be an irreparable loss. Many people particularly from academia started sending me condolence messages from across the world. To me, he was the senior most (in terms of community leadership) figure in the UK Nepali community to have been taken away by the nasty Covid-19 pandemic. On 19 February, he was cremated at South West Middlesex Crematorium, Hanworth, Feltham, following Limbu traditions. A series of online memorial services were organised to celebrate his life and achievements at CNSUK, NOU, Lumbini Buddhist University, NRNA UK, and so on. The huge amount of love and sympathy that poured after his death reflected his service and commitments within various fields, and his achievement within multiple disciplines in life.

I now move to highlight some of these aspects of his life in the next section.

Multidimensional personality

Chandra's father was a retired inspector in the Singapore Police. Despite being born in a *Lahure* family in Taplejung district, Chandra had very different dreams to pursue, shaped by the leftist political influence that he had from an early age. After completing his school education in his native village, he came to Kathmandu, to join ASCOL College, a premier college for those dreaming big in the field of science in Nepal.

However, it appears that Chandra did not focus on becoming a scientist; he rather got into politics. He participated in the landmark

student movement of the 2035-36 BS (1980), which shaped Nepal's political course (see Karki in this volume). It was the time when the ANNFSU-5th (*Akhil Pachaun*), which went to become one of the most influential student associations over decades, was established, and Chandra had played a role in founding the organisation. ANNFSU (All Nepal National Free Students' Union) founded around 1965 spilt into the fifth and sixth groups (disputing over if they had fifth or six national convention). The Akhil Pachaun, or the fifth, was a student outfit, and a vehicle of the rapidly expanding underground radical left Communist Party of Nepal Marxist and Leninist (*Maale*). Following the student-led popular uprising in 1980, the King-led, partyless Panchayat regime was forced to relax its policies, allowing the formation of Free Student Union (FSU) in the constituent campuses of Tribhuvan University (the only university in Nepal at that time). Underground anti-Panchayat political parties utilised this opportunity to run the show through their own student outfits. ASCOL was dominated by the Nepali Congress (NC) affiliated Nepal Students' Union (*Nebi Sangh*). In 1980, thanks to his leadership skill and activism, Chandra was able to break this domination: he became the first Akhil candidate to be elected the chair of the FSU. It was a remarkable feat in its own right. The 1980 student movement culminated in mass protests throughout the country and further forced then King Birendra to announce a national referendum, to choose either an improved (partyless) Panchayat system or a multi-party system. Though the former came out to be the winner, it was not to last for very long; the seeds sown during these movements culminated in 1990 with a popular people's movement, leading to the collapse of the Panchayat system. Since then, some of Chandra's contemporaries, such as Tanka Karki, Prithvi Subba Gurung, Bhim Rawal, Pampha Bhusal, and Minendra Rijal went on to win national elections, become national leaders, and rule the country. Many of them still remain prominent in Nepal's political landscape today. However, Chandra had a different destiny. His *Lahure* heritage was not to be abandoned so lightly.

The tradition of joining Gurkha regiments in the British and Indian Armies had taken a deep cultural roots in many ethnic

communities in Nepal. The Limbu community, to which Chandra belonged, was among four major groups (the others being Gurung, Magar, and Rai) that were preferred, and, thus, dominated British Gurkha recruitments. Chandra was too old to be an infantryman. However, his college education and age were still suitable for joining clerical services. In 1984, he joined the British Army as a clerk. But this was also going to change. There was limited career progression for a clerk. Major Surya Upadhyaya, a Gurkha officer who worked with Chandra in the 7th Gurkha Rifles, recalls, “He was transferred from a clerk to an infantry division because he was seen as 'officer material', there was a lot of potential in him for ascending to leadership positions.” However, things, once again, took a different direction.

Chandra's interest grew more in academic fields than in military leadership. While still in service, he received his undergraduate and postgraduate education from the University of London, UK. Towards the end of his service, he joined the University of Surrey for a doctorate degree under the supervision of a world-renowned scholar of continuing education, Prof. Peter Jarvis (see Upreti and Holford, in this volume). In 2003, Chandra retired from the Army as a Colour Sergeant, and completed his PhD in 2005 on 'Policy and practice of lifelong learning in Nepal: a socio-political study'. This was a new subject in its own right and a new contribution to Nepal studies. Perhaps he was the first retired Gurkha soldier to gain such a higher academic qualification from a reputed UK university.

As the articles in this volume demonstrate, Chandra had good networking skills. He was generally a soft-spoken person with strong reasoning ability. Inculcated by the fiery student activism of the late 1970s and early 80s, he had deep rooted political interests in Nepal, and he was gifted with leadership skills. Gaining systematic academic research skills equipped him to critically investigate and analyse issues concerning people's lives. There were so many issues around and staying away from some form of activism would not naturally be possible for him.

As a recently retired army personnel with first-hand experience of the problems and issues facing the (retired) Gurkhas, there was no better campaign for him. Veteran Gurkhas had been fighting for equality and justice since 1990. The 1997 transfer of Gurkhas from their Hong Kong base to the UK gave rise to new issues. Despite serving in the same army and now being based in the same country, i.e. the UK, Gurkhas were still treated very differently in terms of pay, pensions and welfare. Newly retired Gurkhas, many still in their early thirties, wanted to settle and pursue their career in the UK. This development primarily led to the formation of the British Gurkha Welfare Society (BGWS) in which Chandra was one of the leading figures (see Dewan, and Sherchan in this volume). This campaign was successful to some extent in gaining settlement concessions for Gurkhas retired in the UK.

Over the course of time, Chandra left the BGWS, and joined different groups and movements. Perhaps, there is not a single ex-Gurkha association to which he has not made at least some contribution. After the BGWS, he joined the United British Gurkha Nepal (UBGN), British Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen Organisation (BGAESO), and Gurkha Satyagraha, in that order. Ex-Gurkha organisations have a history of ups and downs, and of uniting and dividing, and Chandra, who often worked strategically and selectively (being issue-based), experienced a fair share of these developments, both good and bad. Most recently, he was moderately active in the campaign, taking a role of an advisor of the oldest ex-Gurkha organisation, GAESO, led by Krishna Kumar Rai.

Though Gurkha issues were closest to his heart, this was not the only field relating to the UK Nepali community that he was engaged in. He played pioneering roles in the establishment and institutionalisation of some of the diaspora organisations. Above all, his priority was to be engaged in research and academic activities, and to make contributions through them.

Thanks to new settlement opportunities for ex-Gurkhas in the early 2000s and a combination of other migration routes, the Nepali population in the UK was growing (Adhikari, 2012). One such newly arrived group was made up of highly skilled migrants

from Nepal. A group of fresh PhD graduates from UK universities was emerging at that time. Nepali communities, scattered in different places, were looking for ways to be organised and promote mutual support. In 2003, the global Non-resident Nepali Association (NRNA) was formed in London at a gathering of leading Nepali individuals living in different countries (Adhikari and Gellner, 2018). Chandra was active in the formative years of the UK chapter and went on to become the first elected Vice President (2006-08) (see Upadhyaya in this volume). Engaged in networking, he came in contact with other PhD graduates in the UK, namely Dr Govinda Dahal and Dr Krishna Adhikari (and later Dr Raju Babu Shrestha) and his old ASCOL colleagues from Nepal, namely Achut Gautam, Lokendra Purush Dhakal, Ananda Bhandari and Shree Baral, who came to the UK under the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme or study programmes. These contacts led to the formation of the Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNSUK) in 2007 as a think tank dedicated to researching and advancing knowledge about Nepalis in the UK (see Dahal and Dhakal in this volume).

Demographic records of Nepalis in the UK were hardly available and the 2001 UK census record was a massive undercount. Thus, the immediate aim of the CNSUK was to conduct a people-led 'census of the Nepalis in the UK (2008)', in collaboration with the NRNA-UK, in order to establish the size and character of the Nepali population. Eventually this led to a campaign for an officially recognised separate Nepali ethnic category. A large number of volunteers were mobilised for the study, and Chandra engaged actively both as a researcher and campaigner (see 'Counting Ourselves: CNSUK's 2008 Survey of Nepalis in the UK' (Adhikari and Laksamba, 2018) reproduced in Chapter 31 in this volume. Following the migration of then CNSUK director Dr Govinda Dahal to Canada, Chandra filled in as the coordinator of the CNSUK (2009-10) and was subsequently appointed the Executive Director (2012-14). He participated actively in the project, Vernacular Religion, of the Nepali Diaspora conducted in 2009-12 in collaboration with the University of Oxford, where he served as a research associate (Gellner, in this volume).

While editing the book *Nepalis in the UK* (Adhikari, 2012), I realised that the inclusion of a separate chapter on the Gurkhas' campaigns in the UK (even though it was not part of the 2008 study) was warranted. Though Chandra's PhD research was in the field of lifelong learning, there was not much that he was doing further in this field. It seemed that there was huge potential for him to contribute to Gurkha studies through research and publications, well-suited to him thanks to his PhD degree and *Lahure* background. We had a serious discussion about it and he took my ideas and suggestions very positively. The first outcome was the writing of a book chapter analysing the ex-Gurkha campaigns in the UK (see Chapter 38 in this volume). Since ex-Gurkhas and their families formed a majority of the UK Nepali population, they naturally became CNSUK's research priority, particularly in view of the on-going justice campaigns led by the retired Gurkha associations. With the achievement of the settlement rights in the 2000s, the focus of their campaigns shifted towards equality of pensions and welfare matters.

However, there existed very limited evidence-based understanding of these phenomena, and there was clearly a gap to be filled. CNSUK carried out a study led by Chandra (2012-14) to factually explore injustices and discrepancies in terms of Gurkha pensions and other welfare provisions. *Gurkha Pensions Policies and Ex-Gurkha Campaigns* (2013) was the outcome of the study and ever since publication, the document has had a considerable impact. On 12 March 2014, the findings were presented at the opening session of the All Party Parliamentary Committee, led by Jackie Doyle Price, MP, formed to enquire into ex-Gurkhas' grievances. It was also presented as evidence in the European Court of Justice in support of the BGWS's case for pension equality. The document has been viewed over ten thousand times on Academia.edu¹ and ResearchGate.² A special issue of the *CNSUK Newsletter* on Gurkhas was co-edited by Chandra with Dr Sangita Shrestha Swechcha in 2014.³

Chandra was also active in the CNSUK's subsequent research in the UK; this time on youth and social mobility (2015-17). Even after moving to Nepal, he continued to be involved in CNSUK's research activities, the latest being the evaluation of SSAFA's Gurkha Support Programme (2019-20).

In response to the Gurkha Satyagraha group's protests, a tripartite technical committee was formed in 2017 comprising representatives of the UK Government, Government of Nepal and ex-Gurkhas. As a result, various factions of the ex-Gurkha organisations were united in putting together their demands. It was a huge honour for Chandra to be included in the team as an independent expert member. The committee synthesised the Gurkhas' demands into a 13-point list and presented them to the two governments for them to respond in the appropriate ways.

At CNSUK we realised that a vast majority of the elderly Gurkhas and their families were unable to read our popular Gurkha pensions report. In 2019 the book was updated and translated into Nepali. Chandra actively participated in this process (Laksamba et al., 2019). He coordinated with GAESO for the printing and distribution. The GAESO and CNSUK signed an agreement, which provided the former an exclusive right to distribute the book in the UK. In return the GAESO agreed to bear the costs of printing, and agreed to pay £4,000 from the proceeds of the book, to fund the CNSUK's Scholarship Scheme in Nepal.

Between 2005 and 2019, Chandra worked at the CVQO (Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation), an educational charity organisation specialising in the certification of vocational qualifications. He worked as an administrator (in facilitating, tutoring and examining the City & Guild's Professional Accreditation Certificate (Level 4-8)). Whenever possible, he took the opportunity to work in more academic settings in the field of lifelong learning and education. Between 2014 and 2018, he worked (casually) as an examiner of an international programme on Nepal Studies conducted by Cambridge University. Eventually, he quit all these jobs after joining the full-time teaching job in NOU. As a researcher with practical experience in the field of lifelong learning in the UK (especially at CVQO), his dream was to apply his skills by taking an innovative initiative in Nepal. His theory was that people should be allowed an opportunity to translate their practical skills acquired through their occupational practices and heritages into a formal qualification. This, he saw, was both a way to stop traditional skill losses, and to increase national productivity. He saw the NOU as the

right platform to pursue these aims, and, therefore, was in discussion with senior officials. In recognition of his academic qualifications and skills, in 2020 the Government of Nepal nominated him as a Senator (representing Province 1) of Lumbini Buddhist University (see Gurung in this volume).

At the NOU, he did his best to mobilise international resources for the benefit of his students and the university. He introduced Nepal-affiliated intellectual friends working in various countries, especially in the UK to his classes and asked them to give guest lectures. Giving guest lectures allowed me to become acquainted with students scattered in different parts of Nepal. I have met and interacted with his students in Surkhet and Dhangadhi. Chandra was developing a course on (social) anthropology and had engaged Oxford's Prof. David Gellner to advise on this. He told me that he had requested another UK-based scholar, Michael Hutt, Professor (now Emeritus) of Nepali and Himalayan Studies, to give a guest lecture to his MPhil students. With Chandra's death, this, like so many of his plans and initiatives, remains unfulfilled.

Another dimension of Chandra's life was his special contribution to the field of Nepali media in the UK. He was a founding member, and editor-in-chief of the Nepali newspaper *Europeko Nepalipatra*, which was an influential media among the Nepalis in the UK. He also published *Gorkha Awaaz* and *Gorkha Voice* (English) magazine for a short period of time (see, Pokharel in this volume).

Chandra played a role in organising and preserving the Limbu cultural organisation, the Kirat Yakthung Chumlung (KYC), in the UK (See Thebe, and Ijam in this volume). He was a founding advisor of the KYC. Through my association with him, I was able to learn about Kirat and Limbu history and culture. He even wrote a long article (which I had the opportunity to read, comment on, and edit) laying out his theory of the origins of the Limbus, and their migration and life in the UK (see Chapter 37 in this volume). Thanks to Chandra, CNSUK was able to collaborate with and mobilise the KYC in community activities.

While caring deeply about his ethnic culture and traditions, Chandra simultaneously had a broader vision of Nepali society and culture, and kept himself outside the silos of ethnic identity politics. He was seen both a bridge between various cultural groups of Nepalis in the UK, and a mainstream community leader. In the 2011 census, when a small group of ex-Gurkhas argued for returning their ethnicity as 'Gurkha' in the census form, he stood against it. He viewed Gurkha (service) as a profession, not as an ethnicity and said, "All Gurkhas are Nepalis, but not all Nepalis are Gurkhas". He saw himself as an archetypical multiculturalist and religiously pluralist Nepali blending Hindu, Kirati, and even Buddhist traditions in everyday life. He said, "We perform birth and death rituals according to Kirati tradition, observe calendrical Hindu festivals and other rituals regularly, and even visit Buddhist shrines and observe the principles of Buddhism." Chandra was active in many other civic forums including the Taplejung Samaj UK, in which he served for two terms as the chairperson. He was active in his (Army) intake group too.

Chandra was a very frank, kind and helpful person. Perhaps, instilled by his early days of student activism and a long military career, he at times would put his arguments and ideas very forcefully. There is no social life without friction and conflicts, and he was no exception. Leading various social organisations and campaigns was bound to invite many tensions and problems, and even earn a few enemies. He was not afraid to take tough decisions, and even switch sides, at times earning him accusations of being factionalist and opportunistic. At a time of frustration, he would not hesitate to resort to saying 'I am also a *Lahure*' as an instrument to justify his tit-for-tat actions. He had a remarkable ability to acknowledge mistakes and reconcile with people. He could easily get along with people with whom he had differences and difficult past relations. Despite being an ardent leftist, he was also politically tolerant. He strongly opposed ideas of ethnic extremism and communal hatred. He believed that given opportunities, all Nepalis were capable of making equal progress and was happy to see the progress made by Nepali children across all ethnicities in the UK.

I have far too many personal memories to recall and reflect, but there is not enough space to accommodate them in this Introduction Chapter, which is already long. Both Chandra and I were committed to promoting research and advocacy for the benefit of the Nepali community in the UK. The CNSUK was our brain child and our small team did everything possible to nurture it. We have spent hours, almost every day, for years, voluntarily to materialise our mission. We did not only expend our time and energy for this cause, but also mobilised personal financial and social capital. We engaged our families and employed personal resources too. The Laksamba family fully participated in CNSUK's research, particularly the 'census' of 2008, and their car was used for crisscrossing the country for months for this purpose. Members would put money from their own pocket to finance its publications. Chandra and I attended almost every possible community events in the early 2010s both to create community awareness on various issues concerning them, and selling our books and other publications. While, generally, we received overwhelming cooperation from Nepali community leaders and event organisers, there had been time for bitter experiences too. Seeing post-doctoral researchers and academics taking time and selling books for £2, £5 was a very strange sight for some people. There were people who thought Chandra and I were doing this for our own personal benefit. However, though pittance, we used the proceeds from these sales to fund our next publication. On one or two occasions, we even lost our books stacked and exhibited in community events. There were several generous people who would understand and appreciated our hard labour, and bought our books in bulk and helped us sell them. This is how CNSUK was able to bring out publications, one after another.

At the CNSUK we have developed a quite intimate yet very informal working culture. Our meetings are organised at homes, hosted by a member's family, who also offer food and shelter as necessary. We have used the Laksamba family home in Frimley on numerous occasions for that purpose. CNSUK members, coming from a long Nepali tradition of addressing senior members and comrades in their organisations respectfully, used to call each other 'sir'. In one meeting in the early 2010s, we had reviewed this 'culture'

and agreed that it did not fit our horizontal organisation and informal work ethos. We stopped calling each other 'sir'. We would take time to openly debate before deciding things. Though there were times and issues that we did not agree, this was acceptable as we adopted a rule to 'agree to disagree' too. Nonetheless, Chandrajee was very receptive to ideas, and keen to try and test them. He always responded positively whenever I proposed a new idea and helped implement it effectively. He was a colleague and friend like no other, and, thus, his absence has left a hole in our personal and organisation's life.

He has left behind a well-educated family. His wife comes from a well-established leftist political background in Eastern Nepal. Her father, the late Ambika Sanba, was a UML Member of Parliament and a Minister (CPN ML). Both his sons were born in Nepal. They came to the UK at an early age and attended school here. The older son (Basanta) is an officer in the Hampshire Police Force, the daughter-in-law (Yojana) is a Chartered Accountant, and the younger son (Bahar) works in Lincoln School in Kathmandu. Chandra had a deep connection to his grandchildren (Greeshma and Amaya), who despite being so young, have fond memories of him. (See Chapters 2-7, for family memories).

Chandra regularly attended Britain-Nepal Academic Council's annual Nepal conferences (Nepal Study Days). In one occasion, driving back from the Durham conference in 2018, we cheered him up in the car by singing Bachchu Kailash's classical Nepali song '*Kalpanako Gagan Muskuraune Chandra Banana*'. The reference then was to poke fun as if the song was written for him (Chandra) and his wife (Kalpana). It certainly has a serious resonance as it reminds us that he will be shining as a moon (Chandra) forever in the imaginary (*kalpanako*) sky of our universe.

It was quite a journey that he made in his life, starting from a remote mountain village of Taplejung to the UK and back to Nepal. He took many avatars: he was a political activist, a soldier, a campaigner, a community organiser, a journalist, a diaspora leader, a researcher, and a professor. In every sense of the word he was a great friend and tireless fighter. Keep on shining my friend. A heartfelt tribute to you.

Organisation of the book

As flagged before, this book is divided into two parts. The first part brings together a collection of selective memories contributed by invited individuals: Chandra's friends, colleagues and family members. The second part reproduces his (including co-authored) published and unpublished writings, excluding books and unpublished PhD dissertation.

Excluding the preliminaries, introduction and appendices, the book has been structured into eight sections, of which five are related to the memories. There are a total of 46 chapters.

Part one

The first part of the book contains 30 pieces which bring deep memories and events recollected by various people who were associated with Chandra at some point in time. Together they highlight and celebrate the colourful and multi-faceted life that Chandra lived. These memories are primarily written in Nepali. This part one is divided into five sub-sections. The memories are generally short but their length vary: some (for example, by Chandra's granddaughter) are just a single paragraph, while a couple of them are more substantial running several pages.

The first section on memories is penned by eight different members of Chandra's family (thus, also include his early life). In this intimate section, his wife Kalpana Laksamba summarises their 40 years' journey as husband and wife. Two sons, Basanta and Bahar present beautiful memories of Chandra as a father. Chandra's grandchildren, Greeshma and Amaya, capture their moments with their grandfather in a single paragraph each. Three further chapters, by Surya Laksamba, Mohan Kangba and Purna Loksam highlight Chandra's leading role as a senior brother in their family and clan.

The second section contains a single chapter on the political events and activism, which primarily took shape during his college life. As discussed above, Chandra had a deep understanding of Nepal's political development through his anti-Panchayat student activism from the late 1970s, the legacy of which sustained his interest in Nepal's politics. Tanka Karki in his chapter recounts the

events that took place in the early 1980s in ASCOL, Kathmandu, where Chandra studied and emerged as a prominent student leader.

The third section presents substantial information about his academic, research and teaching related works. It contains 12 chapters written by 13 different individuals with whom Chandra collaborated at some point in time either as a classmate, research student, research collaborator, colleague or a teacher. Ramesh Bhattarai emotionally expresses his moments with Chandra in his school life. Bishnu Raj Upreti recalls the time when Chandra started his PhD and how his research in lifelong learning was framed, while John Holford, who co-supervised Chandra's PhD, reflects his time with Chandra at Surrey University and beyond. Following the completion of his PhD, forming and running a think tank, CNSUK, was a big development in his life. This is captured in the piece written by Govinda Dahal and Lokendra Purush Dhakal. David Gellner reminds us of his collaboration with Chandra at the CNSUK and how Chandra ended up working with him at the Oxford University through the Vernacular Religion research project. Guy Horridge recounts Chandra's time at the Cadet Vocational Qualifications Organisation (CVQO), where Chandra rose through ranks and diligently performed various duties related to certification of vocational qualifications, a field of lifelong learning, which Chandra deeply cared about.

Two prominent academicians of Nepal: Abhi Subedi and Ganesh Man Gurung, who though did not directly work with Chandra, write about their observation and perception of him, while Jiban Khadka and Ashok Kumar Adhikari, reflect on Chandra's role and time at Nepal Open University (NOU), as a colleague and mentor respectively. This section ends with two poems composed to commemorate Chandra's death by Sangita Shrestha Swechcha (a colleague at the CNSUK) and Om Kumar Shrestha (an MPhil student at the NOU).

The remaining two sections of the first part of the book deal with diverse occupational, professional and associational life. Being a British Gurkha soldier did not only constitute the continuity of the Laksamba family's military tradition, but also became a huge force which shaped his career and personality. Three chapters in

this section, written by Jit Gurung, Tikendra Dal Dewan and Gyan Sherchan attempt to profile some of these aspects. Chandra's own writings in this topic in the second part of the book reflect in detail his views and roles in Gurkha justice campaigns.

Following his military service and PhD studies, Chandra continued living in the UK and actively engaged in civic affairs. Apart from the research, academic and Gurkha rights campaigns, he was active in forming and running community-based organisations, which were formed to help Nepal as well as Nepalis in the UK. His involvement in four different organisations/fields are captured in this section by Krishna Upadhyaya (NRNA UK), Bijaya Prakash Thebe and Ganesh Ijam (Limbu's cultural organisation called Kirat Yakthung Chumlung, UK), Bhuwani Pandhak (Taplejung Nepali Samaj UK) and Nabin Pokharel (on pioneering role in establishing Nepali media in the UK). These brief recounts of memories, complemented by his own writings, which are presented in the second part of the book, sufficiently exhibit his multi-dimensional personality and engagements.

Part two

Chandra wrote both for academic and for general purposes. Most of his research-based academic publications are in English, while others, written for community consumption, are in Nepali. His writings can be broadly divided into three sub-categories:

1. UK Nepali Diaspora, culture and mobility,
2. British Gurkha campaigns (UK-based), and
3. Education and politics in Nepal

This manuscript does not include four books and reports that Chandra individually or as a part of a team contributed to: (a) his PhD thesis entitled *Practices of Lifelong Learning in Nepal* (Laksamba, 2005); (b) British Gurkha Pension Policy book (Laksamba, et al., 2013), (c) which in 2019 was translated into Nepali (Laksamba, et al., 2019), and (d) a report on UK-based elderly Gurkhas' needs assessment prepared in 2019 (CNSUK, 2019).

There are seven chapters on UK Nepali Diaspora, culture and mobility and four of them are co-authored with others. The first Chapter (31) (Adhikari and Laksamba, 2018) details the ideas,

methods, and the processes of the UK Nepali census carried out in 2008 by Chandra and others at CNSUK. It also summarises the findings and demographic details of the Nepalis in the UK. Chapter 32 presents the state of education and employment of the UK Nepalis based on the result of the 2008 'census' (Laksamba et al., 2012). In Chapter 33 (Laksamba et al., 2016), explores the social mobility of Nepalis in the UK through a discussion of Nepali migration in Fairfax Road, Farnborough. Chapter 34 goes further and looks at the education, employment and social mobility of professional Nepalis in the UK (Laksamba, 2012). The paper discusses the generational aspects of Nepali doctors, nurses and their children in the UK. Chapter 35 examines the everyday religiosity of the Nepalis in the UK (Gellner et al, 2016 (2010)). The paper discusses how people's politically correct religious identifications are not necessarily reflected in their everyday blended, multi-religious practices. This discrepancy was evident in holy objects that the people collected and worshipped at their home shrines. Chapter 36, originally a newspaper piece written in Nepali, discusses the idea of dual citizenship (Laksamba, 2066 BS). In the final chapter of this section, Chandra lays out his theory of Limbu genesis, history and culture, and their diasporic life in the UK (Laksamba, undated).

The second sub-section brings together Chandra's writings on retired British Gurkhas' life in the UK and their campaigns for equality and justice. It reproduces one book chapter and four newspaper op-eds (three co-authored with Krishna Adhikari) published in the *Kathmandu Post* and *Kantipur Daily*. 'Battlefields to Civvy Street: Gurkhas Struggles in Britain', in Chapter 38, was the first work to document ex-Gurkhas' struggles within the UK for justice and equality (Laksamba, 2012). The newspaper essays included in Chapters 39, 40, 41, and 42 analyse Gurkha justice campaigns, the British government's reactions, and court verdicts (Laksamba and Adhikari, 2014; 2016; 2019, and Laksamba, 2018).

The third and final sub-section in the second part of the book departs from the UK diasporic and Gurkha issues, and deals more directly with the issues of academic and political concerns in Nepal which Chandra was passionate about. Most of these chapters present his recent work and shifting research interests. This sub-

section includes three journal articles, two of which are co-authored with his students, and one newspaper essay. The co-authored papers, included as Chapters 43 and 44, deal with education and pedagogies. One looks at the hybridity of English used in Nepal (Dewan and Laksamba, 2020), and another at integrating social media as a method of English language instruction (Sijali and Laksamba, 2020). The third paper deals with Nepali politics (Laksamba, 2020). By analysing longitudinal information extracted from *Himal* and *Mulyankan* magazines, it discusses how public meanings were constructed in Nepal, particularly on the role the Maoist insurgency, in creating the federal system in Nepal. The final chapter looks at the integration of the Maoists' 'people's army' into Nepal's national army, following the peace agreement in 2006.

A consolidated bibliography is presented at the end of the final chapter, while (foot)notes are presented at the end of each corresponding chapter. The book also presents selected pictures of Chandra, depicting various stages of his life. In the Appendices, a selection of condolence messages sent by well-wishers and sympathisers immediately after Chandra's death are included.

Contributor:

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Notes:

- 1 https://www.academia.edu/9689136/BRITISH_GURKHA_PENSION_POLICIES_AND_EX_GURKHA_CAMPAIGNS_A_REVIEW
- 2 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309176316_British_Gurkha_Pension_Policies_and_Ex-Gurkha_Campaigns_A_Review.
- 3 CNSUK. (2014). Newsletter: Gurkha Special Issue (Volume 3, Issue 1, May 2014). Eds. Chandra K. Laksamba & Sangita Shrestha Swechcha.

**Part 1: Dr Chandra Kumar
Laksamba in Memories**

भाग १: स्मृतिमा डा. चन्द्र कुमार लक्सम्बा

Section A: Family Memories

पारिवारिक स्मृतिहरू

२

चालिस वर्षको सहयात्रा

कल्पना लक्सम्बा

“म भोलि आफैं हिँडेर आउँछु है” यो उहाँले सबै परिवारलाई भनेको प्रष्ट र अन्तिम वाक्य थियो। यही वाक्य मेरो कानमा घरिघरि गुञ्जिरहेको आभास हुन्छ। म भ्रस्याङ्ग हुन्छु। ‘ए साँच्ची उहाँ त हामी बिचमा त हुनुहुन्न नि!’ कोभिड १९ ले उहाँलाई पनि छाडेन। किन उहाँलाई नै छानेको होला? यो प्रश्न मेरो मानसपटलमा घरिघरि आइरहन्छ। अरू त बाँचेकै छन् नि! फेरि मन बुझाउँछु, लेखेको कुरा भोग्ने पर्दोरहेछ।

म मेरो बुबा पूर्व मन्त्री अम्बिका साँवा र आमा जसमाया थाम्सुहाङ्को पाँचौँ सन्तान (काइँली) छोरी हुँ। म सानैदेखि रोगी थिएँ रे। त्यसैले परिवारले धेरै माया गर्नुहुन्थ्यो र बुबाले मलाई विवाह नगरी पढाउने भन्नुहुन्थ्यो। यस्तै लाड प्यारमा १६ वसन्त पार गरिसकेकी थिएँ। लेखेको कुरा कहाँ टर्दो रहेछ र? उहाँ मलाई माग्नु आउनु भएछ। मेरो बुबा राजनीतिक व्यक्तित्व हुनुभएकोले र उहाँ पनि क्याम्पसमा विद्यार्थी नेता भएको कारणले बुबालाई मन परेछ र दिनुभयो। यसरी हाम्रो विवाह २०३७ साल फागुन २७ गते भयो। त्यो समयमा म साढे १६ वर्षकी थिएँ र उहाँ साढे २० वर्षको हुनुहुन्थ्यो। त्यो बेला हामी एक अर्कोलाई निक्कै परिपक्व भएको महसुस गर्थ्यौँ तर आजकल सम्झँदा त त्यो त बालविवाह पो रहेछ।

विवाह गरेर भित्रिँदा घरमा बाजे ससुरा र बोजू सासुले भित्र्याउनुभएको रहेछ। म त उहाँहरू नै सासु, ससुरा होला भन्ठानेकि थिएँ। बाजेले उहाँलाई कक्षा ७ पास गरेदेखि नै ‘विवाह गर्’ भनेर कर लगाउनुभएको रहेछ। यही सिलसिलामा

उहाँ र बाजेबिच एउटा रमाइलो घटना भएको रहेछ जुन घटना उहाँले मलाई धेरैपटक सुनाउने गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । एक दिन बाजेले बाखा खोरबाट निकालेर चराउन जा भन्नुभएछ । उहाँले जवाफमा “जबसम्म मलाई पढाउनु पठाउनु हुन्न म बाखाहरूलाई खोरबाट निकाल्दिन्न” भनेर खोर छेउमा अनसन (अहिलेको भाषामा) बस्नुभएछ । बाखाहरू खोरमा भोकले कराउन थालेछन् । केही घण्टापछि बाजे आएर उहाँलाई फकाउनु भएछ । “ल अब तेरो लागि दाल, चामल, ओदने, आछ्याउने ठिक पारेर भरिया बोलाइदिन्छु” भनेपछि मात्रै उहाँले हाँस्दै बाखाहरूलाई खोरबाट निकाल्नु भएछ । यो घटना बाजेले सधैं हामीलाई सुनाउने गर्नुहुन्थ्यो ।

मेरो ससुरा आशबहादुर लक्सम्बा हाम्रो विहेताका सिङ्गापुर पुलिसमा इन्स्पेक्टर पदमा कार्यरत हुनुहुन्थ्यो । सासुआमा (माक्सु काइबा) उहाँ पाँच वर्षको हुँदा नै स्वर्गबास हुनुभएको रहेछ । आमाको देहावसानपछि उहाँको हेरचाह घरको बाजे, बोजू, मावली बाजे, बोजू र छ वटी फुपूहरूद्वारा भएको रहेछ । छ वटी फुपूहरूले उहाँलाई खुब माया गर्नुहुन्थ्यो ।

मलाई विवाह गरेर भित्र्याएको दिन बाजे र बोजूले खुब रमाइलो गर्नुभयो । उहाँहरूबिच डोकोमा भारी बोक्ने र दौड्ने प्रतियोगिता भयो । त्यो प्रतियोगितामा बोजूले नै जित हासिल गर्नुभएको थियो । यसरी परिवार बिचमा रमाइलो हुन्थ्यो । यही रमाइलोपनले मलाई माइतीघर बिर्सन कुनै कठिनाइ भएन । म रमाउँदै गएँ । कस्तो रमाइलो परिवार भनेर मनमनै म आफूलाई भाग्यमानी ठान्दथेँ । किनभने माइतीमा मेरो बुबा अलि कडा स्वभावको हुनुहुन्थ्यो र अनुशासनमा कडाइ गर्नुहुन्थ्यो ।

विवाह भएको एक हप्तापछि हामी काठमाडौँ गयौँ । अहिलेको परिभाषामा त्यो हनिमुन रहेछ । काठमाडौँमा घुम्ने क्रममा हामीले न्यूरोडको क्यापिटल स्टुडियोमा फोटो खिच्ने भयौँ । फोटो खिच्दा साडी लगाउनुपर्ने भयो । मलाई साडी लगाउन नआउँदा फोटोग्राफरको गाली पनि खान परेको थियो । त्यो फोटो हामी श्रीमान श्रीमतीको पहिलो फोटो थियो । विवाहपछि हामी धरानको घरमा बस्न थाल्यौँ । हरेक महिना ससुराले मलाई तीन सयको नयाँ नयाँ नोट खाममा हालेर पठाइदिने गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । ससुराको कमाइ बुहारीले पाउँदा म आफूलाई भाग्यमानी ठान्दथेँ । केही महिनापछि उहाँले ब्रिटिश मेडिकल हस्पिटलको अपरेसन थियटरमा काम गर्न सुरु गर्नुभयो । त्यो समयमा उहाँको मासिक तलब नौ सय रुपियाँ थियो । त्यही पैसा जम्मा गरेर हामीले १ हजार ५०० मा एउटा अटो रिक्सा पनि किन्यौँ र भाडामा लगायौँ । प्रत्येक दिन रिक्साबाट नौ रुपियाँ आउँथ्यो । अब हामीलाई पैसा कमाएको

अनुभव भएपछि ससुरालाई 'पैसा नपठाउनुहोस् हामी कमाउन थाल्यौं' भन्यौं । ससुरा धेरै नै खुसी हुनुभयो । यो कुरा ससुराले पछिसम्म कुरा गर्नुहुन्थ्यो ।

विवाह भएको एक वर्षपछि ठुलो छोरा (बसन्त) को जन्म भयो । ससुराले उहाँलाई 'ब्रिटिश आर्मीमा जा' भनेर धेरै कर गर्नुभयो । फलस्वरूप हस्पिटलमा जागिर खाएको दुई वर्षपछि २०४० सालमा ब्रिटिश आर्मी (लाहुर) मा लाग्नुभयो । उहाँ जहिले पनि, "पाँच लाख कमाएर फर्किन्छु" भन्नुहुन्थ्यो । त्यो पाँच लाख कमाउने उद्देश्य र योजना के थियो मलाई अबै थाहा छैन । बसन्त तीन वर्षको हुँदा ससुरा पनि अवकाश पाएर सिङ्गापुर पुलिसबाट नेपाल आउनुभयो । म अब छोरा, बाजे, बोजू र ससुरासँग धरानमा बस्दैथिएँ । कहिलेकाहीं छोरा बिरामी भएर अस्पताल लैजाँदा उसले सबै सेतो पोसाक (ट्रेस) लगाउने मानिसहरूलाई मेरो बाबा भन्ने र फेरि राम्रोसँग अनुहार हेरेपछि 'ए हैन पो रहेछ' भन्दै तोते बोली बोलेको अहिले जस्तो लाग्छ ।

उहाँ भर्ती भएको चार वर्षपछि २०४४ सालमा कान्छा छोरा (बहार) को जन्म भयो । २०४७ सालमा उहाँ ब्रुनाइबाट छुट्टीमा आउँदा बहारले आफ्नो बाबालाई नचिनेर "यो मान्छे को हो ? किन हाम्रो कोठामा बसेको ?" भनेर प्रश्न गर्दा उहाँ मुसुक हाँस्नुहुन्थ्यो । एवं रितले दिनहरू बितरहेका थिए । २०४८ सालमा म युके घुम्न उहाँसँग आएँ । २०५१ सालमा परिवारसहित साढे दुई वर्ष ब्रुनाइको बसाइँ रह्यो । फेरि २०५२ सालतिर सपरिवार नेपाल आयौं । त्यसको छ महिनापछि हामी दुई अष्ट्रेलिया, सिङ्गापुर, थाइल्याण्ड र मलेसिया (क्वालालाम्पुर) घुमेर उहाँ ब्रुनाइमा नै कामको सिलसिलामा बस्नुभयो र म चाहिँ नेपाल फर्कें । फेरि उहाँ जागिरको सिलसिलामा २०५४ सालमा नेपालमा फर्कनुभयो । नेपाल बसाइँपछि उहाँको जागिर फेरि युकेमा भयो र सबै परिवारसहित युकेको बसाइँ भयो ।

युकेमा आएर उहाँको पढाइ र जागिर सँगसँगै चलिरह्यो । यही क्रममा उहाँले लन्डन युनिभर्सिटीबाट मास्टर्स डिग्री प्राप्त गर्नुभयो । फेरि सन् २००१ बाट सरे युनिभर्सिटीमा विद्यावारिधी (पीएचडी) को पढाइ सुरु गर्नुभयो र सन् २००३ मा जागिरबाट पनि अवकाश लिनुभयो । पीएचडी गर्ने क्रममा उहाँले सेक्युरिटीको काम पनि गर्नुभयो । त्यससमयमा हाम्रो श्रीमान-श्रीमतीको भेट निकै कम हुन्थ्यो । कहिलेकाहीं त हप्ताको एक चोटी मात्र भेट हुन्थ्यो र बाटोमा एकले अर्कोलाई हात उठाएर कारमा क्रस हुने गर्दथ्यौं । दिनचर्या यसरी चलिरहेको थियो । उहाँ जहिले पनि केही गरौं भन्ने विचार र चाहना राख्ने प्रवृत्तिको हुनाले सन् २००४ बाट नेपालीपत्र भन्ने पत्रिका प्रकाशित गर्ने सोच राखेर सञ्चालनमा ल्यायौं । २००८

सम्म प्रकाशित गरियो, पैसा पनि डुबायौँ । फेरि उहाँको चाहना कलेजतिर पैसा लगानी गर्ने सोच आयो । लगानी पनि गरियो त्यो पनि डुब्यो । उहाँको जागिर सन् २००५ बाट सिभीक्युओ (Cadet Vocational Qualifications Organisation) मा थियो । त्यो चाँहिँ निरन्तर सन् २०१९ सम्म खाएर अवकाश लिनुभयो ।

नेपाल जाने, उतै नै काम गर्ने भन्ने उहाँको दीर्घइच्छाअनुसार हामी सन् २०१९ मा नेपालतर्फ लाग्यौँ । उहाँले नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयमा अध्यापन गराउन सुरु गर्नुभयो । त्यो कामले उहाँलाई धेरै सन्तुष्टी मिलेको मैले अनुभव गरेकी थिएँ । उहाँ हरेक दिन चार घण्टा अध्यापनमा व्यस्त रहनुहुन्थ्यो र बाँकी समय कान्छो छोरा (बहार) सहित हामी तीन जना बाहिर घुम्न र रेस्टुरेन्टमा खाने गर्दथ्यौँ । हामी तीनै जनाले धेरै खुसीका साथ दिन बिताएको अनुभव गरिरहेका थियौँ । सो वर्षको दसैं, तिहार चाडपर्व सबै इष्टमित्र, परिवार, आमा, दिदीबहिनी र भाइहरूसँग मनाएको रमाइलोपन अहिलेसम्मको सर्वश्रेष्ठ थियो । उहाँको अध्यापन गराउने क्रममा नेपालको पूर्वदेखि पश्चिमसम्मका विद्यार्थीहरूसँग अन्तरक्रिया हुने गर्दथ्यो । यही प्रक्रियामा हामी दुईलाई केही हप्ताका लागि सुर्खेत र पश्चिमका केही भाग घुम्ने मौका मिलेको थियो ।

हामी सन् २०२० को फेब्रुअरीमा नेपालबाट टुलो छोराको परिवालाई भेट्न र सीएनएस युकेको साफा (Soldiers', Sailors' & Airmen's Families Association) प्रोजेक्टको मिटिङका लागि युके आयौँ । कोरोनाको लकडाउनले आवतजावत बन्द भयो । तीन पटक त टिकट काट्दै साँदै बसियो । लकडाउनको समयमा नाति र नातिनीसँग राम्रो समय बितायौँ । उहाँ नाति, नातिनीसँग धेरै रमाउने, माया गर्ने र जहिले पनि “मेरो बाजे, बोजूले पनि त मलाई यस्तै माया गरेको रहेछ नि । नाति नातिनीको यस्तो माया लाग्दो रहेछ तर मलाई थाहा भएन” भनेर भन्ने गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँ नाति, नातिनीसँग खेल्ने, घुम्न जाने, प्रश्न-उत्तर गर्ने आदि गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । करिब तीन वर्षकी नातिनीले कोरोनाको बारेमा प्रश्न गर्थिन् । “बाजे कोरोना भाइरस के हो ? के यो भाइरसले आँखा, ब्रेन (दिमाग) खाइदिन्छ ?” आदि आदि । उहाँले जवाफमा “यो खतरा भाइरस हो” भन्नुहुन्थ्यो ।

युकेको लकडाउनको बसाइँमा हामीहरू (सपरिवार) ले एकअर्काको जन्मदिन, दसैं, तिहार, क्रिसमस सबै खुसीका साथ मनायौँ । परिवार एकसाथ रहेर यसरी चाडपर्व र जन्मदिन मनाएको यही साल उहाँको अन्तिम रहेछ । उहाँ धेरै आत्मबल भएको व्यक्ति, हतपत्त बिरामी नहुने, औषधि कहिल्यै नखाने र मलाई चाँहिँ जहिले पनि सानोतिनो बिमारले सताइरहने र मेरो सधैं चिन्ता लिनुहुन्थ्यो ।

“म ८० वर्षसम्म बाँच्छु, अब १५ वर्ष चाहिँ सक्रिय जीवन बिताउँछु” भन्नुहुन्थ्यो । तर मृत्यु कसलाई थाहा हुँदोरहेछ र ? जनवरीको पहिलो हप्तादेखि घरको सबै सदस्यहरू एकपछि अर्कोलाई कोरोनाले सताउन थाल्यो । क्रमिक रूपले निको पनि हुँदै गयो तर उहाँलाई अस्पताल भर्ना गर्नुपर्थ्यो । अस्पताल भर्ना हुनु अघिल्लो दिन करिब बिहान २ बजेतिर बसन्तलाई एम्बुलेन्स बोलाउन लगाउनुभयो । फेरि एकछिन पछि “म ठीक छु एम्बुलेन्सलाई बोलाउन पर्दैन” भनेर क्यान्सिल गराउन लगाउनुभयो । भोलिपल्ट बिहानको करिब ८ बजेको हुँदो हो उहाँलाई सास फेर्न गाह्रो भयो । हामीले डाक्टरलाई सम्पर्क गर्थौँ । डाक्टरसित भिडियोमा कुराकानी भयो । डाक्टरको सल्लाहअनुसार उहाँलाई कोभिड अस्पताल लग्यौँ । जनवरीको महिना चिसो त्यत्तिकै, बाहिर सेताम्मे हिउँ परिरहेको थियो । घरबाट हिँडेको करिब २० मिनेटपछि हामी अस्पताल पुग्यौँ । उहाँ हिँडेर अस्पतालभित्र जानुभयो । म पनि उहाँको पछि पछि अस्पतालको ढोकासम्म गएँ । म अस्पतालभित्र जान मिल्दैन भन्ने सङ्केत गरेपछि म फर्केर छोरसँग कारमै करिब एक घण्टासम्म बसेँ । तर उहाँ फर्कनु भएन ।

मेरो मन भित्रभित्रै डर र त्रासले छाइसकेको थियो । हामी आमा छोरा अताल्लिरहेका थियौँ । केही समयपछि एउटा एम्बुलेन्स आयो । त्यो एम्बुलेन्स त उहाँका लागि पो रहेछ । उहाँ अस्पतालको ढोकाबाट मुसुकक हाँस्रदै हामी भएतिर आउनुभयो । “मेरो शरीरमा अक्सिजनको मात्रा कम भएको कारणले केही समय अस्पताल बस्नुपर्ने भयो । तिमीहरू घर जानू । मेरो लागि कुनै चिन्ता नलिनू” यति भनेपछि उहाँ एम्बुलेन्सको कुर्सीमा बसेर अस्पताल जानुभयो । अस्पताल पुगेर म्यासेज गर्नुभयो । म्यासेजमा “मेरो अक्सिजन मात्रा लगायत अरू सबैको जाँच हुँदैछ” भन्नुभएको थियो । आज भन्दै भोलि भन्दै अस्पतालको बसाइँ लम्बिँदै गयो । तर भिडियो कलमा कुरा भइरहन्थ्यो । उहाँ ‘आज आउँछु, भोलि आउँछु’ भन्दाभन्दै आठ दिन बित्यो । आठ दिनको साँझ करिब ८ बजेतिर होला भिडियो कलमा सम्पर्क भयो । उहाँले भन्नुभयो, “मेरो बायाँ हात र खुट्टा चल्दैन जस्तो छ । भाग्यमा जस्तो लेखेको छ सोही भोग्नु पर्दो रहेछ । अब मैले अन्य काम गर्न सकिदैन जस्तो छ ।”

उहाँको पीरले भत्भत्ति पोलिरहेको मन, चिन्ताले सताइरहेको तन । क्वीन्टल भारी बोकेको अनुभूति भइरहँदा उहाँको त्यो पीर, चिन्ता र सोच मैले सुन्नै सकिरहेकी थिइँन । त्यो सबै सुनिरहँदा म हतास भएकी थिएँ । अत्तालिएकी थिएँ तथापि म सम्हालिँदै उहाँलाई आत्मबल, मनोबल र उर्जा भर्ने कोसिस गरिरहेँ । उहाँ

आफैं भन्दै हुनुहुन्थ्यो, “शरीर रहे जीवनमा धेरै काम गर्न सकिन्छ ।” त्यो नै उहाँको अन्तिम वाक्य मेरो कानमा गुञ्जिरहेको आभास हुन्छ । म भ्रसङ्ग हुन्छु र विश्वास गर्न कठिन हुन्छ । हामीले यसरी सम्वाद गरेको करिब दुई घण्टापछि अस्पतालबाट फोन आयो । डाक्टरले भन्यो उहाँलाई स्ट्रोक भयो । अहिले भेण्टिलेटरमा राखेर उपचार गराइरहेका छौं । अस्पतालबाट फोन आएपछि मनमा त्रास मात्र होइन उहाँको त्यो अवस्थाको अनुभूति गर्न लागें । म एकोहोरिएछु, छोरा र बुहारीले आवश्यक विकल्पको बाटो खोजिरहेको भिन्नो याद छ । तर मस्तिष्कघात भएको कारणले थप उपचारका लागि अर्को विकल्पका उपायहरूसमेत अवलम्बन गर्नसक्ने सम्भावना रहेन छ । भोलिपल्ट फेरि अस्पतालबाट अर्को फोन आयो । “हेभी स्ट्रोक भएको कारण उहाँलाई बचाउन सकिएन । उपचारको क्रममा राखिएको भेटिलेटर बन्द गर्न परिवारको सदस्य आउनु” भनेपछि मेरो त होस नै थिएन । रुने, कराउने, भावविह्वल भएको रहेछु । त्यसपछि उहाँको साथी डा. कृष्ण अधिकारी र मेरी फुपू सासुलाई फोन गरेकी रहिछु । कसरी बोलें, के बोलें ? मलाई केही थाहा छैन । अस्पताल भर्ना गरेको नौ दिनपछि उहाँको देहान्त भयो । दिन आएपछि कसैको केही लाग्दैन रहेछ ।

उहाँ बित्नुहुँदा ६० वर्ष पुग्न एक महिना बाँकी थियो र विहे भएको ४० वर्ष पुग्न डेढ वर्ष बाँकी थियो । यी दुई समारोहलाई भव्यताका साथ नेपालमा मनाउने हाम्रो (कान्छा छोरा र मेरो) योजना थियो । विवाह भएको ४० वर्ष पुगेको अवसरमा ताजमहल जाने दुई वर्षअगाडिकै योजना थियो । सबै सपना र योजनाहरू कोभिड १९ ले सन् २०२१ जनवरी २६ का दिन चकनाचुर पारिदियो ।

यदि अर्को जन्म हुन्छ भने त्यो योजना अर्को जन्ममा अवश्य पूरा गर्नेछौं ।

कल्पना लक्सम्बा स्वर्गीय डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाकी धर्मपत्नी हुनुहुन्छ । उहाँ परिवारका साथमा समय मिलाएर कहिले नेपाल कहिले बेलायतको फ्रिम्लीमा बस्नुहुन्छ ।

डा. चन्द्र : मेरो सम्भनामा पिता

बसन्त लक्सम्बा

अभिभावकको रूपमा निस्सन्देह उहाँ एक उत्कृष्ट पिता हुनुहुन्थ्यो । बाबाले निरन्तर गर्नुभएको कठोर मिहिनेत बिना हामी युकेमा हुनु असम्भव प्रायः थियो । हाम्रो योजना र सपनाहरूमा उहाँले मेरुदण्डको रूपमा तत्परताकासाथ सधैं सहयोग गर्नुभयो । हामीले प्राप्त गरेका सबै सफलताहरूमा गर्व महशुस गर्नुभयो । उहाँले सन्तानहरूप्रति भन्ने गर्नुभएको एउटा वाक्य सदैव याद आउँछ : “मेरो छोराहरू सुनको डल्ला र नाति नातिनीहरू हिराको डल्ला हो ।” मलाई हिजो जस्तै लाग्छ त्यो क्षण; मैले ह्याम्पसायर प्रहरीमा भर्ना भएको खबर सुनाउँदा उहाँ अत्यन्त प्रफुल्लित र गर्वित हुनुभएको थियो । आश्चर्यचकित पनि हुनुभएको थियो । मेरो भाइ बहारले “स्वास्थ्य सूचना व्यवस्था” विषयमा स्नातकोत्तर पास गर्दा पनि उहाँले उत्तिकै गर्व महशुस गर्नुभएको थियो । त्यो उहाँको अनुहारमा प्रष्ट देखिन्थ्यो । उहाँले हामीलाई उच्च शिक्षाको लागि सधैं प्रेरित गरिरहनुभयो । उहाँले भाइ बहारलाई उहाँले भैँ पीएचडीको लक्ष्य राख्न भक्भक्काई रहनुभयो ।

बुहारी योजनाले हासिल गरेका सफलताहरूमा उहाँ त्यतिकै गर्वका साथ खुसी हुनुहुन्थ्यो । मलाई यो कुरा भन्न कुनै संशय छैन कि बुहारी योजना उहाँको प्रिय थिइन् । कुनै विषयमा प्रष्टता चाहिएमा वा द्विविधा भएको अवस्थामा योजनाले सधैं आफ्नो ल्याकतले भ्याएसम्म, पहिलो व्यक्तिको रूपमा सहयोग गरिरहिन् । आफ्नो छोरी नभएर पनि होला, उहाँले योजनालाई सधैं छोरीको रूपमा माया ममता दिनुभयो ।

नाति ग्रीष्म र नातिनी अमायासँग उहाँको अति नै नजिकको र विशेष सम्बन्ध थियो । उहाँको एउटा आफ्नै नियम थियो कि उहाँको जति नै व्यस्त समयको बावजुद पनि नाति नातिनीले अनुरोध गरेका कुराहरूमा नाइँनास्ति कहिल्यै गर्नु हुन्थेन । उहाँलाई मुटु जत्तिकै प्रिय थिए नाति नातिनीहरू । अमायाको प्रिय आदेशरूपी अनुरोध थियो : घाँटी बाजे । त्यसपछि नातिनीलाई काँधमा बोकेर उहाँ घर बाहिर निस्कनुहुन्थ्यो । यस्तो बेला नातिनीको चलाखी आफ्नै खालको थियो । अमाया आफ्नो ज्याकेटको गोजीमा बियरको क्यान लुकाएर बाजेलाई बोजूले नदेखने गरी बाहिर निस्केपछि दिन्थिन् । यो तालिका बाजे-नातिनीको नियमितजस्तै थियो ।

ग्रीष्म आफ्नो बाजेलाई अति कनै माया र आदर गर्दथ्यो, अभ्रै पनि गर्दछ । बाजे-नाति नड र मासु भैं थिए । ग्रीष्मले बाजेलाई पहिलो प्राथमिकतामा राखेको थियो किनभने बाजे घरमा भएपछि उसले भनेको सबै कुराहरू सजिलै पाउँथ्यो । आफन्तहरूबाट कहिलेकाहीं केही पैसा पाउँदा ग्रीष्मले त्यो पैसा बचाएर बाजेलाई घर वा कार किनिदिन्छु भन्थ्यो । सधैं सबै कुराहरू बाजेलाई नै । बाबालाई बिहानै उठेर नातिलाई स्कुल पुऱ्याउनु खुसीको क्षण हुन्थ्यो । म कहिलेकाहीं बाजे-नाति हात समाएर गइरहेको झ्यालबाट हेर्छेँ, त्यो हात समाइ र हिँडाइ हेर्दा यस्तो लाग्थ्यो कि उनीहरूलाई बाँकी संसारको कुनै मतलब छैन ।

बाबा बितेपछि समय कहाँ सजिलो रहन्थ्यो र ! यो कठिन परिस्थितिले उहाँसँग बिताएका मिठा यादहरू भल्भल्ती ल्याइरहन्छ । सन् २०१९ को फेब्रुअरी महिनामा युकेमा करिब एक महिना समय बिताउन बाबा र आमा सँगै आउनुभएको थियो तर कोरोना महामारीले सिर्जना गरेको यात्रा प्रतिबन्धको नियमहरूले नेपाल जाने उहाँहरूको योजनालाई निरन्तर पर धकेल्यो । यही कारणले हामीलाई युकेमा बाबा आमासँगै बस्ने अवसर पनि मिल्यो र हामीले धेरै चाडपर्वहरू जस्तै : दशैं-तिहार, क्रिसमस, कुशे औंशी आदि बडो हर्षोल्लासपूर्वक मनायौँ । सारै मिठा थिए ती दिनहरू ! आज ती पर्वहरू मनाएका क्षणहरू सम्भ्रँदा मलाई यस्तो लाग्छ, बाबालाई आफ्नो जाने दिनको पूर्व आभास पो थियो कि !

जीवनका १९ वर्षहरू गोर्खा सैनिक सेवामा बिताएर पनि उहाँको मन सधैं नेपालमा नै रह्यो । युकेमा जति नै दुख गरे पनि, बाबा सधैं नेपाल फर्किएर केही काम गर्न चाहानुहुन्थ्यो । योजनाअनुसार फर्किनु पनि भयो । शिक्षा उहाँको पहिलो प्राथमिकता थियो । उहाँले युकेमा अध्ययन गर्नुभएका कुराहरू नेपालमा अध्यापन वा लागू गर्न चाहानुहुन्थ्यो । त्यसमा उहाँ प्रष्ट विचार थियो : जात,

धर्म, रङ्ग आदिको कुनै भेदभाव नराखी सबै जनालाई शिक्षाको दायरामा ल्याउनु पर्दछ। नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयमा उहाँ १८ महिनादेखि प्राध्यापकका रूपमा कार्यरत हुनुहुन्थ्यो। विश्वविद्यालयको कामप्रति उहाँको प्रेम थियो र विद्यार्थीहरूसँग समय बिताउँदा उहाँ औधि रमाउनुहुन्थ्यो। म प्रायः जसो बाबालाई बिहानको पाँच बजे नेपालमा रहेका विद्यार्थीहरूसँग कक्षा लिइरहेको वा कुराकानी गरिरहेको देख्थेँ। उहाँ आफ्ना विद्यार्थीहरूलाई उनीहरूको नामहरूले नभई “मेरा विद्यार्थीहरू” भनेर सम्बोधन गर्नुहुन्थ्यो। यसबाट उहाँ आफ्नो काममा कति दत्तचित्त भएर विद्यार्थीहरूलाई आफूले पाएको ज्ञान बाँड्न चाहानुहुन्थ्यो भनेर मलाई आभास हुन्थ्यो।

लुम्बिनी विश्वविद्यालयमा सिनेट सभा सदस्यको रूपमा पनि उहाँ नियुक्त हुनुभएको थियो। विश्वविद्यालयको एक अङ्ग हुनुभएकोमा जिम्मेवारीपूर्वक उत्साहित हुनुहुन्थ्यो। ताप्लेजुडस्थित हाम्रो गाउँ “कुन्जारी” फर्किने उहाँको सपना थियो, जसलाई समयले पूरा हुन दिएन। कुन्जारी उहाँको मुटुमा नै थियो। त्यहाँ एउटा सानो घर बनाएर आफ्नो जन्मस्थान नाति नातिनीलाई देखाउन चाहानुहुन्थ्यो। सायद आफ्ना सन्ततिहरूलाई हामी कहाँको मान्छे हौं भनेर चिनाउन चाहानुहुन्थ्यो उहाँ।

बाबा आफूले पढेको सरस्वती स्कुललाई सहयोग गर्न चाहानुहुन्थ्यो। सेवानिवृत्त जीवन नेपालमा बिताउँदा उहाँमा अपार खुसी र सन्तुष्टि थियो। उहाँले आफ्नो जीवनकालमा धेरै कुराहरूमा सफलता प्राप्त गर्नुभयो तथापि समाजलाई दिन सक्ने कुराहरू बाँकी नै थिए। नियतिले उहाँको जीवन असमयमा नै चुँडेको हो। हामीलाई सधैं समाज र सामाजिक सम्पत्तिको बारेमा भन्नुहुन्थ्यो। उहाँको देहावसानपछि हामीले प्राप्त गरेका चिठ्ठी, कार्ड र फोनहरूले पनि समाज र सामाजिक सम्पत्तिको महत्त्वका बारेमा बुझ्यौं। दुःखको घडीमा साथ दिनु हुने हाम्रा सबै स्वजनहरूलाई हाम्रो परिवारको तर्फबाट हृदयदेखि नै धन्यवाद तथा नमन व्यक्त गर्दछौं।

बसन्त लक्सम्बा स्वर्गीय डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको जेठो छोरा हुनुहुन्छ। उहाँ बेलायतको ह्याम्पसायर प्रहरीमा कार्यरत हुनुहुन्छ।

एक बुबाको रूपमा चन्द्र

बहार लक्सम्बा

हाम्रो प्रिय बुबाको देहान्तलाई सामना गर्न हामीलाई निकै चुनौतीपूर्ण भएको छ । उहाँ हाम्रो जीवनमा एक प्रमुख व्यक्तित्व हुनुहुन्थ्यो । हाम्रो बाल्यकालमा उहाँले हामीसँग बिताउन सक्ने समयलाई त्याग गरेर हाम्रो जीवन सजिलो होस् भन्ने आशामा ब्रिटिश सेनामा जागिर खान विदेशिनु भयो । उहाँले त्यस समयमा गर्नुभएको मिहिनेतले अभैसम्म पनि हामीलाई जीवन जीउन सहज बनाइरहेको छ । उहाँले बाटो नकोरिदिनुभएको भए सायद मेरो दाजुले न त ह्याम्पशायर प्रहरीमा जोडिने मौका नै पाउनु हुनेथियो न युकेमा मेरी भाउजूलाई नै भेट्नु हुनेथियो । मैले पनि युकेमा माध्यमिकदेखि उच्चतहसम्मको शिक्षा कहिल्यै पाउने थिइँन होला ।

हाम्रो बुबा उहाँको जीवनभरि नै सधैं आफ्नो शिक्षाप्रति रहेको जोश र पारिवारिक जिम्मेवारीद्वारा निर्देशित हुनुहुन्थ्यो । माध्यमिक शिक्षालाई पछ्याउँदा उहाँ कुन्जारी गाउँबाट ताप्लेजुङ्ग सदरमुकाम पुग्नुभयो । उच्च शिक्षा खोज्दै उहाँ ताप्लेजुङ्गबाट काठमाडौँ पुग्नुभयो । हाम्रो परिवारको जिम्मेवारीले उहाँलाई विश्वभरि पुऱ्यायो । ब्रुनाई र युकेमा उहाँको यात्राको समयवाधिमामा हामीले पनि उहाँसँगै जाने र एकसाथ समय बिताउने केही मौका पायौँ । यी दुई देशहरूमा हामीले बिताएका समयहरूलाई फर्केर हेर्दा त्यो एउटा यस्तो समय थियो जहाँ बुबा र छोराबिचको साँचो सम्बन्ध पुनः जोडिन र त्यसलाई विकास गर्न हामी सक्षम भयौँ । उहाँ सामाजिक र भावनात्मकरूपमा बुद्धिमान हुनुहुन्थ्यो र हामी टाढा रहेको कारण हामी बिचको अन्तरको विषयमा पनि सचेत हुनुहुन्थ्यो ।

हामीलाई मनपर्ने क्रियाकलापहरू, जस्तै स्कुल पुऱ्याउन जाने, क्रिकेट वा फुटबल प्रतियोगिताहरूमा सामेल हुनका लागि उहाँले अतिरिक्त प्रयास गर्नुभयो ।

मलाई याद छ उहाँले मेरो फुटबल प्रतियोगिता सकिनलाई दुई घण्टासम्म प्रतीक्षा गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । यस समयमा उहाँले आफ्नो कारलाई ल्यापटप, किताबहरू, नोटकपीहरू, हाइलाइटर्सको एक प्याकेट र उहाँको मनपर्ने पेय पदार्थ- चियाले भरिएको थर्मसको साथमा घुम्ती पुस्तकालयमा परिवर्तन गरिदिनुहुन्थ्यो । आजसम्म पनि कसरी उहाँ पुस्तक खोलेर तुरुन्तै त्यस्तो ध्यानको साथमा आफैँलाई त्यसमा डुबाउन सक्नुहुन्थ्यो भन्ने कुराले मलाई अचम्मित पाछ । लाग्छ, आफैँले थाहै नपाइकन पढेर सम्भवतः उहाँले केही विश्व कीर्तिमानहरू पनि तोड्नुभएको छ ।

हाम्रो बुबाले हामी आमालाई आस्टा सुपरस्टोरमा घरेलु सामाग्रीहरू किनमेल गर्न लैजाँदा पनि त्यस्तै गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँ कारमै बस्नुहुन्थ्यो र पढ्ने गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । आमाले बुबासँग जिस्केर भन्नुहुन्थ्यो “तपाईँले धेरै पढ्नु हुने भएकोले कुनै दिन म कारमा पस्दा नचिनेर, ‘तपाईँ को हो बहिनी भनेर सोध्नुहुनेछ’ ।”

मैले एकपटक, “उहाँ कसरी जहाँपनि पढ्न सक्नुहुन्छ ?” भनेर आमालाई सोधेँ । अनि आमाले मुस्कुराउँदै जवाफ दिनुभयो, “उहाँ ब्रुनाईको जङ्गलमा व्यायामका लागि तैनाथ गरिँदा जसरी पढ्नका लागि समय निकाल्नुहुन्थ्यो, त्यसको दाँजोमा कार त निकै विलासिताको स्थान हो । ब्रुनाइमा हरेक बिहान उठेर उहाँ आफ्नो शौच गर्नका लागि एउटा खाल्डो खन्नुहुन्थ्यो र त्यहाँ बस्दै गर्दा उहाँ पुस्तक निकाल्नुहुन्थ्यो, अनि आफूले सक्ने जति पानाहरू पढ्नुहुन्थ्यो । किनकि यो नै उहाँले पढ्न पाउने एक मात्र समय थियो ।” उहाँमा बहानाबाजी गर्ने बानी थिएन । त्यही अनुशासन र समर्पणले नै उहाँलाई पीएचडीका कठिन चरणहरूबाट गुज्रिन सहायता गऱ्यो । मेरी आमा र मेरो दाइले उहाँलाई ती समयबाट गुज्रिनलाई र पूर्णरूपमा पीएचडीमा नै ध्यान केन्द्रित गर्नका लागि पर्खाल जस्तै खडा भई साथ दिनुभएको थियो ।

हाम्रो बुबाको कार हाम्रा लागि आश्रयस्थल थियो । किनकि त्यहीं नै उहाँले हामीसँग विभिन्न विषयहरू र योजनाहरूको बारेमा कुरा गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । यात्रा जति लामो हुन्थ्यो, वार्तालाप त्यति नै गहिरो हुनेगर्थ्यो । हामी दुवैजना गाडीबाट बाहिर निस्केपछि राम्रोसँग बुझेको महसुस गर्थ्यौँ । हामी सन् २०१९ सालमा नेपाल फर्केपछि कार यात्रामा गर्ने सरसल्लाहको तरिकामा परिवर्तन भयो । सुनाकोठी, ललितपुरमा रहेको सेकुवा घर अब हाम्रो अर्को छलफल गर्ने स्थान बन्यो, जहाँ हामी व्हिस्कीको गिलास र उहाँको मनपर्ने पोर्क सेकुवाको साथमा ती वार्तालापहरू गर्ने गर्थ्यौँ । शुक्रवारबाहेक हप्ताको अरू छ दिन म घर ढिलो आउँदा मेरो बुबाले त्यति चिन्ता गर्नु हुन्थ्यो । यदि म बेलुकीको ६:३० बजेसम्म पनि घर आइँन

भने उहाँले तुरुन्तै मलाई फोन गर्नुहुन्थ्यो र उहाँलाई र आमालाई उक्त सेकुवा घरमा भेट्नलाई बोलाउनुहुन्थ्यो । त्यसमा कहिल्यै कुनै बहाना मान्य हुँदैनथ्यो । उहाँ बुबाभन्दा बढी एक असल मित्र, सल्लाहकार र हाम्रो जीवनमा सबैभन्दा ठुलो प्रेरणा हुनुहुन्थ्यो ।

हाम्रो बुबालाई कुन्जारीमा उहाँको सपनाको घर बनाउने कुरा गर्न निकै मनपर्थ्यो र त्यहाँबाट नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयका अनलाइन कक्षाहरू सञ्चालन गर्ने धारणा प्रकट गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँले आमाको सहजपनाका लागि त्यहाँ युरोपेली शैलीको शौचालय बनाउने प्रस्ताव पनि राख्नुभएको थियो । जब हाम्रो गाउँमा बाटोहरू चौडा बनाउन डोजर प्रवेश गर्‍यो, तब एक खाले अपार उत्साह नै छाएको थियो । त्यतिखेर हामीलाई थाहा थिएन कि बुबाले उहाँको सपनाको घर बनाउने योजना गर्नुभएको स्थानसम्म जाने बाटो खन्नका लागि डोजरलाई गोप्यरूपमा केही थप पैसा पनि तिर्नुभएको रहेछ ।

उहाँ विश्वभरि घुम्नु भएको भएता पनि उहाँले कतै पनि जरा नै भने गाड्नु भएन । हाम्रो वार्तालापको समयमा यो स्पष्ट थियो कि उहाँ आफ्नो गाउँ कुन्जारीमा फर्कन चाहनुहुन्थ्यो । जहाँबाट उहाँको जीवनको सुरुवात भएको थियो । सपनाको घर बनाइसकेपछि एकदिन उहाँका बहुमूल्य नाति-नातिनी (ग्रीष्म र अमाया) लाई गाउँमा लैजाने योजना उहाँले राख्नुभएको थियो । हामीहरू कुन्जारीमा हुँदा ग्रीष्म र अमायालाई त्यहाँको स्थानीय संस्कृतिमा अभ्यस्त भएको कल्पना गर्ने गथ्यौँ र उनीहरूका बारेमा कुरा गर्न निकै रमाइलो मान्थ्यौँ । बुबा आफ्ना हजुरबुबा-हजुरआमा र काकीहरूप्रति आफूलाई हुर्काउनुभएकोमा निकै आभारी हुनुहुन्थ्यो र मलाई लाग्छ कि ग्रीष्म र अमायाले पनि उहाँ र आमाबाट त्यही हेरचाह, माया र निर्देशन पाउनु भन्ने उहाँ चाहनुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँ सधैं परिवारमा सबैजनाको बारेमा सोच्नुहुन्थ्यो, अनि मेरो दाजु र मेरी भाउजूमाथि निकै गर्व गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । छोरा बुहारी (मेरो दाइ र भाउजू) ले स्थायी पेसा प्राप्त गरेकोमा र परिवारका लागि एक स्थायी वातावरण सिर्जना भएकोमा उहाँ गर्व गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । मेरी भाउजूलाई उहाँ छोरी भैं माया गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँको अनुसन्धान परियोजनाहरूमा प्रूफ रिडिङ वा डाटा क्लिनडिङ गरेर भाउजूले सहयोग गर्नुहुँदा उहाँ भाउजूको निकै सराहना गर्नुहुन्थ्यो ।

उहाँको शैक्षिक मण्डल र उहाँका विद्यार्थीहरू उहाँको अर्को परिवार थियो । बुबा उहाँका विद्यार्थीले उत्कृष्ट नतीजा ल्याउन सक्नु भनेर समर्पित हुनुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँ बिहानको ५:०० बजेदेखि मध्यरातसम्म आफ्नाका विद्यार्थीहरूको आवश्यकताअनुसार आफू उपलब्ध भएको पक्का गर्दै आफ्नो ल्यापटपको अगाडि

रहनुहुन्थ्यो। 'मार्क्सवाद', 'अनुसन्धान पद्धति', 'वयस्क शिक्षा', 'औपचारिक र अनौपचारिक शिक्षा', 'जीवन पर्यन्तको सिकाइ' जस्ता शब्दहरूले घर गुञ्जने गथ्र्यो।

औपचारिक र अनौपचारिक शिक्षाको बारेमा उहाँले हामीलाई दिनुभएको व्याख्या सधैं हाम्रो जीवनको भाग हुनेछन्। उहाँले हामीलाई यति धेरै अनौपचारिक शिक्षाको अनुभवहरू छोडेर जानुभएको छ जसको निमित्त हामी सधैं बुबाप्रति ऋणी रहनेछौं। एकपटक मैले मेरो स्नातक तहको डिग्री पूरा गर्ने कुराबाट पछि हट्न लागि सकेको थिएँ। उहाँले आफ्नो पीएचडीका लागि गर्नुभएको संघर्षलाई मैले नजिकबाट अवलोकन गरेको कारण नै स्नातक तहबाट यति सजिलै पछि हट्नु हुँदैन भन्ने कुराको महसुस गरें। उहाँले ग्रीष्म र अमायाले पनि एकदिन त्यही बाटो पछ्याउनेछन् भनेर आशा गर्नुहुन्थ्यो। जब ग्रीष्मले हाम्रो बुबाको थिसिसको पुस्तक चिनेको थियो तब उहाँ निकै गर्व गर्ने हजुरबुबा हुनुभएको थियो। उहाँ खुसीको किरणले चम्किनुहुन्थ्यो र भन्नुहुन्थ्यो कि मेरो नातिले पनि उसको हजुरबुबाजस्तै पीएचडी गरेको हुनेछ।

हाम्रो बुबा ज्ञानको अत्याधिक तृष्णा भएको र ग्रामीण क्षेत्र विकासको दर्शनसहितको एक द्रष्टा हुनुहुन्थ्यो, विशेषगरी कुन्जारी गाउँको निमित्त। उहाँले हामीलाई निकै चाँडै नै छोडेर मात्र जानुभएन, यस्तो खाली ठाउँ पनि छोडेर जानुभयो जुन कहिल्यै भरिन सक्दैन। हामी हाम्रो बुबालाई निकै नै सम्झन्छौं र यदि हामीले उहाँलाई फेरि देख्न सक्ने भए हामी उहाँलाई एउटा कारको यात्रामा लैजाने थियौं जसको कुनै अन्त्य हुने थिएन। यदि त्यसको अन्त्य हुनु नै थियो भने पनि उहाँको गाउँ कुन्जारी अन्तिम गन्तव्य हुनेथियो जहाँ उहाँले कल्पना गर्नुभएको उहाँको सपनाको घर बन्दै गरेको उहाँले देख्नु हुनेथियो।

बहार लक्सम्बा स्वर्गीय डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको कान्छा छोरा हुनुहुन्छ। उहाँ काठमाडौँस्थित लिङ्कन स्कुलमा कार्यरत हुनुहुन्छ।

To my Favourite Baje

Greeshma Laksamba

In football I always used you as my motivation and said to myself "Baje's watching, give it 100 per cent". You were my best friend and I remember when you shouted at Baba for telling me off. I still have a clear memory of when you bought my scooter, games, sweets and nerf guns, secretly.

When I'm in bed thinking about you, I always regret shouting at you over losing in my game. I always feel upset when I think about you and try to think of other stuff. I cried a lot when I wrote this. Every time I think about you, I secretly cry and hide it from Baba.

I wish I could say one final goodbye! Sometimes I wonder why you left so early.

From your 1st diamond- Greeshma (Hugs and kisses).

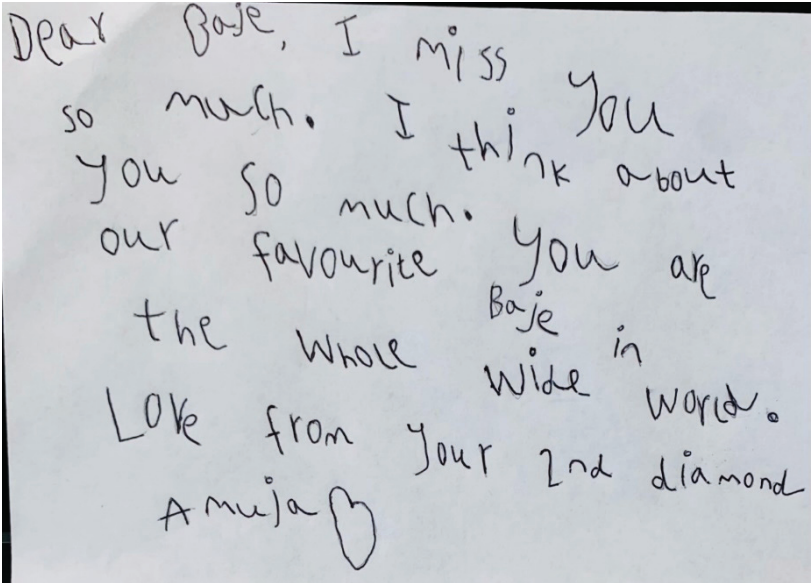
Greeshma Laksamba

Contributor:

Greeshma Laksamba, aged 12, is the grandson of the late Chandra Laksamba. He is currently studying in Year 7.

My Shining Angel

Amaya Laksamba



Contributor:

Amaya Laksamba, aged 6, is the granddaughter of the late Chandra Laksamba. She is currently studying in Year 1.

मेरो दाजु, मेरो अभिभावक

सूर्य कुमार लक्सम्बा

डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा लिम्बू बाबा आश बहादुर लिम्बू र आमा माक्सु लिम्बूको एक मात्र छोरा हुनुहुन्छ । आमा माक्सु लिम्बूको असामयिक निधनपछि बाबाले फिस्टीमाया लिम्बूसँग पुनर्विवाह गर्नुभयो र उहाँको कोखबाट म र मेरी एक बहिनीको जन्म भयो । डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा मेरो दाजु हुनुहुन्छ । मेरा लागि महत्त्वपूर्ण अभिभावकीय भूमिका निर्वाह गर्नुभएकाले मेरो अभिभावक पनि । उहाँ मेरो जीवनका मार्गदर्शक हुनुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँकै रेखदेखमा मैले शिक्षा-दीक्षा र व्यवहारिक ज्ञान प्राप्त गरें ।

बुबा सिङ्गापुर प्रहरीका इन्स्पेक्टर हुनुहुन्थ्यो । बुबा अवकाश भएर नेपाल आउनुभयो । बुबाले मलाई सरकारी विद्यालयमा भर्ना गर्न खोज्दा दाइको जिकिरले निजी स्कुल (बोर्डिङ)मा भर्ना भएँ । सिङ्गापुर प्रहरीबाट रिटायर्मेन्टपछि बुबा-आमा पुर्ख्यौली थातथलो (ताप्लेजुङ) पहाडमा बसोबास गर्नुभयो । त्यो कठिन समयमा मेरा लागि सम्पूर्ण अभिभावकको जिम्मेवारी र दायित्व दाइले नै निर्वाह गर्नुभयो । दाजुको रेखदेखसँगै मेरी भाउजू कल्पना साँवाको महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिकाको कारणले मेरो बाल्यकाल सुखद रह्यो ।

नेपालीहरूको महत्त्वपूर्ण चाडपर्वमा होस्टल बिदा हुने हुँदा होस्टेलसम्म लाने ल्याउने काम मेरो दाजुले नै गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । मसँग भएका मेरो किताबकापी सहितको गह्रौँ भोला बोक्नुहुन्थ्यो र मेरा हात समाएर बाटोमा डोच्याएर घर ल्याएको याद अबै मेरो मानसपटलमा ताजै छ । होस्टल बिदाको समयमा हाट-बजार घुम्न जाँदा होस् या आफन्तलाई भेटघाट गर्न जाँदा आउँदा होस् म घरबाहिर जाँदा आउँदा समेत मेरो हात समाएर डोच्याउनु हुन्थ्यो । यसरी हरेक कारणले मेरो बाल्यकालका सम्पूर्ण समय दाइसँग बित्यो । दाइले सधैं मेरो ख्याल गर्नुभयो । त्यसैले उहाँ मेरो अभिभावक हुनुहुन्थ्यो ।

म सानो हुँदासम्म मेरो हरेक क्रियाकलापमा ध्यान दिनु हुने मेरा दाइ र मेरो सम्बन्ध उमेर ढल्किँदै जाँदा अभिभावकबाट बिस्तारै आत्मिय मित्रको रूपमा रूपान्तरित हुन पुग्यो । उहाँ मेरो लागि एउटा असल मित्र हुनुभयो । बौद्धिक र वैचारिक दृष्टिकोणले दाइ धेरै अधि हुनु भए पनि आत्मिक रूपले सबैभन्दा नजिक थियौं ।

परिवारको सल्लाहबमोजिम सोल्टिनी इन्द्रकला साँवा लिम्बूसँग मेरो वैवाहिक जीवन गाँसिएपछि एउटा नयाँ अध्यायको शुभारम्भ भयो । दाजु-भाउजू र परिवारको आग्रहमा सोल्टिनी इन्द्रकला साँवा मेरी जीवन साँगिनी भइन् । हामी दाजुभाइ, उहाँहरू दिदिबहिनी । हाम्रो पारिवारिक सम्बन्ध भन् धेरै प्रगाढ एवम् सुमधुर भयो ।

मेरो दाइ सानो उमेरदेखि नै शिक्षाप्रेमी हुनुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँको सङ्घर्षमय विद्यार्थी जीवनका बारेमा त मैले उल्लेख गर्नु पर्दैन जस्तो लाग्छ । त्यसैले यहाँ दाजुभाइको अन्तरसम्बन्धका बाहेक अरु कुरा लेखिनँ ।

शिक्षाका लागि उहाँले मलाई सधै अभिप्रेरित गरी रहनुहुन्थ्यो । हाम्रो परिवारमा दाइले जति हामी अन्य दाजुभाइ, दिदिबहिनीहरूले शिक्षा क्षेत्रमा नाम राख्न सकेनौं । तर जे भए पनि हाम्रो परिवारमा दाइको नाम लिन पाउँदा गर्व महसुस हुन्छ । हामीले बोर्डिङ स्कुलमा अध्ययन गर्ने मौका पाए पनि केही गर्न सकेनौं । दाइले गाउँको सरकारी विद्यालयबाट अध्ययन सुरु गरेर ताप्लेजुड जिल्लाको दुर्गम भेगबाट प्रवेशिका परिक्षा (एसएलसी) उत्तीर्ण गरेर बेलायतजस्तो देशबाट पीएचडीसम्मको अध्ययन पूरा गर्नुभयो । त्यसैले आज दाइको बारेमा वर्णन गर्ने कुनै सीमा नै छैन ।

मेरो यो जीवनमा वैचारिक र व्यवहारिक ज्ञान दिनु हुने मेरो दाइ आज मेरा लागि मात्र अभिभावक हुनु भएन, तपाईं हामी सबैको सर्वप्रिय अभिभावक बन्न सक्नुभयो । हाम्रो परिवारको इज्जत, गौरव र प्रतिष्ठा मात्र नभएर राष्ट्रको व्यक्तित्व बन्न सफल हुनुभयो । आज मेरा दाइ हामी बिच नरहे पनि सधैं हामीलाई सरसल्लाह, सुभावा र शिक्षित बन्न बाटो देखाइरहेको जस्तो लाग्छ मलाई ।

दाइ ! तपाईं आज हाम्रो परिवार, शिक्षाप्रेमी नेपाली समुदायबिच रहरहनु भएको छ । त्यो विश्वास लिएको छु - तागेरा निडमाफुमाडमा तपाईंको गौरवमय उपस्थित रहरहोस् । सेवारो ।

सूर्य कुमार लक्सम्बा स्वर्गीय डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको कान्छो भाइ हुनुहुन्छ । उहाँ धरान १८ बुद्धचोक, नेपालमा बस्नुहुन्छ ।

चन्द्रमा जस्तै चम्किलो चन्द्र दाइ

मोहन काडबा

नेपालको सुदूर पूर्वी जिल्ला ताप्लेजुङको हालको सिरिजंगा गाउँपालिका सिकैंचा ३ कुन्जारीमा स्वर्गीय आशबहादुर लक्सम्बा र स्वर्गीय माक्सु काड्बा लक्सम्बाको कोखबाट वि.सं. २०१७ साल फाल्गुन ८ गते डा. चन्द्र कुमार लक्सम्बाको जन्म भएको थियो। म उहाँको जेठो मामाको छोरा हुँ र उहाँ मेरो जेठी फुपूको छोरा हुनुहुन्छ। त्यसकारण चन्द्र दाइ सानोमा मावलीघर आउनु हुँदा मावली बाजे, बोजू र घरका अन्य सदस्यहरूले हामीलाई दाइको बारेमा बयान गर्नुहुन्थ्यो। उहाँ सानो छँदादेखि नै अति नै तेजिलो र मिजासिलो स्वभावका व्यक्ति हुनुहुन्थ्यो भनेर भन्नुहुन्थ्यो।

बाजे, बोजू, मामाहरू र छ्यामाहरू भने पछि उहाँलाई अरू कोही नचाहिने रे। मावली घरकै घुन्यानमा त्यो बेला श्री सरस्वती प्राथमिक विद्यालय कुन्जारी (हाल श्री सरस्वती उच्च माध्यमिक विद्यालय) भएकोले चिटक्क परेर कालो पाटी र खरी (चक) बोकेर खुसीसाथ दौडेर स्कुल जानुहुन्थ्यो रे। उहाँ स्कुलमा कक्षामा सधैं प्रथम हुनुहुन्थ्यो रे।

यसरी नै उहाँले आफ्नो अध्ययनको क्रममा ताप्लेजुङ फुड्लिङ अम्बिटरको भानु माध्यमिक विद्यालयबाट २०३३ सालमा एसएलसी उत्तीर्ण गर्नु भएपछि उच्च शिक्षाका लागि काठमाडौँ आउनुभयो। अमृत साइन्स क्याम्पसबाट आफ्नो अध्ययन सकेर धरानस्थित घोपामा काम गर्नुभयो।

त्यति मात्र नभएर उहाँले विद्यार्थी कालबाटै राजनीतिक गतिविधिमा पनि चासो लिनुहुन्थ्यो। उहाँ अमृत साइन्स क्याम्पसमा अखिल नेपाल राष्ट्रिय स्वतन्त्र विद्यार्थी युनियन (पाँचौँ) को तर्फबाट स्ववियूको सभापति पनि बन्नुभयो।

उहाँ स्वदेशका धेरै अवसरहरूलाई थाँती राख्दै सन् १९८४ मा ब्रिटिश आर्मीमा (क्लरिक्ल सर्भिस) मा भर्ति हुनुभयो। त्यतिबेला म अलिक सानै थिएँ। छुट्टीमा मावली आउनुहुन्थ्यो। दाइको घर र मावलीघर (मेरो घर) २५ मिनेट हिँडाईको दुरीमा छ।

समय र परिस्थितिवश म पनि सन् १९९४ मा ब्रिटिश आर्मीमा भर्ती भई दाइसँग ब्रुनाईमा भेट भयो। यसरी नै दाइ अनि उहाँको परिवार कल्पना भाउजू, भतिजहरू बसन्त र बहार हामी एकै परिवारजस्तै भएर ब्रुनाई र युकेमा भेट भइरहन्थ्यो। म छुट्टी जाँदा दाइ-भाउजूको घर कोटेश्वर काठमाडौँमा जान्थेँ। हामी पारिवारिक कुरा गरेर रमाइलो गर्दथ्यौँ। यहाँ बेलायतमा पनि दाइ र म भेट हुँदा खाली गाउँघरको र मावलीघरको अनि दाइको पुरानो पौठेजोरी खेल्ने गाउँका साथीहरूको बारेमा कैयौँ घन्टा गन्थन गर्थ्यौँ। यसरी नै हामी बेलायतमा दाइ-भाइको परिवार बिच भेटघाट भइ रहन्थ्यो।

दाइले पल्टनमै आफ्नो अध्ययनलाई अघि बढाउनु भइ सरे युनिभर्सिटीबाट पीएचडी उपाधि प्राप्त गर्नुभएको थियो। त्यो बेला दाइको घर म छुट्टीमा जाँदा दाइसँगै कहिलेकाहीँ उहाँको युनिभर्सिटीमा पनि लानुहुन्थ्यो। बेलायतमा दाइ र मेरो बसाइँ एक घन्टाको गाडी यात्राको दुरीमा छ। डा. चन्द्र दाइ हाम्रो परिवारको मूली, अग्रज हुनुहुन्थ्यो साथै हरेक कुरामा बौद्धिक सुभावहरू दिनुहुन्थ्यो। उहाँ हाम्रो परिवारको दिवार जस्तै हुनुहुन्थ्यो। उहाँले मावलीहरूको नाम उच्च राखिदिनुभएको थियो। पूर्णिमाको रातमा चन्द्रमा चम्किएर जगत नै उज्यालो भए भैं उहाँको उपस्थितीप्रति अति गर्व गर्दथ्यौँ हामी। उहाँले परिवार, समाज, संस्थाहरू आदिमा दिनु भएको योगदानहरू लेख्न वा भन्न मेरो औकातले नै पुग्दैन।

सन् २६ जनवरी २०२१ का दिन हाम्रो परिवारमा बलिरहेको त्यो चम्किलो चन्द्रमा (डा.चन्द्र दाइ) सोच्नै नसकिने र पत्याउनै नसकिने गरी सधैंका लागि बिलिन हुनुभयो। भगवानले पनि राम्रो मान्छेलाई छिट्टै टिपेर लान्छ भन्ने भनाइ साँच्चै नै हो रहेछ जस्तो मलाई लागिरहेको छ। दाइ तपाईं जहाँ रहनु भए पनि खुसी रहनु होस्। हामी सधैं सम्झी रहने छौँ। दाइप्रति हार्दिक श्रद्धान्जलि।

स्वर्गीय डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको मामाको छोरा मोहन काइबा हाल बेलायतको हाइ वेकोम्बमा बस्नुहुन्छ।

हाम्रो कुलका एक चम्किलो नक्षत्रको अविश्वसनीय ब्रम्हलीन

डा. पूर्ण लक्सम

लक्सम्बा, लक्सम र लक्तम दाजुभाई बन्धु समुदायमा पहिलो विद्यावारिधि (पीएचडी) दीक्षित व्यक्ति मात्र होइन योग्यतालाई व्यावहारिकताको कसीमा ढाल्ने तमाम बन्धुहरूको उज्यालोको ज्योति हुनुहुन्थ्यो डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा । विक्रम संवत् २०३६ सालमै अस्कल क्याम्पसमा बि.एस्सी अध्ययनको क्रममा स्ववियु सभापति बन्न सफल हुनुभएकाले डा. लक्सम्बाको सामाजिक तथा राजनैतिक विकास र परिवर्तनको चेत र भोक किशोर अवस्थामै अङ्कुरण भएको पुष्टि हुन्छ । मानिसको मृत्यु शाश्वत कुरा हो तथापि उहाँले यो संसार छाडेर गएको कुरामा आजपर्यन्त हामी विश्वस्त हुन सकेका छैनौं । हर आत्मीय, सहयोगी तथा अभिभावककीय भाव र आवाज अभै हामीमा गुञ्जिन्छन् । लामो सपनाबाट बिपनामा आई उहाँको उपस्थिति तथा साथ पाउन सकिएला कि भन्ने भान हामीलाई परिरहन्छ । अति सरल र सहयोगी व्यक्तित्वको धनी डा. लक्सम्बा दाजुभाइ बन्धुको मात्र नभई तमाम गोर्खा समुदाय र सिङ्गै (नेपाल) राष्ट्रको मूल्यवान् उपहार हुनुहुन्थ्यो । आधुनिक विश्वको सापेक्षतामा समग्र दाजुभाइ समाजको विकास, प्रगति र खुसीका निमित्त सदैव तल्लीन हुनुहुन्थ्यो । एक चम्किलो नक्षत्रको दुःखद अन्त्यले अत्यन्त ठुलो क्षति बेहोर्न परेको पीडा हामीमाभ्र ताजै छ ।

सामुदायिक सुख दुःख साट्टेने मञ्चको रूपमा बेलायतका तमाम लक्सम्बा, लक्सम र लक्तम दाजुभाइ समाज स्थापनामा उहाँले अग्रणी भूमिका खेल्नुभएको थियो । आत्मीयता र घनिष्ठता बढाउन नियमित भेटघाटको वातावरण

बनाउन हरसम्भव प्रयासरत हुनुहुन्थ्यो । बदलिँदो विज्ञान-प्रविधि र विश्व स्थितिलाई आत्मसात् गर्दै नवीन सोच र शिक्षाबाट समुदायको प्रगतिशील समुन्नति सम्भव छ भनी सम्मानित गोर्खा सेनाको सेवानिवृत्तिपश्चात् निरन्तर शैक्षिक क्षेत्रमा तल्लीन रहनुभयो । उहाँका महत्त्वपूर्ण ज्ञान, अनुभव र अध्ययनबाट सदैव बन्धु समाज दीक्षित हुन पायो । युवालाई आधुनिक शिक्षाको तागत र व्यवहारिकता बारेमा सदैव प्रेरित गरि नै रहनुभयो ।

उहाँले बन्धु दाजु-भाइहरूको समष्टिगत आर्थिक तथा सामाजिक विकासमा अहोरात्र खट्नु भई हामीलाई प्रेरित मात्र गर्नु भएन । ऐतिहासिक पहिचान र सामर्थ्यको बारेमा धेरै अन्वेषण गरी यथार्थ पस्किन समेत सफल हुनुभयो । मुख्यतः बन्धुहरू एकै परिवारबाट समाज विकासको क्रममा विभिन्न ठाउँमा स्थानान्तरण भइ तीन फरक थरको रूपमा लक्सम्बा, लक्सम र लक्ष्म बनेको तथ्यगत आधारको पुष्टिमा महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेल्नुभयो । उहाँले लक्सम्बाको मुख्य बसोबास क्षेत्र फावाखोला, ताप्लेजुड; लक्समको बसोबास क्षेत्र याङ्गवरक-५ (नागी), पाँचथर र लक्ष्म बसोबास क्षेत्र ईलाम पटक-पटक गएर सूक्ष्म सामुदायिक अध्ययन गर्नुभएको थियो । साथै दाजुभाइ बन्धुको थप सामाजिक अध्ययनको निमित्त अन्य बसोबास क्षेत्र भापा-गोलधाप, सिक्किम लगायतका धेरै क्षेत्रमा समेत समन्वय-सहकार्य गरी एकता, सौहार्द्धता र आत्मियताको दियो बाल्न सबैलाई उत्प्रेरित गरिरहनुहुन्थ्यो । त्यसैगरी उहाँले ऐतिहासिकता र बन्धु विकासको क्रमलाई लिपिवद्ध गर्नका निमित्त वंशावली तयारीमा अहोरात्र खट्नुभयो । पछिल्लो समय दाजुभाइ समुदाय मात्र नभई सिङ्गो राष्ट्रको श्रीवृद्धिका निमित्त निर्लिप्त भई विभिन्न कार्ययोजनाका तथा सोचका साथ नेपाल फर्किनुभयो । विभिन्न विश्वविद्यालयमा उहाँको प्राज्ञिक सक्रियताले राष्ट्रको समृद्धि तथा नवीन विकासमा महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेलेको थियो । बेलायतको ठुलो हैसियत, अति वैभवशाली सम्मानित जीवन छाडेर आफ्नो जन्म क्षेत्र फावाखोला, ताप्लेजुडमा पुनः बसोबास स्थानान्तरण गरी आफ्नो जन्मभूमि, माटो, समुदाय र सिङ्गो राष्ट्रको समृद्धिमा जोडिँदै गर्दा हुन गएको अत्यन्त दुःखद निधन हाम्रो लागि अपूरणीय क्षति हो । हामी सबै दाजुलाई उहाँको दिशानिर्देशलाई उच्च सम्मानका साथ जीवन्त राख्दै, पुस्तान्तरण गर्ने प्रण गर्दै आत्माको चिर शान्तिको कामना गर्दछौं ।

डा. पूर्ण लक्सम नेपालको प्रदेश नम्बर १ को योजना आयोगको पूर्व उपाध्यक्ष हुनुहुन्छ ।

Section B: Political Activism

राजनीतिक सक्रियता

१०

स्मृतिमा चन्द्र लक्सम्बा

टंक कार्की

चन्द्र लक्सम्बा र म एउटै जिल्ला ताप्लेजुङका । हाई स्कुल शिक्षा पनि हाम्रो एउटै, सदरमुकामको भानु पब्लिक हाई स्कुलबाट । मैले पढ्दा उक्त स्कुल तोक्मे डाँडामा थियो जहाँ अहिले सेनाको सैनिक ब्यारेक बसेको छ । स्कुलमा उहाँ ६/७ वर्षले कनिष्ठ हुनुहुन्थ्यो । पहाडी जनजीवन त्यसका आफ्नै मजा र दुःखको आफ्नै कहानी । हामीले समवेत लयमा पढेका छौँ र हाम्रो सामाजिक हैसियत उस्तै उस्तै हो, दुवै मध्यम वर्गीय परिवार । हामी भिन्न जातीय कुलबाट आएका थियौँ तर मिश्रित बसोबासमा हुर्केका थियौँ, बडो जातीय सद्भावमा ।

दूरदराजको पहाडी गाउँ ठाउँ भएर पनि ताप्लेजुङ्ग आधुनिकताको प्रभावमा लपेटिन थालिसकेको थियो । भानु स्कुलको स्थापना (वि.सं. २००६) ले जिल्लामा आधुनिक शिक्षा प्रणालीको जग मात्रै बसाएन त्यसको बिस्तार गर्न पनि 'क्याटलिस्ट' को काम गर्‍यो । त्यसपछि भने एक पछि अर्को गर्दै स्कुलहरू सञ्चालनमा आए । राजनीतिक रूपमा २०१५ सालको आम निर्वाचनले राजनीति र विचारधाराको विविधतालाई जनस्तरको पहुँचसम्म नै पुऱ्याई दियो । २०१८ सालमा कांग्रेसले गरेको सशस्त्र चढाइमार्फत ताप्लेजुङ सदरमुकाम अलिक दिनकै निम्ति भए पनि नियन्त्रणमा लिएपछि राजनीतिको अर्को स्वरूप पनि जनसाधारणले बुझ्ने मौका पाए । जननिर्वाचित सरकारलाई अपदस्त गरेर पञ्चायती व्यवस्थाको नाममा अधि सारिएको सक्रिय राजतन्त्रको पुरानो राजनीतिक प्रणाली, प्रजातान्त्रिक प्रणालीमा आफ्नो पहिचान दिने नेपाली कांग्रेस र साम्यवाद/समाजवादको पैरवी गर्ने कम्युनिष्ट वामपन्थीहरू, अलिक सुसुप्तरूपमा भए पनि, देशका अन्य भागका जस्तै जिल्लाका भित्री यथार्थ बनिस्केका थिए । २० को दशकको मध्यतिर भानु

स्कूलमा प्रधानाध्यापक भएर नन्दकुमार प्रसाईं आए पछि जिल्लामा वामपन्थी शक्तिको प्रभाव हवातै बढ्यो । २०२८ सालमा भापामा कम्युनिष्ट आन्दोलनको एउटा तप्काले सशस्त्र विद्रोहको सुरुवात गर्यो, जसले पछिल्लो समयमा आफूलाई नेकपाको को-अर्डिनेसन केन्द्र, नेकपा (माले) र हालको नेकपा (एमाले)को रूपमा स्थापित गर्‍यो । पार्टीहरू प्रतिबन्धित, लोकतान्त्रिक 'स्पेस'को अभाव, बढ्दो सामाजिक विभाजन र चरम गरिबीले गर्दा यसको विद्रोही स्वरूपले शिक्षित तप्कामा खासगरी युवा, विद्यार्थी र शिक्षकहरूलाई व्यापक आकर्षण गर्‍यो ।

किशोर विद्यार्थी अवस्थामै चन्द्रजीमा नजानिंदो प्रभाव परेको हुन सक्दछ । २०३५ सालमा चन्द्रजी एसएलसी गरेर उच्च शिक्षा अध्ययनको निमित्त राजधानी काठमाडौं आउनुभयो । काठमाडौंमा शैक्षिक उन्नयनको निमित्त बढ्ता अनुकूल वातावरण थियो नै । जिल्लाका धेरैजसो विद्यार्थीको उच्च शिक्षाको गन्तव्य स्थल काठमाडौं बन्दै गइरहेको सन्दर्भमा चन्द्रजीको पनि यो छनौट परेको हुनु पर्दछ । उतिखेर मेधावी विद्यार्थीहरूमा विज्ञान पढ्ने आम लहर थियो । चन्द्रजी अमृत साइन्स क्याम्पसमा आईएससी पढ्न भर्ना हुनुभयो ।

अध्ययनको बोभले पनि हुन सक्दछ, समान्यतया विज्ञानका विद्यार्थी राजनीतिमा उस्तो चाख राख्दैनथे । चन्द्रजीले क्याम्पस जीवनमा नै राजनीतिलाई नजिकबाट र प्रत्यक्षरूपमा बुझ्न पाउनुभयो । उहाँ होस्टलमा बस्नुहुन्थ्यो । सत्ता समर्थक राष्ट्रवादी विद्यार्थी मण्डलको बिगबिगी थियो - ऊ बेलाको एक मात्र विद्यार्थी सँगठन । होस्टलमा उनीहरूले चाहेको बेलामा कोठा खाली गरिदिनु पर्ने या गोजीबाट पैसा धुत्ने जस्तो गुण्डाराज तिनको आम कर्म जस्तै थियो । बाहिरबाट समेत आएर उनीहरूबाट गरिने यस्ता सास्तीबाट विद्यार्थीहरू हैरान थिए । होस्टलमा आफूलाई प्रगतिशील भनेर चिनाउने वामपन्थी भुकाव भएका पृथ्वी सुब्बा गुरुड, लोकराज जोशी, डिक राई, दामोदर उपाध्याय, केशव गौतम, अचुत गौतम (आइएस्सी पहिलो वर्ष अस्कलमा अध्ययन गरेका र दोश्रो वर्ष त्रिचन्द्र क्याम्पस सरेका), राजेन्द्रमान श्रेष्ठ, दिनेश भुजु जस्ता साथीहरू थिए भने आफूलाई प्रजातन्त्रवादी भनेर चिनाउने कांग्रेसप्रति भुकाव भएका मिनेन्द्र रिजाल, विनोद सापकोटा, शत्रुघ्न बास्तोला जस्ता विद्यार्थी पनि थिए । ऊ बेला क्याम्पसमा भित्ते पत्रिका निकाल्ने चलन थियो । साभा प्रकृतिको थियो त्यो, त्यसमा प्रगतिशील पक्षको चिनारी दिने 'शोषणको विरोध' गर्ने लेख रचना पनि उक्त पत्रिकामा साथीहरूको पहलमा प्रकाशित हुने गर्दथ्यो । काठमाडौंमा पढ्ने बाहिरी जिल्लाका अधिकांश साथीहरू प्रगतिशील फाँटका नै थिए । अस्कलमा पनि चन्द्रजीको

प्रगतिशील फाँटका यी साथीहरूसँगको बढ्ता हिमचिम रत्यो । यी साथीहरूको निष्कपट सामाजिक उत्तरदायी जीवन चरित्रले गर्दा पनि उहाँको भावी राजनीतिक जीवनदिशा निर्दिष्ट गर्न सहज भयो ।

ऊ बेलाको एउटा घतलाग्दो कुरा के भने व्यवस्थाको विरोध र ‘मण्डले’ विरुद्धमा भने दुवै थरी, प्रजातन्त्रवादी र प्रगतिशील, एकगठ हुन्थे - अधोषित मोर्चावन्दी थियो ।

सन् १९७७ जुलाई ५ मा पाकिस्तानमा निर्वाचित राष्ट्रपति जुल्फिकर अलि भुट्टोलाई सैनिक कुद्वारा हटाइयो र अर्को वर्ष १९७९ को अप्रिल ४ मा उनलाई फाँसीमा लट्काइयो । यस अलोकतान्त्रिक र अमानवीय घटनाको विश्वव्यापी निन्दा विरोध हुनु स्वाभाविक थियो । यसै घटनाको प्रतिक्रियास्वरूप काठमाडौँमा विद्यार्थीहरूले विरोध जनाउँदै त्यहाँस्थित पाकिस्तानी दुतावासमा विरोध पत्र बुझाउन जाने क्रममा लाजिम्पाटमा विद्यार्थी जुलुसमाथि प्रहरीले लाठी चार्ज गर्‍यो । धेरै बेरसम्म लाठी चार्ज र दुःखा हानाहानको दोहरी चल्‍यो । कैयौँ विद्यार्थी सख्त घाइते पनि भए । नजिकैका अस्कलका विद्यार्थी यसमा नपर्ने कुरै भएन । अस्कलका सुरेन्द्र पन्त समेत नराम्रो घाइते भए । त्यसपछिका दिनहरूमा अस्कल आन्दोलनको ज्वालामुखी केन्द्रजस्तै भयो । अस्कलका विद्यार्थीहरूले अदम्य साहस देखाए ।

प्रहरी दमनको विरुद्धमा भोलिपल्टदेखि काठमाडौँका सबैजसो क्याम्पसमा असन्तुष्टी भड्कियो । हडताल र विरोध जुलुस निस्कन थाले । हुँदाहुँदै यो आगाको फिल्लो ‘जङ्गलमा’ सल्किन पुग्यो । यस आन्दोलनलाई दबाउन सरकारी यावत संयन्त्र प्रयोग गरिए । क्याम्पस-क्याम्पसमा मण्डलेलाई विपक्षी विद्यार्थीमाथि जाई लाग्न उकासियो । खुकुरी, भाला, रड, छुरी, चेन लिएर तिनीहरू नृशंसतापूर्वक जाई लाग्थे । अस्कलमै तिनले दुई पटक आक्रमण गरे । पछिल्लो पटकको आक्रमण स्वयम् दिपक बोहरा र उत्तम राईहरूले गरेका थिए । तर अन्ततः प्रतिरोध यति सशक्त भयो कि दुवै पटक यिनीहरू टाप कस्न बाध्य पारिए । ‘मण्डले’हरूको आक्रमणबाट आजित भएका विद्यार्थीहरू ‘सशस्त्र’ प्रतिरोधका उपायहरू पनि सोचन थाले । ऊ बेलाका साथीहरू अहिले पनि स्मरण गर्छन्, “एकपटक कुरै कुरामा ‘हतियार’ कहाँ पाइन्छ ?” कुरा चल्‍यो । भोलिपल्ट बिहानै राजेन्द्रमान श्रेष्ठले एकबोरा खुकुरी लिएर आइपुगे । अस्कलका विद्यार्थीहरू यस्ता जुभार पनि थिए । यी साथीहरूले प्रचारको निमित्त नयाँ जुत्ती निकाले । स्टेनसिल पेपरमा काटेर बोतलले पेलेर गरिने

लिथोग्राफमार्फतको प्रचार सामग्रीको नयाँ शैली अपनाइयो । यी यावत घटनाका चन्द्र साक्षी मात्रै थिएनन्, सकृय सहभागी पनि थिए ।

यो विद्यार्थी आन्दोलन २०३५ चैत्र २४ देखि २०३६ जेठ ९ सम्म भन्दै डेढ महिना चल्यो । यस दौरानमा यो एउटा सीमित घेराभित्र रहेको सामुदायिक आन्दोलन मात्रै रहेन । राजनीतिक उद्देश्य बोकेको विस्तृत राष्ट्रिय आन्दोलन बन्न पुग्यो । यतिबेला सम्ममा शहर शहर, गाउँ गाउँबाट मजदुर, किसान र शिक्षकहरू समेत आ-आफ्नो ढङ्गले आन्दोलनमा उत्रिसकेका थिए र परस्परमा हातेमालो गर्दै संयुक्त जुलुसहरूको लर्को निस्कन थालिसकेका थिए । आन्दोलनको चरित्र र दिशालाई बुझ्न आन्दोलनकारीहरूको यो अर्गानिक रसायन आफैँमा पर्याप्त थियो, अफ जुलुसको बिच बिचमा लाग्ने 'तानाशाही पञ्चायती व्यवस्था-मुर्दावाद !', 'राजबन्दी-रिहा गर !' जस्ता नाराले सबै कुरा छर्लङ्ग पार्थ्यो । सारमा यो संयुक्त राष्ट्रिय लोकतान्त्रिक आन्दोलन थियो ।

आन्दोलनको फैलिँदो यस्तो स्वरूप र राजनीतिक ध्येयबाट आत्तिएको सत्ता पक्षले आन्दोलनलाई बिच बाटोमै तुहाउन हरसम्भव उपाय रचन थाल्यो । जेठ ६ गते सरकारले विद्यार्थीहरूको एउटा पक्षलाई समातेर सम्झौता गर्‍यो जसमा राष्ट्रव्यापीरूपमा स्वतन्त्र विद्यार्थी युनियन खोल्न पाउने समेतका केही सामुदायिक हितका विषय समेटिएका थिए । बुझ्न गाह्रो थिएन, आन्दोलनको लगाम आन्दोलन भित्रको वामपन्थीहरूको पकडमा नजाओस् भनेर सम्झौताका पक्षधर मूल शक्तिहरू भयभीत थिए । जेठ ८ मा सम्झौता अपूर्ण भन्दै त्रिचन्द्र क्याम्पसको प्राङ्गणमा आयोजित आमसभामा विरोध सार्वजनिक भयो पनि । भोलिपल्ट अस्कलमा अर्को आमसभा आयोजित भयो । त्यहीँबाट सम्झौताका हस्ताक्षरी - दुई नेतालाई दण्डस्वरूप कालो मोसो दलेर शहर परिक्रमा पनि गराइयो । प्रदर्शनमा जनसागर उर्लियो । तत्कालीन शाही नेपाल वायु सेवा निगम (आरएनएसी)को मुख्यालय र गोरखापत्र संस्थानमा आगजनी भयो । जनताको रोष र असन्तुष्टी अनि अब आन्दोलनले लिन सक्ने फैलावट र स्वरूपलाई यसै आँकन सकिन्थ्यो । अन्ततः वैशाख १० गते राजा वीरेन्द्रले 'सुधारिएको पञ्चायती व्यवस्था वा बहुदलीय व्यवस्था' बिच जनमत संग्रह गरिने घोषणा गर्न पुगे । यो विद्यार्थी आन्दोलनले हासिल गरेको विराट राजनीतिक उपलब्धि थियो । त्यो अदम्य साहस, सौर्य, समर्पण र सुभ्रबुभ्र देखाउने विद्यार्थीहरूले नेपालको लोकतान्त्रिक विकासको इतिहासमा पुऱ्याएको असाधारण योगदान, यसर्थ स्तुत्य र अनुस्मरणीय भइरहने छ । यस कारण पनि म चन्द्र लक्सम्बासहित ती तमाम साथीहरूलाई श्रद्धा स्मरण गरिरहेको छु । वास्तवमा इतिहासको रचना परस्परविरोधी शक्तिको अन्तर संघर्षको प्रतिलोम हो ।

लगतै विद्यार्थी आन्दोलनको दिशामा दुई काम फत्ते गर्नु थियो । विद्यालय, क्याम्पसस्तरका लगायत राष्ट्रिय स्तरका स्वतन्त्र विद्यार्थी युनियनको गठन प्रकृत्यामा लाग्नु र जनमत संग्रहलाई लोकतन्त्रको पक्षमा ढाल्न योगदान पुऱ्याउनु । सत्ता इतर राजनीतिक दल अभै प्रतिबन्धित अवस्थामा रहेको कारणले गर्दा पनि राष्ट्रिय राजनीतिक दायित्व विद्यार्थीहरूमा आई पर्नु स्वाभाविक थियो । आन्दोलनको लगतैपछि राष्ट्रियस्तरका तथा क्याम्पस/विद्यालयस्तरका दुई थरीका स्ववियु निर्माणको प्रकृत्याले गति लिन थाल्यो ।

राष्ट्रियस्तरको स्ववियुको हकमा हामीहरू पुरानो अखिल नेपाल राष्ट्रिय स्वतन्त्र विद्यार्थी युनियन (अनेरास्ववियु) सकृय बनाउने अभियानमा जुट्यौं । गत आन्दोलनमा संयुक्त रहेको प्रगतिशील विद्यार्थीहरूको अर्को एउटा पक्ष र हाम्रो बिच अनेरास्ववियुलाई संयुक्तरूपमा सँगठित गर्नमा सहमति जुटाउन सकिएन । अनेरास्ववियुको पाँचौं सम्मेलन भई सकेको मान्ने या नमान्ने विषयमा हामी बिच सहमति हुन सकेन । हामी अनेरास्ववियु (एकताको पाँचौं)को ब्यानरमा सङ्गठित हुन थाल्यौं भने अर्को पक्ष अ.ने.रा.स्व.वि.यु.(छैठौं) को ब्यानरमा । चन्द्रजी 'एकताको पाँचौं'को पक्षमा सकृय भएर लाग्नुभयो । लगतै क्याम्पसस्तरीय स्ववियु निर्वाचन भयो । देशका अधिकांश क्याम्पसमा हाम्रो पक्षका विद्यार्थी साथीहरूले स्ववियु निर्वाचन जिते । हाम्रो तर्फबाट अस्कलको सभापतिमा चन्द्रजी निर्वाचनमा लड्नुभएको थियो र जित्नु पनि भयो । स्ववियु सभापतिको हैसियतमा उहाँले राम्रा काम पनि गर्नुभयो । उहाँको पहलमा क्याम्पसको पश्चिमतिरको भागको विस्तारको काम भएको थियो । बजेटको अभावमा यो काम धेरै अधिदेखि थाँती रहेको थियो । त्यतिमात्रै होइन उहाँले विद्यार्थीहरूको निमित्त सुलभ क्यान्टिनको व्यवस्था पनि गरिदिनुभएको थियो ।

चन्द्रजी साहसी, मिलनसार र तार्किक हुनुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँको यहीं गुणले गर्दा उहाँ विद्यार्थी, प्राध्यापक तथा क्याम्पस प्रशासनमाभ्र औधी रुचाइएका पात्र हुनुहुन्थ्यो । त्यो आन्दोलनको त्यो सहयोद्धाको कोभिडसँग जुझाजुझ्दै सन् २०२१ जनवरी २६ मा लन्डनमा असामयिक देहावसान भयो । घर, परिवार, इष्टमित्र र सहपाठी एवम् सहयोद्धाहरूमाथि यो असह्य वज्रपात थियो । उहाँको समेत पसिनाको जगमा आज मुलुकमा संघीय लोकतान्त्रिक गणतन्त्र स्थापना भएको छ । तैपनि चुनौतीबाट मुक्त भइसकेको अवस्था मुलुकमा अभै बनिसकेको छैन । नव स्थापित प्रणालीसँग सङ्गति नराख्ने संरचना, संस्था र संस्कृति अनि राजनीतिक प्रतिबद्धताको अभावले गर्दा पनि हाम्रा चुनौतीहरू फाङ्गिन पुगेका हुन् । यति हुँदाहुँदै

पनि चुनौतीमाथि विजय प्राप्त गरेर एक सबल, सामाजिक न्याय सहितको समुन्नत लोकतान्त्रिक राष्ट्र निर्माण गर्ने चन्द्रजी लगायतका योद्धाहरूको सपना फलिभूत भई छाड्नेछ । त्यो क्षमता हिजो आन्दोलनमा अभिव्यक्त भए जस्तै नेपाली राष्ट्रको गर्भमा प्रचुररूपमा सञ्चित छ ।

चन्द्रजी हार्दिक श्रद्धान्जलि !

टंक कार्की चीनका लागि पूर्व नेपाली राजदुत हुनुहुन्छ । अनेरास्ववियुका पूर्व अध्यक्ष कार्की हाल नेकपा एमालेका केन्द्रीय सदस्य पनि हुनुहुन्छ ।

Section C: Academic, Research and Teaching

प्राज्ञिक, अनुसन्धान र शिक्षण

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तिमीलाई सलाम ! तिमीलाई श्रद्धाञ्जलि

प्रा. रमेश भट्टराई

प्रिय चन्द्र

तिमी एउटा उज्यालो लिएर आयौ र उज्यालो लिएर गयौ । तिम्रो प्रियता र हार्दिकताको सामीप्य मैले तिम्रो बाल्यकालका पाँच वर्ष र तिम्रो मृत्यु अधिका तीन/चार वर्षसम्म मात्र पाएँ । बेलायत जाँदै थियौ तिमी र खुला विश्वविद्यालयमा अबको जीवन बिताउने अठोट थियो तिम्रो । तिम्रो कविता जस्तो सुन्दर जीवनको अन्त होला भनेर सोचन र कल्पना गर्न पनि पाइँनँ मैले त्यो बेला । तिमीले भनेका थियौ, “रमेश म बेलायतबाट फर्केपछि हाम्रो ब्याचका साथीहरू भेला हुने है” । हामीले वाचा नै गरेका थियौँ हामी भेला हुने भनेर । अब हुने भेलामा तिमी हुने छैनौ र हुने छैनन् चैतन्य र उदय पनि । त्यसैले त्यो भेलाका बारेमा सोचेको पनि छैन मैले । प्रिय साथीहरूको यो मृत्यु कति दुखद् र कहालीलाग्दो हुनेरहेछ । साँच्चै चन्द्र यो निष्पुत्री कोरोनाले हाम्रा प्रिय साथीहरूलाई नै लैजानु पर्ने ? बलियो आत्मविश्वासले बाँधिएको तिमीलाई नै लानुपर्ने ? अनि खुला विश्वविद्यालयका ती डिफेन्सहरूमा उपस्थित भएर आलोचनात्मक चेत र प्रश्न राख्ने तिमीलाई नै रोज्नु पर्ने ?

मेरो ल्यापटपको दुर्दशा देखेका थियौ तिमीले । कोरोनाको कारण बजारमा ल्यापटप थिएनन् । मैले ‘आउँदैछ अमेरिकाबाट छोरीले ल्याउँदैछिन् नयाँ’ भन्दा पनि “चिन्ता नगर म तिम्रो छोरीभन्दा चाँडो आउँछु बरू कुन मोडेल हो” भन्थौ तिमीले । मैले “ठीक छ अहिलेलाई चन्द्र” भनेको थिएँ तर बेलायत गएपछि पनि तिमीले इमेलमा यो कुरा लेख्न नछाडेपछि मैले मोडेल पठाएको थिएँ र तिमीले यो चाहिँ ठिक होला भनेर मलाई त्यसको विस्तृत विवरण पठाएका थियौ । मैले त तिमी

बिरामी परेको कुरासमेत नसुनी तिम्रो मृत्युको खबर फेसबुकमा पढें । ओहो ! विचार गर त त्यो क्षण कस्तो भयो होला ? तैपनि विश्वास लागेन र सोधें धेरै ठाउँमा । जब तिम्रो सालो चित्रगुप्त साँवाकै फेसबुकबाट यो पढें म त छाँगाबाट भरे भैं भएँ । चन्द्र तिमिले परिवारजनलाई छाड्यौ, आफन्तलाई छाड्यौ, तिम्रा मित्रहरू हामीलाई पनि त छाड्यौ । तिम्रा प्रिय विद्यार्थीलाई छाड्यौ र संसारलाई छाड्यौ तर तिम्रीलाई हामी सदा सम्भन्ने छौँ तिम्रो भाव, तिम्रा तर्क, तिम्रा प्रश्न हाम्रा कानमा गुन्जिरहेका छन् र गुन्जिरहने छन् ।

तिम्रा बारेमा लेखिरहँदा मेरो अगाडि बाल्यकालका ताजा स्मृति खेरिलरहेका छन् । कति बिर्सिएछ पनि नि । तिम्री कुन्जारीबाट कक्षा ६ मा आएर भानु स्कूलमा पढ्न थालेपछि हामी साथी भएका थियौँ । तिम्री बजार छात्रावासमा बस्ने र म नजिकैको बोभेमा । त्यसैले हामी अति निकट थियौँ । स्कूलको टुलो मैदान र फुटबल खेल । तिम्री खेलमा पनि रुचि राख्थ्यौ । भलिबल पनि त खेल्थ्यौ नि । छात्रावासको बसाइमा पनि तिमिले एकलोपन महसुस नगरी पढेका थियो । पढाइमा तिम्री कम अब्बल थिएनौ । सबै साथीको नाम त बिर्सैँ तर ईश्वरी, म, तिम्री, चैतन्य, राजेन्द्र, टङ्क, याम, प्रदिप, उदय विशेष साथी त थियौँ नै तर प्रतिस्पर्धी पनि थियौँ तर हामीमा सुषुप्त रूपमा पनि त्यो भाव प्रकट भएन । हाम्रो सिकाइको प्रबलततामा ईश्वरी गुरु, तुला सर, केशव सर, पीताम्बर गौतम सर, कर्ण सर, काजी सर, कैलाश सर लगायतका सरहरू कति खुसी हुनुहुन्थ्यो । खुला विश्वविद्यालयका धेरै बसाइमा हामीले कुरा पनि गरेका थियौँ नि ताप्लेजुडबाट पढेर पनि हाम्रो त्यो कक्षा समूह केही गर्नेमा परेको हो भनेर । वास्तवमा तिम्रीमा उज्यालोपन त्यही बेला जागृत थियो र तिम्री मिहेनती थियो । तिम्री र म लगभग सहरबाहिरका हुनुमा पनि एकत्व थियो । हुन त मेरो घर ताप्लेजुड बजार नजिकै थियो तापनि सहर र गाउँको भेद विद्यमान थियो त्यो बेला र हामीलाई बाँध्ने एउटा सूत्र ग्राम्यता पनि थियो । तिम्रीमा कुन्जारीको लिम्बूपन थियो र त्यसमा सहजता र सरसता मिसिएको थियो । सुरुमा त्यो भाषिक प्रभाव तिम्रीमा थियो र हामी साथीहरू तिम्रा शब्दलाई समातेर जिस्क्याउँथ्यौँ पनि । त्यसपछि तिम्री सचेत भएर त्यसलाई सुधार गरिहाल्थ्यौ ।

प्रिय चन्द्र

दिउँसोको खाजा खाने समयमा हामी पर चउरमा घुम्न गएको, कहिले मेरा घरको काँक्रोको स्वाद लिएको, कहिले उकालो चढेको कुरा अबैँ स्मृतिबाट हराएको छैन । काँक्रो चोरीको हाम्रो कथा पनि त ताजै छ नि । आफ्नै घरमा काँक्रो चोर्न गएको र तिम्री चाहिँ कोही आउँछ कि भनेर हेरेर बसेको नि । आखिर बोभेको

मकैबारीमा देखने कोही हुन्थ्यो र हामी काँक्रो चोर्न सफल हुन्थ्यौँ । चोरिएको काँक्रो हामी मात्र होइन अरू साथीसहित भएर खान्थ्यौँ नि । मागेर पाइने भए नि चोर्नुको मजा अर्कै हुँदोरहेछ नि बाल्यकालमा । बाल्यकालका यस्ता स्मृति अहिले सम्भ्रंदा कति रमाइलो हुने नि ? के गरूँ तिमीसँग यी सबै कुरा प्रत्यक्ष गर्न पाए कति रमाइलो हुन्थ्यो तर तिमीलाई असमयमै निष्ठुरी मृत्युले लग्यो र हामी बाँचेकालाई सदैव पीडा छोडेर गयो । त्यसबेला ताप्लेजुङमा ब्रिटिस लाहुरेको सन्तान हुनुको सान र मान भिन्न थियो । नहोस् पनि कसरी ? मानिसका बाँच्ने आधार सीमित थिए र पुँजी विकासको कुनै उपाय पनि त थिएन । यस्तो समयमा बुबा सिङ्गापुरको लाहुरे भएर पनि तिमीमा न त्यो धाक थियो न घमण्ड नै । बाबुआमाको कुरा तिमी सीमित मात्र गथ्यौँ नि । कक्षामा तिमी सधैं अधिल्लो बेन्चमा बस्थ्यौ र प्रायः हाम्रो बसाइ एकै लहरमा हुन्थ्यो । पढाइमा सहकार्य थियो नि हाम्रो । तिमी कविता लेख्थ्यौ म पनि लेख्थेँ । शुक्रबार तिमी हामी प्रायः कविता सुनाउँथ्यौँ । ईश्वरी गुरुले हामीलाई 'भानु' भित्ते पत्रिकाको सम्पादक मण्डलमा राखिदिनुभएको थियो र मलाई प्रधान सम्पादकमा । त्यही भएर शनिबार हामी छात्रावासमा त्यसकै तयारीमा ब्यस्त हुन्थ्यौँ । पढाइबाहेक पनि अरू क्रियाकलापमा भाग लिने रूचि तिमीमा थियो । निबन्ध लेखनमा पनि हाम्रो मित्रवत् प्रतिस्पर्धा चल्थ्यो नै । ताप्लेजुङमा हुने यस्ता प्रतिस्पर्धा हाम्रा लागि अवसर नै हुन्थे । वास्तवमा तिमी अति रसिला थियौ र मिजासिला पनि । तिमीमा केही हाँस्यचेत (सेन्स अफ ह्युमर) पनि थियो र हाँसाउँथ्यौ पनि । हामी सबै मजा लिई लिई हास्थ्यौँ । यसरी भानु स्कुलका लगभग पाँच वर्ष हाम्रा सुखद् वर्षहरू थिए ।

हाम्रो लगनशीलताकै कारण हामीले जिल्लामा हाजिरीजवाफमा प्रायः जित्ने गथ्यौँ । प्रत्येक पटक हाम्रो विद्यालय प्रथम हुन्थ्यो । २०३२ सालमा तिमी हामी ९ कक्षामा थियौँ । अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय नारी वर्षको उपलक्ष्यमा पूर्वाञ्चलस्तरीय विद्यालयको हाजिरीजवाफ प्रतियोगिता आयोजना भएको थियो । भीम, ईश्वरी, यामकुमार, तिमी र म रहेको भानु स्कुलको समूह जिल्लामा प्रथम भयो र आदरणीय तुलाराम सरसहित हामी १६ जिल्लासँग प्रतिस्पर्धा गर्न धरान गयौँ । साउन भदौको समय, बखेँ भरी । हामी लेकको बाटो गोर्जा, गुफा, चौकी, हिले, धनकुटा हुँदै तीन दिनमा धरान पुगेका थियौँ । बाटोमा सर्दु खोलाले हामीलाई बगाएको तर केही तल पुगेपछि मलाई खोलाले छेउ लगाएको र छाता खोलाले बगाउँदा तिमीले कति सहानुभूति प्रकट गरेका थियौ । साँच्चै पहाडको वेगवान ठाडो खोलामा पस्ने हिम्मत पनि हामीले गरेकै हौँ नि । हामी बाँच्नु थियो, बाँच्नै तर लगभग

छ दशकको उमेरमा नेपालमै केही गर्छु भनेर अठोटका साथ काठमाडौँ उपत्यका आएको र बेलायत गएर तुरुन्त फर्कने सङ्कल्प गरेका तिमिलालाई निष्पूरी कोरोनाले लग्यो ।

तिमी त गयौ चन्द्र । आखिर उही पुराना स्मृति अब मेरा साथी भएर रहने भए । अहिले सम्भन्धु धरानको त्यो यात्रा हाम्रो जीवनको पहिलो लामो यात्रा भए पनि सुखद् थियो । बाटोमा ईश्वरी केही क्षण बिरामी भएका थिए लेकको फूलको प्रभावले । हामीले धैर्य गर्थौँ, उनी निको भए । तुलासरको कुशल रेखदेख र मैत्रीपूर्ण व्यवहार हाम्रा लागि सहयोगी थियो भन्ने कुरा हामीले पछिल्लो भेटमा पनि गरेका थियौँ । त्यस बेलाका उही पुराना होटेल र लह्रै सुत्नु पर्ने बाध्यता । तिमिले हिलेमा राति त तर्साउँछ भनेर जिस्केको मैले बिर्सेको छैन । धरान पुगेर हामीले विशेष तयारी गर्न नपाई हाजिरीजवाफ सुरु भयो । तैपनि हामी प्रतिस्पर्धामा खरो उत्रिएका थियौँ । अन्तिम राउन्डसम्म पुगेर पनि हामी तेस्रो मात्र हुनसक्यौँ र कास्यपदक पायौँ । तैपनि ताप्लेजुडबाट आएर सुनसरी, मोरङ र भापालगायत सुगम जिल्लासँग खरो प्रतिस्पर्धा गर्न सकेको भनेर त्यसबेलाका क्षेत्रीय शिक्षा निर्देशकले हाम्रो प्रशंसा गर्दा हामीले कम्ती गर्व गरेका थियौँ । तुला सर पनि हाम्रो सहभागिता र प्रतिस्पर्धाबाट खुसी हुनुभएको थियो नि । यही बेला त हो हाम्रो दैनिक भ्रमण भत्ताबाट बचेको पैसाले हामी सबैलाई तुला सरले लुगा किन्न लगाउनु भएको र हामीले त्यही लुगा (पेन्ट र सर्ट) लगाएर सामूहिक फोटो खिचेको । तिमिले पछि त्यो फोटो फेसबुकमा सेयर गरेपछि हाम्रा लागि सबै कुरा स्मृति बनेर आएका थिए र हिजो मात्र पनि फेसबुकले सेयर गर्छस् भनेर सोधेपछि मैले सबैको नाम लेखेर र तिमिलालाई स्व. लेखेर सेयर पनि गरें । तिमिलालाई यसरी यति चाँडै स्व. लेख्नुपर्ला भन्ने लागेको थिएन नि प्रिय मित्र । यो फोटो नै त्यस्तो अन्तिम स्मृति भयो जुन तिम्रो हाम्रो बाल्यकालसँग जोडिएको छ ।

कक्षा ९ सकेर अन्तिम वर्ष वा कक्षा १० मा तिमि छात्रावासमा बस्न पाएनौ । स्कुलसँग जोडिएको एउटा सानो घटनाका कारण तिमि हामी यातना भोग्न बाध्य भयौँ । एकजना साथीले कुटाइ खाएको घटनामा हामी जोडियौँ । साँच्चै भनाँ भने त्यस घटनाको कारण अहिलेसम्म थाहा छैन नि मलाई । तैपनि मलाई थाहा छ तत्कालीन राजनीतिक र शैक्षिक व्यवस्थाको दोषका कारण हामीमाथि यातना दिइएको थियो । अहिले तिमि र मैले शिक्षा बुझेपछि थाहा पायौँ हामी निर्दोष हुँदाहुँदै विद्यालयले दमन गरेको थियो र तिमि हामीले यातना भोग्नुपरेको थियो । त्यसबेला हामीमाथि भएको यातनामा सान्त्वना ईश्वरी गुरुले मात्र दिनुभएको थियो ।

हामीलाई माया गर्ने तुला सर सायद काठमाडौँ पढ्न जानुभएको थियो । काजी सर पनि कैलाश सरको अगाडि सायद मौन रहनुभयो । राति हामीलाई प्रहरीले लैजाला भनेर छात्रावासमा लुकाउने तिमी नै थियौ । हामीलाई खाना खुवाउने पनि तिमी नै थियौ । बिहान विद्यालयमा हामी धेरै जनामाथि लाठी बर्साएको थियो । यसले हामीलाई एउटा प्रतिशोध जस्तो अवस्थामा पनि पुऱ्यायो किनभने हामीले कुनै गल्ती नगरी यातना पाएका थियौँ । यही बेला हामीमा कम्युनिस्ट बीज पसिसकेको थियो र त्यो बीज बसाउनमा हाम्रा अग्रज दाइहरूको भूमिका पनि थियो । त्यही कारण क्याम्पस पढ्दा हामी क्रान्तिकारी बन्यौँ र कम्युनिस्ट भयौँ । जे होस् यो घटना हाम्रो जीवनको अविष्मरणीय थियो ।

हाम्रो स्कुले जीवनको अन्तिम वर्ष मिहिनेतको वर्ष रह्यो । ‘फलामे ढोका’ भनेर एसएलसी दिने हामीलाई तर्साइन्थ्यो । सामुदायिक विद्यालय भए पनि हाम्रो स्कुलको पढाइ तुलनात्मक रूपमा राम्रो थियो तापनि इज्जत राख्ने कुरा सबैको मुखमा हुन्थ्यो । सरहरू, परिवार र सबै आफन्तजनको कुरा यस्तै हुन्थ्यो । हामी भन्नु डराउँथ्यौँ । तिमी बुझ्छौ नि वास्तवमा त्यस समयको शिक्षा प्रणालीले हामीलाई कति घोकन्ते बनाएको थियो । तिमी, ईश्वरी, म र चैतन्य अञ्जेजी निबन्ध, गणितका सूत्र र विज्ञानका प्रयोग समेत घोकेर बसेको स्मृति यो बेला भल्भली आउँछ र तिमीलाई सम्बोधन गरिरहेको यस क्षणमा मनमा भावुकता पनि उम्लेर आउँछ । तिमी साँच्चै मिहिनेती थियौ प्रिय मित्र । यो कुरा तिमी हामी सँगै हुँदा पनि भनेको छु र तिमीले हामी तीन - तिमी, ईश्वरी र म नै मिहिनेती थियौँ भनेर विषयलाई टुङ्ग याएका थियौ । दश कक्षाभरि नै हामीले निरन्तर अध्ययन गर्नु, परिक्षा दिइरह्यौँ र ज्ञान तथा अनुभव पनि साटिरह्यौँ । एसएलसी पनि हाम्रा लागि नयाँ भएर आयो नि । हाम्रो भानु स्कुलमा राजाको सवारी हुने भयो । पञ्चायतकालिन समयमा सत्ताले जे चाह्यो त्यही हुने हुँदा हामी परीक्षार्थीका रूपमा स्कुलबाट पर पुग्यौ । बाहिरबाट सहयोग गर्ने र पाइने सपना अब ध्वस्त भयो । हामी भन्नु चिन्तित भयौँ । अब हाम्रो परीक्षा समीक्षालयमा हुने भयो । त्यसबेला अलिअलि चिट चोर्न र सहयोग लिन पाइने हाम्रो सम्भावनामा पनि ढोका लाग्यो । मैले यसो भनिरहँदा त्यस प्रणालीलाई पनि खेतल्दैछु मित्र जुन तिमी हामीले भोगेको साभ्हा समस्या थियो । हामी एउटा यस्तो समयका उपज थियौँ जसलाई तिम्रो हाम्रो स्कुले जीवनदेखिको घोकन्ते यात्रा, फलामे ढोका र खुला विश्वविद्यालयको डिजिटल वा अनलाइन र स्वयम् निर्देशित सिकाइसम्मको यात्राले जोडेको थियो ।

एसएलसी दिएपछि हाम्रो स्कुले जीवन सकियो । त्यसपछि हाम्रो भेटघाट र कुराकानी पनि भएन । रिजल्ट भयो, राम्रो अङ्क ल्याउनेमा पनि म, ईश्वरी, तिमी र चैतन्य नै भएछौं । दुःखको कुरा हामीले यो खुसी पनि साट्न पाएनौं । हामी जन्मेको भूगोल, हाम्रो अवस्था हाम्रा लागि बाधक हुँदा भेट भएन । त्यसपछि तिमी काठमाडौं लाग्यौ, म विराटनगर । म त्यतै हुँदा सुनें तिमी अस्कल भर्ना भयौ । पढ्न थाल्यौ र अखिलमा लाग्यौ । म पनि अखिलमा सक्रिय भएँ । पछि सुनें तिमी त ब्रिटिस आर्मी भयौ, अनि निवृत्त पनि भइसक्यौ । निरन्तर सिकाइमा विद्यावारिधि गर्नु आदि आदि । तैपनि हाम्रो भेट भएन । धेरै वर्षपछि फेसबुकमा भेट भएको याद छ । सायद फोटो पनि त्यही बेला सेयर गर्नु वा पठायौ क्यारे । हाम्रो केही कुरा पनि भयो तर सामाजिक सञ्जालमा तिमी कम मात्र भेटिन्थ्यौ नि ।

“हेलो, रमेश हो” एकदिन अचानक फोन आयो । म विश्वविद्यालयबाट चाबिहिल घरतिर फर्कँदै थिएँ । ‘हो त यहाँ को हुनुभयो’ मैले विनम्रतापूर्वक सोधें । ‘म चन्द्र क्या’ मलाई यो स्वर कताकता सुने जस्तो त लाग्यो तर ठम्याउन सक्ने कुरा भएन । अनि फेरि सोधें ‘को चन्द्र हुनुहोला ?’ तिमीले ‘म चन्द्र लक्सम्बा क्या’ भन्नासाथ मैले तिमीलाई चिनिने मात्र तिम्रो बाल्यकालका सबै सम्झना मेरो टाउकोमा एकछिन नाचे । तिमी हामीले एकछिन भलाकुसारी गरेपछि भोलिपल्ट भेट्ने कुरा तय भयो । नभन्दै हामी बानेश्वरको एउटा रेस्टुरामा भेट्यौ भोलिपल्ट नै । हामीले केही छिनमा हाम्रा कुरा सक्ने अवस्था थिएन । किनभने यो भेट हाम्रो लगभग चार दशकपछिको भेट थियो । त्यो बेला तिमीमा नेपाल फर्केर केही गरौं भन्ने हुटहुटी थियो । त्यसपछि तिम्रो रोजाइको खुला विश्वविद्यालयको कुरा भयो । नभन्दै तिम्रो खुला विश्वविद्यालयको इच्छा पूरा हुने भयो । दिन रामचन्द्र पौडेल र उपकुलपति लेखनाथ शर्मा तिमीलाई शिक्षकका रूपमा राख्न तयार भए । अब त तिमी र म अनुसन्धान कमिटीमा पनि सँगै भयौं । डिफेन्सहरूमा तिमी हरेक विषयलाई गम्भीर रूपमा राख्न थाल्यौ । आफ्नो कुरा राख्ने क्रममा तिम्रो जोड अनुसन्धानलाई कसरी राम्रो बनाउने भन्ने नै हुन्थ्यो । तिमी बेलायत जाँदा कुनै न कुनै राम्रा पुस्तक लिएर आउँथ्यौ र कुन पुस्तक ल्याउँ भनेर सोध्थ्यौ पनि । तिमीले ल्याएको ‘अ सेज ह्यान्डबुक अफ क्वालिटेटिभ रिसर्च’ र ‘क्रिटिकल पेडागोजीः अ रिडर’ को फोटोकपी मेरो पुस्तकालयमा सुरक्षित छन् । तिमीले बेलायत गएर पनि कति डिफेन्समा अनलाइनबाट सहभागी भएर अनुसन्धानको काममा सहयोग गर्थौ । तिमी चाहन्थ्यौ खुला विश्वविद्यालयमा स्थायी वा करार बनौं । तिमी बन्ने पनि थियौ तर समकक्षता नामको ऋणभटले तिमीलाई कति दुःख दियो नि । तिमीले कमाएको

सुप्रसिद्ध डिग्रीलाई नेपालमा समकक्षता दिन पनि समय लाग्यो नि । यसका लागि हामी कति त्रिभुवन विश्वविद्यालय धायौँ । यस्तो बेथितिले तिमी निराश पनि भएका थियौ तर अन्त्यमा समाधान भएपछि तिमी अब पूरा फर्कने तयारीका साथ बेलायत गएका थियौ तर तिम्रो त्यो महान् इच्छालाई निष्पूरी कालले निलिदियो । बेलायतको माटोमा नै मृत्युवरण गर्न तिमी बाध्य भयौ ।

तिमी राजनीतिमा सुधार होस् भन्ने चाहन्थ्यौ र त्यही कारण नेतालाई भनेर केही गरौँ भन्ने हुटहुटी तिमीमा थियो । प्रचण्ड र के. पी. सँग भेटेर तिमी गहन कुरा राख्न चाहन्थ्यौ । समयले तिमीलाई यो अवसर दिएन बरू अम्बिका साँवा दाइको संस्मरण निकालेर तिमीले तिम्रो लगनशीलताको परिचय दियौ । तिम्रा बारेको यो संस्मरण लेखिरहँदा म सम्भन्धु फावाखोलामा जन्मेर, दुःख गरेर र मिहिनेतको बलमा तिमीले जे गरेका छौ त्यो अविष्मरणीय छ । तिमी तिम्रा विद्यार्थीको प्रिय थियौ तिमी, हामी साथीका प्रिय थियौ । तिम्रो र मेरो लगभग ५० वर्षे चिनारी अन्त्यमा दुखान्त बनेर उभियो र तिम्रो सपनालाई तिम्रो असामयिक मृत्युले अवरुद्ध गर्‍यो । यो बेला म के पो भन्न सक्छु प्रिय मित्र तिमीलाई म सलाम भन्न चाहन्छु र तिमीलाई हार्दिक श्रद्धासुमन भन्न चाहन्छु । तिमी सानो भिल्कोबाट आगो बालेर समाज उज्यालो पार्ने चेतना लिएर यो वयस्क उमेरमा देशको माया र हुटहुटीले नेपाल आएका थियौ तर तिम्रा इच्छा अधूरा रहे । तैपनि हामी तिम्रो यो प्रतिवद्धतालाई सदा सम्भ्ररहने छौँ । मित्र यो भावुक क्षणमा अरू म के भनौँ ? तिम्रो मृत्युमा सँगै हुन नसके पनि तिम्रो स्मृति मेरो हृदयमा सदैव रहने छ । जीवन नश्वर छ तर तिमीले छिटो मृत्यु रोज्नुपन्यो । अन्तमा तिम्रो प्रतिवद्धता र तिम्रो लगनशील यात्रालाई सलाम । तिमीलाई लाख लाख सलाम र विनम्र श्रद्धाञ्जलि ।

डा. रमेश भट्टराई त्रिभुवन विश्वविद्यालय, काठमाडौँमा प्राध्यापक हुनुहुन्छ ।

स्नेही मित्र स्व. डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बालाई सम्झिँदा

डा. विष्णु राज उप्रेती

मैले सम्झँदा सन् २००० को फ्रेब्रुअरी २१ गते बेलुका ९ बजेतिर म मेरो नेदरल्याण्डको वागेनहेगन सहरको वोनस्टेग भनिने मूलत विद्यार्थीहरू बस्ने ३२ तले भवनको २३ औँ तल्लामा भेरोनिका भन्ने डच टिभी च्यानलको मनोरञ्जनात्मक कार्यक्रम हेरिरहेको थिएँ । मेरो फोनमा लगातार घण्टी बज्यो । निकै पछि फोन उठाउँदा एउटा अपरिचित तर दृढ आत्मविश्वास भएको आवाज आयो, “विष्णुजी नमस्ते, म चन्द्र लक्सम्बा, सरे विश्वविद्यालयमा छु । तपाईं यहाँ रिसर्च फेलोको पदमा आउन लाग्नुभएको नोटिस बोर्डमा देखी सम्बन्धित विभागमा सोध्दा हो भन्ने निश्चित भयो । कहिले आउनु हुन्छ, कुन एअरपोर्टबाट आउनु हुन्छ, मलाई भन्नुहोला । म लिन आउँछु, बस्ने फ्ल्याट व्यवस्था नभएसम्म मसँगै बसौंला” । लगातार उताबाट उहाँले आफू ब्रिटिश गोर्खामा काम गरी युनिभर्सिटी अफ लन्डनबाट दर्शनशास्त्र र सार्वजनिक नीतिमा स्नातकोत्तर गरी सरे विश्वविद्यालयबाट तालिम लिएको र त्यही निरन्तर सिकाइ (कन्टिनियस लर्निङ्ग) मा विद्यावारिधिको तैयारी गरिरहेको भनेर सात मिनेट जति एकतर्फी लामो कुरा गरिरहनुभयो ।

चन्द्रजीले मभन्दा केही अगाडि एसएलसी पास गरी अस्कल क्याम्पसमा विद्यार्थी राजनीतिमा पनि सकृय हुनुभएको कुरा पनि भन्नुभयो । मलाई पहिले यो बारेमा पनि थाहा थिएन । मैले उहाँको नाम पनि सुनेको थिइनँ । पहिलोचोटि फोनमा मात्र कुरा भएको, भौतिकरूपमा भेटसम्म नभएको, उहाँले मेरो बारेमा केही अरू कुरा पनि नसोधी एकैचोटी एकतर्फी सात मिनेट लामो कुरा गरेर “म विमानस्थलमा लिन आउँछु, मेरो घरमा बसे हुन्छ” भन्ने कस्तो मानिस रहेछ ? किन यसो भनेको होला ? के यो सब साँच्चै भनेको होला कि ? भन्ने मनमा लाग्यो । अनि उहाँको

कुरा सुनेपछि मैले उहाँलाई सहयोगको प्रस्ताव गर्नुभएकोमा धन्यवाद दिँदै “मलाई हिश्रो विमानस्थलमा विश्वविद्यालयले गाडी पठाउने भनेको छ र दुई हप्ताका लागि विश्वविद्यालयको पाहुना घरको कोठा पनि उपलब्ध गराएको छ, त्यसैले तपाईं लिन आउनु पर्दैन। तर दुई हप्तासम्ममा आफूले अर्को बस्ने व्यवस्था गर्न सकिनँ भने चाहिँ अर्को व्यवस्था नभएसम्म तपाईंको घरमा बसौंला। म मार्च २ मा आउँछु अनि भेटौंला” भनँ।

उहाँले मेरो विभागमा गई सेक्रेटरी मार्लिनसँग “विश्वविद्यालयको सूचनामा विष्णु उप्रेती यहाँ आउन लागेको थाहा पाएँ, हामी एकै देशका, म उहाँलाई सहयोग गर्छु। उहाँको सम्पर्क नम्बर दिनु” भनी फोन र ठेगाना लिई फोन गर्नुभएको रहेछ। पहिलो फोन भएको र म गिल्फोर्ड जाने दिनको बिचमा उहाँले पाँचपटक सम्पर्क गर्नुभयो र लगभग त्यही कुरा दोहोर्याइ रहनुभयो। यो सम्पर्कबाट मलाई थप हौसला बढ्यो र ढुक्क पनि बनायो।

म गिल्फोर्ड पुगेको भोलिपल्ट उहाँ कल्पना भाउजूसहित म कहाँ आउनुभयो (११ बजेतिर उहाँहरू आउनुभएको जस्तो लाग्छ)। उहाँहरू सकेसम्म दुवैजना सँगै हिँड्नु हुँदोरहेछ। कल्पना भाउजू त्यतिबेलासम्म आफैँ गाडी चलाउनु हुन्थ्यो। चन्द्रजी र भाउजूसँग पहिलो भेट र लामो कुराकानी भयो। नजिकैको रेष्टुरेण्टमा गई सँगै लन्च खाई मेरो लागि दुई हप्ता पुग्ने सामान किन्न नजिकैको सुपरमार्केट गयौँ र सामान ल्याई गेष्टहाउसमा राखेर मलाई उहाँहरूले आफ्नो घरमा लानुभयो। छोराहरू बसन्त र बहार सानै थिए। बेलुका त्यहीँ खाना खायौँ। अबेरसम्म कुराकानी गरी मलाई गिल्फोर्ड छोडेर उहाँहरू दुवैजना फर्कनुभयो। यो पहिलो दिनको मेरो भेट हाम्रो सदाका लागि गहिरो मित्रताको दरिलो आधार बन्यो।

चन्द्रजीले पीएचडीको तैयारी गर्दै गरेको र त्यसमा उहाँलाई बौद्धिक सहयोग चाहिएको रहेछ। हाम्रो भेटको पहिलो २०-२२ हप्ता जति चन्द्रजीको विद्यावारिधी अनुसन्धानको प्रस्ताव तैयारी गर्ने काममा हामी लामा-लामा बहस गर्थ्यौँ। धेरैजसो शुक्रबार दिउँसो चन्द्रजी र कल्पना भाउजू मलाई लिन आउनुहुन्थ्यो। अनि हामी शुक्रबार राति अबेरसम्म बियर र मासु खाँदै उहाँको प्रस्तावबारे छलफल गर्थ्यौँ। सन्दर्भ सामग्री जुटाउँथ्यौँ, लेख्ने काम हुन्थ्यो। अबेर १ बजेतिर हामी सुतेर शनिबार बिहान पनि हामी त्यस्तै काम गर्थ्यौँ।

म नेदरल्याण्डको चर्चित वागेनहेगेन विश्वविद्यालयबाट राम्रो मूल्याङ्कनसहित भर्खर विद्यावारिधि सकेकाले ममा पनि निकै जोश र पीएचडीका बारेमा जानकारी पनि थियो र चन्द्रजीले मलाई यति धेरै भौतिक सहयोग गरेकोले

पनि उहाँलाई मैले सकेसम्मको सहयोग गर्नुपर्छ भन्ने मलाई भित्रैदेखि लागेको थियो र मैले यो गरें पनि । मेरो यो सहयोगलाई चन्द्रजी र भाउजूले राम्ररी महसुस पनि गर्नुभएको थियो ।

म त लक्सम्बा परिवारको सदस्य नै भइसकेको थिएँ । कुनै सामूहिक भेटघाट र कार्यक्रममा पनि चन्द्रजी र भाउजू मलाई जाउँ भन्नुहुन्थ्यो । सुरुको बेला मलाई जतिसक्दो धेरै जानकारी लिनु पर्ने पनि थियो । त्यसैले उहाँहरूले प्रस्ताव गरेको धेरै स्थान र कार्यक्रममा म सहभागी भएँ ।

त्यतिबेला चन्द्रजीको स्वभाव कस्तो थियो भने, म यसो गर्छु भनेपछि गरिहाल्ने, बरू जबरजस्ती नै गर्ने । त्यो विषयको पर्याप्त दखखल नभए पनि अरूले केही भन्लाकी भनेर पछि हट्ने हैन कि बौद्धिक बहसमा भिडिहाल्ने । पढ्ने लेख्ने काममा ज्यादै तत्पर, सोध्न, सिक्न नहिचकिचाउने, कुरा गर्दा आफ्नो पृष्ठभूमि र गरेका अध्ययनहरूको सन्दर्भ जोड्ने हुँदा मानिसले उहाँलाई हतपत्त बौद्धिकरूपमा हेप्न पनि नसक्ने । म चाँहिँ बेला बेलामा विषयको गहिरो ज्ञान हासिल नगरी यस्तो महसुर शैली अपनाउँदा कहाँ कठिन अवस्था पर्नसक्छ भनी सजग गराउँथे । उहाँ तत्काल महसुस पनि गर्नुहुन्थ्यो र, “म त लाहुरे, आइहाल्छ यो शैली” भन्नुहुन्थ्यो ।

सुरुमा मलाई उहाँको पीएचडीको तैयारी र उहाँको जबरजस्ती शैली देख्दा अलि चिन्ता पनि लागेको थियो र म उदाहरणसहित उहाँलाई यो बारेमा थप सन्दर्भ सामग्री अध्ययन गर्न, ती सामग्रीसँग जोडेर प्रस्तुत गर्न र सुझावहरू सकारात्मकरूपमा लिन बारम्बार सम्झाउँथे । कल्पना भाउजू पनि मेरो कुरालाई जोड दिँदै थप्नुहुन्थ्यो । चन्द्रजीको स्वभाव कस्तो थियो भने कल्पना भाउजूले भने पछि खुरूक्क मानिहाल्ने । पछि उहाँले विषयगत दक्षतामा यति राम्रो विकास गर्नु भयो त्यो अत्यन्त प्रशंसनीय रह्यो । मैले डेढ वर्ष सरे विश्वविद्यालयमा काम गरें । ८० प्रतिशत जति अनुसन्धान र २० प्रतिशत जति पढाउने ब्यवहारिक व्यवस्था गरिएको थियो । कहिलेकाहीँ चन्द्रजी मेरो कक्षामा पनि आउनुहुन्थ्यो र चाखलाग्दा उदाहरणसहित कक्षामा बहसमा उत्रिई विद्यार्थीहरूलाई लड्न पार्नुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँले मलाई आफ्नो विद्यावारिधिको प्राध्यापक पिटर जाभिर्ससँग लगेर चिनाएपछि उहाँसँग पनि मेरो राम्रो सम्बन्ध स्थापित भएको थियो ।

डेढ वर्षपछि म सरे विश्वविद्यालयबाट लन्डन विश्वविद्यालयको स्ट्रान्डमा रहेको किङ्ग्स कलेजको डिफेन्स स्टडिज विभागमा रिसर्च फेलोमा काम गर्ने गरी लन्डन सरें । त्यतिबेला पनि चन्द्रजीले नै मलाई स्थानान्तरणमा सहयोग गर्नु भयो । अब मेरो लक्सम्बा परिवार सँगको भेटघाट पहिलाभन्दा अलि पातलियो । तर पनि

कहिले म उहाँ कहाँ जान्थेँ, कहिले चन्द्रजी र भाउजू लन्डन आउनुहुन्थ्यो । भेटघाटमा नेपाल र त्यहाँको समसामयिक राजनीतिका बारेमा र चन्द्रजीको विद्यावारिधिको बारेमा छलफल हुन्थ्यो । उहाँले फोनबाट सम्पर्क गरिरहनु हुन्थ्यो ।

जब म सन् २००३ को मध्यतिर बेलायतबाट नेपाल फर्केँ त्यसपछि भने हाम्रो सम्पर्क निकै पातलियो । कहिलेकाहीँ ईमेल आदानप्रदान हुन्थ्यो । एउटा ठुलो विश्वव्यापी अनुसन्धान कार्यक्रमको दक्षिण एसिया प्रमुख भएपछि मैले आठ वर्ष जति बारम्बार युरोप भ्रमण गर्नु पर्‍यो । त्यो बेला म बेलायत पनि वर्षको तीन/चारपटक जति जान्थेँ । मिलेसम्म गएको बेला उहाँहरूलाई भेट्थेँ तर दुवैजनाको व्यस्तताका कारण धेरै समय बिताउन नसकिने र कहिले त फोनमा मात्रै कुरा गर्नु पर्ने अवस्था हुन्थ्यो ।

उहाँले बेलायतमा साथीहरूसँग मिली सेन्टर फर नेपाल स्टडिज (सीएनएस) युके खोल्नुभयो र मलाई सल्लाहकार बस्नु पर्‍यो भनेर अनुरोध गर्नुभयो र मैले त्यो स्विकारें । उहाँ पनि नेपाल आउँदा मसँग भेट्नुहुन्थ्यो । पछि हामीले छलफल गरी सीएनएस युके र एन.सि.सि.आर. (Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research) बिच सम्झौता नै गरी चन्द्रजीले पूर्वी जिल्लामा किपट जग्गासम्बन्धी अध्ययनको नेतृत्व गर्ने र त्यसका लागि आवश्यक स्रोत र बौद्धिक सहयोग एन.सि.सि.आर.ले गर्ने गरी तय गर्‍यो ।

मेरो उहाँलाई पहिलेदेखिकै एउटा निरन्तर अनुरोध थियो, पढाइ सकेपछि नेपाल नै फर्काँ । उहाँ भन्नुहुन्थ्यो “यो घरको व्यवस्था र दुई छोराको पूर्ण व्यवस्था पछि म र कल्पना नेपाल नै फर्कने हो” । कल्पना भाउजूले पनि मेरो नेपाल जानु पर्ने प्रस्तावको समर्थन गर्नुभएको थियो । उहाँ पनि “हामी त पछि नेपाल नै जाने हो” भन्नुहुन्थ्यो । चन्द्रजीले लगातार आफ्नो बौद्धिक योगदानलाई सीएनएस युके, सरे र लन्डन विश्वविद्यालय लगायत बेलायतका विभिन्न विश्वविद्यालय र शिक्षण संस्थाहरू मार्फत दिइरहनुभएको थियो ।

बसन्त र बहारले आ-आफ्नो राम्रो व्यवस्था गरेपछि चन्द्रजी र भाउजू नेपाल फर्कने निर्णय गर्नु भएछ । नेपाल आएको बेला आफूले प्रदेश १ को योजना आयोगमा काम गर्ने सम्भावना भएको भन्नुहुन्थ्यो । नेपालमा राम्रो सम्पर्क बनाई खुला विश्वविद्यालय पढाउन थालेको र मेरो घर नजिकै घर पनि किन्नुभएको रहेछ । एक भेटमा त्यो थाहा भयो । उहाँ त्यतिबेला बेलायत जाने तैयारीमा हुनु हुँदोरहेछ । हाम्रो बिचमा चन्द्रजी उताबाट फर्केपछि भेटेर विस्तृत कुरा गर्ने योजना तय भयो ।

तर दुर्भाग्य उहाँ उता गएपछि कोभिड महामारीका कारण नेपाल फर्कन पाउनु भएन र त्यतै बस्नु पर्ने अवस्था आएछ ।

केही समयपछि त फेसबुकमार्फत उहाँलाई कोभिड महामारीले सङ्क्रमण गरी ५९ वर्षको उमेरमै हामी सबैलाई छोडेर जानुभयो भन्ने जानकारी भयो । उहाँ बेलायतबाट फर्केपछि सँगै बसेर बिस्तृत योजना बनाई सँगै काम गर्ने हाम्रो योजना सदाका लागि अधूरे रहयो । स्नेही मित्र चन्द्रजीमा हार्दिक श्रद्धाञ्जलि र भाउजू कल्पना, बसन्त बाबु र उनको परिवार तथा बहार बाबु लगायत सम्पूर्ण लक्सम्बा परिवारप्रति गहिरो समवेदना । चन्द्रजी मेरो हृदयमा सदा रहिरहनु हुने छ ।

सुनाकोठी- सिभिल होम्स ३, गोदावरी नगरपालिका वडा नं १२, ललितपुर निवासी डा. विष्णु राज उप्रेती नेपाल सरकारको 'थिङ्क ट्याङ्क' नीति अनुसन्धान प्रतिष्ठानको कार्यकारी अध्यक्ष हुनुहुन्छ ।

Chandra as my PhD Student and Friend

Prof. John Holford

I met Chandra almost by accident as part of my work, but he actually became a significant figure in my life. Adult education which has been my profession for over four decades has a way of generating 'true believers'. People who take up learning as adults can see its capacity for improving a lot of individuals and communities, and not infrequently they devote themselves to that cause. I think I always saw Chandra as part of that movement. This went very far back in his being. He was an adult educator: he was in the army of course, but he was also an adult educator amongst the Nepalese community in Britain and with the Nepal Open University. I hadn't realised before now about his youthful political enterprises, but they can clearly be seen now as an educational exercise. He was clearly also a researcher; it was also obvious to me that he was deeply committed both to his country and to the Gurkha community in the UK. Those kinds of loyalties are meat and drink to adult educators because adult education is about creating knowledge and serving the people.

We met when I was working in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Surrey. It must have been around 20 years ago. We were introduced by my colleague and our mutual friend Professor Peter Jarvis who wanted Chandra to enrol as a PhD student; Peter asked me to be his co-supervisor. Peter, of course, sadly died a couple of years ago but I am sure he would have been here today and spoken as warmly about Chandra as I can—

though probably more eloquently. I never exactly discovered how Peter and Chandra met. I imagine it was Peter's reputation as a great figure in the study of adult learning, and with truly global interests, that played a large part. Peter was a great networker, and they very likely encountered each other in an event where he spoke. Whatever the reason, they hit it off and Chandra came to Guildford to do a PhD.

But working with him as a supervisor, I quickly discovered that Chandra although quiet spoken and humble was a deep thinker and very able. His PhD research was a socio-political study of lifelong learning policy and practice in Nepal. It is worth saying that he faced a quite a few difficulties in doing it. I was looking at his PhD the other day and he wrote, "The field research was obstructed by the unexpected escalation of the civil war which led to a breakdown in security and the major forces embroiled in the war shoot at will under the pretext of the victim being classed as the enemy". He summed up the effects of that with what I would say is a typically modest statement: "The field research was a challenge".

Anyway, he finished his thesis quickly and it was awarded in 2005 and I think some of the things he says in it gives us a sense of what he believed in what he wrote and how he saw the position. It is a long thesis; it extends to 18 chapters and 460 pages. He saw adult education as a part of the wider Nepalese social and political project. He wrote that lifelong learning is as old as Nepalese civilisation, and extremely important to daily life. He said (he was writing of course in the early 2000s), that every single person he met was dissatisfied with the government's current policy because it failed to generate the knowledge needed to address the widespread oppression, social exclusion and marginalisation of the poor, lower castes, indigenous nationalities and women. He saw this oppression as perpetuated by Hindu religion and culture. He saw a chain of hierarchy across the entire social order as a tool of oppression and exploitation which had led the poor, lower castes and women to revolt. Lifelong learning needed to address issues of caste, class, ethnicity and gender. But he advocated protection and promotion of different religions and cultures. This, I think is really important because this culture, this indigenous system, would provide a framework for lifelong learning processes and practice. Chandra thought that indigenous knowledge

systems and cultures were essential in the battle against the negative effects of globalisation. So he wanted to end centralised planning, which he saw as driven by international donor organisations, and to replace it by a participatory, bottom-up approach which could benefit individual communities at local level. That was a very strong element of his thesis and his argument.

Let me turn a little bit away from his thesis. He was deeply charming. When he finished his thesis, he began to involve me, just a little, in the masses of activities he organised, or was engaged in, for Gurkha and Nepali interest in Britain and in Nepal. As a result, I discovered that he was not only charming but also a charming powerhouse. His courteous and reserved exterior concealed a man who could and did move mountains in pursuit of the causes he worked for. I marvelled – and deeply envied – his extraordinary gift for persuasion. He would ring me up often and invite me in some gentle way to join him in some event or campaign. I don't recall single occasion where I was able to turn him down, however inconvenient it was or however ill-qualified I felt myself to be.

But above all, I remember him as a kind man. Several friends who knew him at Surrey have said the similar things when I told them about his ever-so-premature death. He was someone who cared about his people and was willing to go extra ordinary lengths to help them. I imagine that was why he decided to go to back to Nepal to work for Open University a couple of years ago. When he was there, he was courteously relentless in getting his friends to contribute in various ways. He really did seem to be doing great things there.

In mourning his loss, I think also I celebrate his contribution and memory. I am genuinely proud and privileged to have known him.

**

John Holford is Robert Peers Professor of Adult Education at the University of Nottingham. He is also an advisor of the CNSUK.

Note:

The text in this Chapter is just a transcription of oral remarks made by Prof. John Holford during the memorial service organised online on 26 February 2021 by the Centre for Nepal Studies UK.

सीएनएस युकेको स्थापना र विकासमा डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा

डा. गोविन्दप्रसाद दाहाल
लोकेन्द्रपुरुष ढकाल

बेलायतमा अध्ययन अनुसन्धान तथा प्राज्ञिक कर्ममा नेपालीहरूको संलग्नता सन् १९७० को दशकदेखि फाइफुट्टु देखा पर्न थालेको हो । सन् १९९० पछिको दशकमा भने धेरै नेपाली मूलका डाक्टर, इन्जिनियर, प्राविधिक, शिक्षक तथा अनुसन्धानकर्मीहरूको उपस्थिति बाक्लिँदै गएको थियो । नेपालीहरूको बेलायत आगमन हुने यो क्रम सन् २००० पछि भन्नु हवातै बढेको पाइन्छ । सन् २००० को दशकमा ठुलो सङ्ख्यामा नेपाली विद्यार्थीहरू, हाइली स्कल्ड माइग्रेन्ट कार्यक्रमअन्तर्गत दक्ष जनशक्तिहरू र स्थायी बसोबासका लागि भूतपूर्व गोर्खाहरू भित्रिएका थिए ।

यसरी राम्रै सङ्ख्यामा बढेका नेपाली विद्यार्थीहरू र प्राज्ञहरूले त्यसपछि बेलायतका विभिन्न विश्वविद्यालयहरूमा अध्ययन तथा व्यावसायिक कार्य गर्ने सिलसिलामा नेपाल र नेपालीसम्बन्धी अध्ययन अनुसन्धान थालेका थिए । फेला पारिएका तथ्यहरू तथा नतिजालाई नेपाल र बेलायतस्थित नेपालीको हितका लागि प्रयोग वा समन्वय गर्ने नेपालीहरूद्वारा नै मौलिकरूपमा सञ्चालित कुनै संस्था थिएनन् । यस्तो अवस्थामा नेपाल र नेपालीसम्बन्धी विशिष्ट एवम् महत्त्वपूर्ण सवालहरू समेटेर बेलायत एवम् नेपालमा समेत नीति तथा कार्यक्रम निर्माणका लागि पहलस्वरूप प्रमाण प्रस्तुत गर्न सक्ने र नेपाल र नेपालीसम्बन्धी अरु थप वास्तविक प्राज्ञिक सवालहरूको वैज्ञानिक तबरले अध्ययन-अनुसन्धान गर्न सक्ने एउटा प्राज्ञिक केन्द्रको अपरिहार्यता छ भन्ने महसुस भयो । सन् २००६ को

अन्त्यतिर स्वर्गीय डा. चन्द्रकुमार लक्सम्बा, डा. गोविन्द दाहाल, डा. अच्युत गौतम, लोकेन्द्रपुरुष ढकाल, आनन्द भण्डारी लगायतको समूहले यसतर्फ अग्रसरता लियो । यसका लागि पहिलो बैठक फेब्रुअरी २००७ मा फ्रिम्लीमा डा. चन्द्रकुमार लक्सम्बाको घरमा र दोश्रो बैठक अर्को महिनामा साउथथ्याम्पटनमा डा. गोविन्द दाहालको निवासमा बसेको थियो । तदनु रूप डा. गोविन्द दाहालको 'डाइरेक्टरसीप' र स्वर्गीय डा. चन्द्रकुमार लक्सम्बाको समन्वयकारी भूमिकामा हामी सबै संलग्न भइ 'सेन्टर फर नेपाल स्टडीज युके (सीएनएस युके)' को स्थापना गरिएको हो ।

सीएनएस युकेको स्थापनापश्चात सर्वप्रथम हामीले बेलायतमा बसोबास गर्ने समग्र नेपालीहरूको हितमा 'नेपालीहरूद्वारा नेपालीका लागि जनगणना' भन्ने कार्यक्रम गर्ने निर्णय गर्नुपर्छ । डा. चन्द्रकुमार लक्सम्बा त्यस बेला एनआरएनए युकेको उपाध्यक्ष पनि हुनुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँले "डा. गोविन्द दाहाल आफैँ जनसंख्याविद् भएको र भर्खरै संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघ, जनसङ्ख्या तथा तथ्याङ्कशास्त्र विभाग जेनेभाबाट त्यही विषयमा काम गरेर फर्कनुभएकाले उहाँकै नेतृत्वमा यो जनगणना गर्नुपर्छ" भनेर प्रस्ताव राखेपछि केन्द्रको बैठकले त्यसलाई अनुमोदन गरेको थियो । विज्ञको व्यवस्था भएपछि जनगणना पूरा गर्न चाहिने जनशक्ति र आर्थिक सहयोगको व्यवस्था गर्नु पर्ने थियो । यस सम्बन्धमा बेलायतमा अविस्थित भण्डे ६० नेपाली संघ-संस्था र एनआरएनए युकेले मिलेर काम गर्ने र न्यूनतरूपमा चाहिने आर्थिक सहयोग पनि उठाउने निर्णय भएको थियो । यो निर्णयका लागि डा. चन्द्रकुमार लक्सम्बाले महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेल्नुभएको थियो ।

जनगणना गर्दा सुरुको नमूना परीक्षण हामीले उहाँको स्थानीय बस्ती फ्रिम्लीमै गरेका थियौँ । त्यसपछि लगातार गरिएको तथ्याङ्क सङ्कलनमा उहाँकै कारको प्रयोग गरेर हामी सँगसँगै काम गर्थ्यौँ । कतिपय व्यक्तिको घरमा तथ्याङ्क सङ्कलन गर्न पुग्दा उहाँहरूको नकारात्मक व्यवहार र नमिठो बोलीको पनि हामी साक्षी बनेका थियौँ । कतिपय अवस्थामा त यस्तो व्यवहार देखेर डा. लक्सम्बा भोक्किनु पनि हुन्थ्यो । बाटोमा फर्केर आउँदा म (यहाँ र यसपछि 'म' शब्दले पहिलो लेखकलाई जनाएको छ) उहाँलाई "सर हामी पढे लेखेका व्यक्ति, उहाँहरूले यो जनगणनाको महत्त्व नबुझे हो । भो हामी यसमा 'माइन्ड' नगरौँ" भन्थे । "गोविन्द सर ! उहाँहरूकै हितका लागि त तपाईं हामीले यो सारा गरेको हो । यो गाडीको माइलेज, हामीले सितै दिएको यत्रो धेरै समय, परिवारलाई छोडेर यही कामका लागि हिँडेको कति भयो ? फेरि उल्टै हामीलाई पो त्यसो भन्ने ? यो मेरो पीएचडीको सर्टीफिकेटले गर्दा तपाईंले मलाई त्यसो भनेको होइन ? त्यो सर्टीफिकेट त म उ त्यो रुखको टोडकोमा

(अगाडिको रुखलाई देखाउँदै) सिउरेर भिड्न जानु सक्छु” भनेर उहाँ मसँग पनि भोक्किनुहुन्थ्यो । म मुसुमुसु हाँसेर उहाँलाई हेरिरहन्थेँ । अनि फेरि अलि पल्टिर पुगेपछि सबै कुरा बिसेर “अरू मान्छेको व्यवहार देखेर म तपाईंसँग पो भोक्किएछु” भन्दै अनेक कुरा गरेर मरीमरी हँसाउनुहुन्थ्यो । यस्तो जोसिलो र रमाइलो हुनुहुन्थ्यो हाम्रो चन्द्र लक्सम्बा जी ।

यो जनगणना प्रोजेक्टको क्रममा धेरै पटक हामीलाई कल्पना बहिनी (चन्द्रजीकी धर्मपत्नी) ले ड्राइभ गरेर फिल्डमा पुर्‍याउने र ल्याउने गर्नुभएको थियो । कल्पना बहिनीको ड्राइभिड चन्द्रजीको ड्राइभिडको तुलनामा धेरै सहज हुन्थ्यो । अनि चन्द्रजी आफैँ कल्पना बहिनीको ड्राइभिडको तारिफ गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । त्यसबेला तथ्याङ्क सङ्कलन गर्न जान म (गोविन्द) साउथह्याम्पटनबाट ट्रेनमा फानबोरो आउने अनि त्यहाँबाट चन्द्रजीले गाडी लिएर मलाई लिन आउने हाम्रो दिनचर्या नै बनिसकेको थियो । हतार हतार चन्द्रजीको घरमा पुगेर कल्पना बहिनीले बनाएको खाजा खाने अनि तथ्याङ्क सङ्कलन गर्न हिँडी हाल्ने । कल्पना बहिनीको त्यो निस्वार्थ सेवाप्रति म सधैं ऋणी छु ।

एक पटक हामीले नसोचेको घटना घट्यो । तीन दिनका लागि हामी तथ्याङ्क सङ्कलन गर्न म्यानचेस्टरतिर जाने भएका थियौँ । म बिहानै चन्द्रजीको घर फ्रिम्ली आइपुगें । अनि थाहा भयो कि कल्पना बहिनी गम्भीररूपमा बिरामी पर्नुभएको रहेछ । चन्द्रजी यति हतास हुनुभएको मैले उहाँलाई त्यसअघि कहिल्यै देखेको थिइनँ । छोराहरू र हामी सबैले मिलेर बहिनीलाई तुरुन्त अस्पताल पुर्‍यायौँ । बहिनीलाई भित्र उपचार गर्दैगर्दा चन्द्रजी र म बाहिर परिर्खरहेका थियौँ । त्यसबेला चन्द्रजीले मसँग भन्नुभएको थियो, “गोविन्द सर, आज कल्पनाको अवस्था देखेर त म ‘हेड लेस चिकन’ जस्तो भैसकेको थिएँ । तपाईंको साथ पाएर मात्र अहिले साहस आएको छ ।” कल्पना बहिनीको स्वास्थ्य जाँच सकिएपछि एन्टीबायोटिक्स लेखी दिएर ‘उहाँलाई केही पनि हुँदैन, यो औषधि खाइ हाल्नु’ भनेर चिकित्सकले भनेको कुरा सुनेपछि मात्र चन्द्रजी ढुक्क हुनुभएको थियो । यसबाट मैले प्रष्ट देखेको छु कि उहाँ बाहिरबाट जति कडा देखिनुहुन्थ्यो भित्रबाट त्यत्तिकै कमलो पनि हुनुहुन्थ्यो । अनि उहाँ आफ्नो परिवारको स्वास्थ्य र सुरक्षाप्रति अति चिन्तित र सतर्क हुनुहुन्थ्यो । यो घटनापछि रेडिडबाट डा. कृष्ण पौडेलको सवारी साधनमा डा. कृष्ण अधिकारी र म म्यानचेस्टर-बर्मिङ्घम-ग्रान्थामको यात्रामा गयौँ ।

यो जनगणना परियोजनाका क्रममा चन्द्रजीले मलाई धेरै नयाँ साथीहरूसँग परिचय गराउनुभएको थियो भने कतिपय मैले चिनेका मित्रहरूसँग उहाँको परिचय

गराएको थिएँ । डा. कृष्ण अधिकारीलाई मैले चन्द्रजी र हाम्रो समग्र टीमसँग जनगणना सुरु गर्ने क्रममा परिचय गराएको थिएँ । त्यसबेला रेडिडमा अधिकारीजी र अरू साथीहरूको सक्रियताले जनगणनाको राम्रो तथ्याङ्क सङ्कलन भएको थियो । यसरी युकेभरिबाट समग्र तथ्याङ्क सङ्कलन गरिसकेपछि हामी प्रतिवेदन लेखनको आरम्भिक चरणमा थियौँ । हाम्रो सङ्कलित तथ्याङ्कको शुद्धीकरणको काम केही हदसम्म अगाडि बढिसकेको भए पनि विश्लेषणको काम बाँकी थियो । के के च्याप्टर लेख्ने भन्नेबारे मस्यौदा योजना पनि तयार हुँदै थियो । यसै क्रममा डा. गोविन्द दाहाल युके छोडेर २००९ मा क्यानाडा जानु पर्ने भयो । आफ्नो अनुपस्थितिमा यस प्रोजेक्टलाई अधि बढाउन उहाँको सल्लाह र सुभावमा सीएनएस युकेले डा. कृष्ण अधिकारीलाई अनुरोध गर्‍यो । तथ्याङ्क सङ्कलनको क्रममै यो परियोजना सक्रिय सहभागी हुँदै आउनुभएका डा. अधिकारीलाई सीएनएस युकेको थप औपचारिक जिम्मेवारी र भूमिका दिइयो । म क्यानाडा जाने पक्का भएपछि मैले डा. लक्सम्बालाई अलि हतोत्साही देखेँ । त्यो स्वाभाविक पनि थियो । एकातिर साथीसँग बिछोड, अर्कोतिर लेखन कार्य हुने बेलामा परियोजनाको नेतृत्व गर्ने मानिस हिँड्दा उहाँ बढी चिन्तित हुनु स्वाभाविक थियो । मैले “म तपाईँकै साथमा हुनेछु चिन्ता नगर्नु” भनेको थिएँ । अनि फेरि “तपाईँले र हाम्रो समग्र टिमले लिएको लक्ष्यलाई दिगो बनाउने काम डा. अधिकारीको प्रयासले पूरा हुनेछ । चिन्ता नगर्नुस् हामी सबै साथै हुनेछौँ” भनेपछि चन्द्र धेरै ढुक्क हुनुभएको थियो ।

त्यसपछि म (गोविन्द) क्यानाडा आएँ । क्यानाडा आइ पुगेपछि मैले डा. लक्सम्बालाई फोन गरें । फोनमा “गोविन्द सर, तपाईँ क्यानाडा गैसकेपछि त मेरो मन अत्यन्त विह्वल भयो, अनि ड्राइभिङ्ग गरेर एकातिर गएँ भनेको अर्कोतिर पुगेछु” भन्नुभयो । यता मेरो पनि अवस्था उस्तै थियो । कामको सिलसिलामा हामी दुवै कतिपय कुरामा असहमति पनि राख्थ्यौँ, तर एक अर्काप्रतिको मित्रता भने सधैँ अत्यन्त गाढा थियो ।

जनगणना परियोजनामा आधारित रही हामीले ‘नेपालिज इन द युनाइटेड किङ्गडम: एन ओभरभ्यु’ नामक पुस्तक प्रकाशित गर्‍यौँ । यस पुस्तकमा स्वर्गीय डा. चन्द्रकुमार लक्सम्बाले शिक्षा र गोर्खासम्बन्धी विषयमा अत्यन्त महत्त्वपूर्ण अनुसन्धानमूलक लेख लेख्नुभएको छ ।

सन् २००७ देखि नै सीएनएस युकेले निरन्तररूपमा नेपाल र नेपालीको सन्दर्भमा अध्ययन, अनुसन्धान कार्य गर्दै बेलायत र नेपालस्थित विविध प्राज्ञिक एवम् गैर प्राज्ञिक संघ/संस्थाहरूलाई सहयोग गर्दै आइरहेको छ । सन् २०१०

को दशकमा सीएनएस युकेले भूपू गोर्खाका पेन्सनसम्बन्धी अध्ययन, अक्सफोर्ड विश्वविद्यालयसँगको सहकार्यमा नेपालीको धर्म संस्कारसम्बन्धी अध्ययन, सीएनएस युकेको दशौँ स्थापना दिवस साथै बेलायतमा अवस्थित नेपाली समुदायको सामाजिक गतिशीलतासम्बन्धी अनुसन्धानका काम सम्पन्न गरेको छ । संस्थाले सन् २०१९ मा डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको संलग्नतामा साफा (सोलजर्स, सेइलर्स एण्ड एयरमेन्स फ्यार्मिलिज एसोसिएसन) को भूपू गोर्खा सैनिक सम्बन्धी एउटा आयोजनाको मूल्याङ्कन समेत गर्‍यो । सीएनएस युकेको स्थापना र यसको संस्थागत विकास गर्ने कार्यका लागि डा. चन्द्रकुमार लक्सम्बाको निरन्तर नेतृत्वदायी संलग्नता रह्यो । मूलतः भूपू गोर्खासम्बन्धी विषय र बेलायतमा अवस्थित सामाजिक संघसंस्थाहरूसँगको समन्वय एवम् सहकार्य गर्ने सवालमा उहाँको सक्रिय एवम् प्रभावकारी भूमिका रहन्थ्यो । उहाँले गोर्खा सैनिकसम्बन्धी प्रायजसो विषयमा सीएनएस युकेको तर्फबाट प्रतिनिधित्व गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा अत्यन्त शालीन व्यक्तित्वका धनी, जुभारु, लगनशील एवम् कर्तव्यनिष्ठ व्यक्तित्व हुनुहुन्थ्यो । यी सबै सद्गुणका कारणले गर्दा सीएनएस युकेले एउटा कुशल एवम् विशिष्ट अनुसन्धानकर्ता, असल व्यवस्थापक अनि एउटा जाज्वल्यमान मित्र गुमाएको छ ।

डा. गोविन्द दाहालले साउथह्याम्प्टन विश्वविद्यालयबाट सामाजिक तथ्याङ्क विषयमा विद्यावारिधि गर्नुभएको छ । नेपाल अध्ययन केन्द्र बेलायतको संस्थापक निर्देशक दाहाल अहिले क्यानाडाको ओटावामा स्वास्थ्यसम्बन्धी कार्यमा संलग्न हुनुहुन्छ ।

लोकेन्द्रपुरुष ढकाल नेपाल अध्ययन केन्द्र बेलायतका कार्यकारी निर्देशक हुनुहुन्छ ।

Chandra Laksamba at CVQO

Guy Horridge (OBE)

I remember well Chandra's interview with us for the post of Assistant in the Administration Office of what was, in those days, a relatively new charity called the Cadet Vocational Qualifications Organisation (CVQO). Chandra had all the attributes that one would associate with ex-servicemen and with a Gurkha soldier in particular. He was smart, intelligent and I could see a great sense of humour lurking behind that professional interview face. In fact the interview went on much longer than normal as I found there was so much I wanted to talk to Chandra about. It goes without saying that the other candidates were no competition; Chandra sailed through and was appointed and so began a very happy association.

Right from the start it became abundantly obvious that this, clearly, academically minded man with a passion and love for his home country Nepal and the people there, was an excellent fit for CVQO and we knew immediately that we were lucky to have him. He became a professional colleague and friend that so many of us valued and I sought his advice frequently.

Chandra fitted in extremely quickly and was prepared to get fully immersed in any job he was given. He very quickly realised that there were better, more efficient ways of meeting the demands of the charity and, with a skill that came readily to him, was able to make it seem like the changes he suggested and implemented weren't just his idea but, rather, a group initiative. He quickly recognised that, as CVQO was expanding, we needed to work more regionally and set about organising the administrative part of the office in a much more user friendly way.

Chandra was the embodiment of efficiency, and the feedback we received from cadet units recognised the massive contribution that he made to CVQO. This efficiency soon led to his promotion to Team Leader. His first departmental promotion as a manager was being responsible for overseeing the cadet Level 2 assessments. He allocated marking and helped moderate the standards. He was always looking to see if he could find ways to overturn any decisions in favour of the learner. He never cut corners but always used his vast experience to the benefit of the learner. In later years he took responsibility for the administration and assessment of CVQO's adult professional recognition awards, in particular those with the City and Guilds (C & G). He became a valued mentor and through his own initiative mentored a number of ex-Gurkha soldiers through their Level 4 to Level 7 (masters equivalent) C & G in Leadership and Management. The care and understanding he took belied a very scholarly approach which enriched all those who were lucky enough to have him as their mentor or assessor. It is a huge testament to his abilities that someone who started in a clerical position rose to such a level and we sorely miss that expertise.

As a manager he was able to pass on his knowledge and experience to other members of the department along with new members of the team. Very quickly, Chandra became known as the 'go-to' man if one wanted a job done properly.

However, Chandra, of course, was not just a workaholic - he was also extraordinarily proud of his Nepali heritage and kindly introduced a Gurkha food experience for the whole office. The first time Chandra did this, the whole ground floor of the CVQO building turned in to a little part of Nepal and what a feast we had! There were curries and other wonderful spicy delicacies, different types of rice and various flatbreads, all laid out in the most tempting and delicious manner. We thought that there was no way that we were going to eat it all, but we absolutely did finish it! So started one of CVQO's favourite traditions and one that still happens now - every so often, on a Friday, we have a cultural experience with an opportunity to get to know more about a country, its food and its culture, a wonderful tradition started by Chandra.

As I mentioned earlier, Chandra was prepared to do anything and at our annual Graduation Ceremony. With his local knowledge of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, he came in to his own - he very quickly became trusted to escort our most senior visitors

and guests around the college and, when requested, the grounds too. Like a good ex-soldier, weather did not bother him and he could always be relied upon as a very safe pair of hands with the common sense to sort out any problems on the spot. Many a VIPs commented on Chandra's professionalism and willingness to go that extra mile.

We, as an educational charity, were particularly proud of Chandra's academic achievements – none more so than when he was made a 'Professor' at Nepal Open University. This is no mean feat for anybody but to be able to write academic papers in your second language just makes it even more impressive. In fact, this recognition of Chandra's academic skills encouraged younger members of his department to further their own education and this will always be a legacy to Chandra.

On numerous occasions he would, very modestly, ask me to proof read some of his work and I hardly ever had to make any suggestions on punctuation, grammar or English. What was very clear to me was the intelligence of Chandra and it certainly made me realise how lucky we were to have such a person working in our Administrative Department.

Sadly, and inevitably, the department at CVQO that Chandra had helped build was not going to be enough to hold him forever and it was, therefore, no surprise to me when he came to tell me that he had accepted a job working with Nepali Government in Nepal. I knew there was nothing I would be able to do to persuade him to stay but I did try as he was too good a man to lose without a fight.

His farewell speech to the team is one that we shall remember for a long time – it was wonderfully balanced between his clear pride in what he had achieved at CVQO and his excited anticipation of his new role, intermingled with his stories and great humour.

The incredibly sad news of Chandra's most untimely death during Covid shook the organisation but his legacy lives on. We will remember a fun, loyal, hardworking and genuine person but, above, all we will always remember a true gentleman.

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Guy Horridge, OBE, is the Chief Executive at the UK-based educational charity, Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation (CVQO).

In memoriam, Chandra Laksamba, 1961–2021

Prof. David N. Gellner

I first met Chandra in – I think it was – 2007. Two carloads of Nepalis drove from Reading to Oxford to come and discuss possible collaboration in the survey of all Nepalis in the UK that they were currently undertaking in the hope of persuading the Office of National Statistics to adopt 'Nepali' as one of the possible ethnic choices in the upcoming 2011 census. The story of the huge amount of voluntary work involved in doing that survey, cajoling and cooperating with community leaders up and down the UK, is told in K.P. Adhikari and C.K. Laksamba (2018), 'Counting Ourselves: CNSUK's 2008 Survey of Nepalis in the UK' in D.N. Gellner & S.L. Hausner (eds) *Global Nepalis: Religion, Culture, and Community in a New and Old Diaspora* (Delhi: OUP), pp. 303–31. Much of the credit for mobilizing community support for that project goes to Chandra, with his unrivalled people skills and his position as an ex-Gurkha. On that day in Oxford was Govinda Dahal, as was Lokendra Dhakal. I knew Chandra was coming as well. It so happened that my PhD student, Ian Fitzpatrick, was just back from fieldwork in the Taplejung village of Mamangkhe, which he had been advised to study as 'the most traditional Limbu village' by the Yakthung Chumlung in Kathmandu. (Four years later Ian published his thesis as *Cardamom and Class: A Limbu Village and its Extensions in East Nepal*, Vajra Publications.) I knew Ian was good at languages, but I had no idea how much, if any, Limbu he had picked up. I called him over to my office at 51 Banbury Road and when the Nepalis arrived,

everyone squashed into my office, then up under the eaves of the building, books piled everywhere. I put Chandra and Ian together and more or less instructed them to start speaking in Limbu. I am glad to say that Ian passed the test with flying colours. Then we all went for lunch in Wolfson College.

It wasn't possible to jump in with financial help for CNSUK immediately. But that meeting was none the less the beginning of a long and fruitful collaboration. There were discussions about the survey questions, especially in connection with religion, and further consultations that eventually led to the AHRC-ESRC-funded Vernacular Religion project, 2019–2012 (www.anthro.ox.ac.uk/vernacular-religion).

Chandra had a special gift for friendship. He had networks of friends everywhere and in every possible combination – in politics, in the Gurkhas, in education and academia, and of course from his own clan and lineage. His contacts and ability to mix with everyone were crucial for the success of CNSUK (even if initially there were rumours about his political attachments). Chandra's networks were crucial also for the success of the Vernacular Religion project.

He came late to the Gurkhas and had always been committed to education, so it was perhaps inevitable that he would, on leaving the military, and unlike the typical destination of the ex-Gurkha, take up a PhD. Appropriately enough, the subject he chose was lifelong learning, something he both advocated and encouraged others to study, and embodied in himself.

Chandra was proud of his sons and very clearly doted on his grandchildren. But it would have been completely out of character for him to sink into relative inactivity in Frimley as he got older, doing nothing but spend time with his family. He was determined to make a difference back in Nepal. He threw himself into charity work, raising money for a hospital in his home district. He decided that, unlike so many migrants who only talk about moving back to the home country (the so-called 'myth of return'), he would actually do it. He got involved both in the Nepal's Open University and in Lumbini University. It was on behalf of the Open University that he contacted me to have a look at their proposed new anthropology syllabus and he was phoning me about it from his hospital bed, just a week before he died, confident that he would soon be out and about.

Chandra was determined to use his education to understand and change the position of migrants like himself. He was the driving force behind the CNSUK publication on the Gurkha pension issue (C. Laksamba, K.P. Adhikari, L.P. Dhakal, & D.N. Gellner, 2013, *British Gurkha Pension Policies and Ex-Gurkha Campaigns: A Review*, Reading: Centre for Nepal Studies UK). My name ended up on the cover of the book, just for doing quite a lot of editing of the English, as well as trying to smooth out the more provocative language. It is probably my most downloaded and sought-after publication! Yet despite his passionately held opinions, Chandra could also be very analytical, in distinguishing different types and generations of Gurkha soldiers.

Chandra was also fascinated by the phenomenon of social mobility, the way Nepalis from a peasant background could, in the UK and within one generation, become middle-class property owners and businessmen, aspiring to send their children to good British universities.

Chandra's attitude to religion was ecumenical and pluralist, while holding firm to Kirati tradition for births and deaths. He described this typically Nepali approach very well, so well that twice – in two different articles -- we quoted his words from a video made for the 'Nepali Connections' exhibition at the Surrey Heath Museum in 2012. "Directly or indirectly," he said, "I practise three religions. But we are not very hardcore fundamentalist kind of thing. When I was in the army, we used to go to church. We celebrate Christmas as well. We Gorkhas celebrate all." And he laughed.

From time to time Chandra would send me a message to see if I was free that evening, then he would phone up for a long chat and fill me in on the latest gossip about the NRN movement in the UK, about the Yakthung Chumlung, the Oxford Nepali community, Limbu religion and the politics of prophecy and sacrifice, and so much more. I miss those conversations very much and my heart goes out to the bereaved family.

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Prof. David N. Gellner is Professor of Social Anthropology and a Fellow of All Souls College at the University of Oxford. He is the Principal Investigator of the British Academy-funded project 'The Dalit Search for Dignity: State, Society, and Mobilisation from Below in Nepal' [HDV190020]. He is also an advisor of the CNSUK.

चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको जीवनगति

प्रा. अभि सुवेदी

यो छोटो लेख डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको सम्झनामा लेखिएको हो । केही लेख उनी जीवित र जीवन्त भएकै बेला लेखे र कति उनको जीवनपछि लेखे । ती सबै अहिले संस्मरण भएका छन् । पहिला कहिल्यै नचिनेका व्यक्तिलाई नेपालबाहिर अथवा बेलायतमा भेट्नु अनि तिनका कर्म र जीवनको विषयमा लेख्नु, केही पटक उनी नेपालमा आएको बेला भेट्नु अनि उनका काम र विचारको प्रशंसा गर्दागर्दै उनको 'ओबिचुअरी' लेख्नु मेरो निमित्त एउटा समयको बेगसँग चल्नु जस्तै भएको छ । त्यो समयको बेग उनकै जीवनको थियो, उनकै प्रयोगशील र गतिशील स्वभावले बनेको थियो । यो लेखमा म चन्द्र लक्सम्बासँग भेटेको, उनीसँग प्रभावित भएको अनि उनको विषयमा शोक गरेको यही सानो कथा लेख्दैछु । समग्रमा यो चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको एउटा गतिशील जीवनको कथा हो । उनका मित्र र सहकर्मीहरूले उनीमाथि अनेकौँ किसिमका लेख लेखेका छन् । जस्तै उनीसँग वर्षौँ सहकार्य गरे, जस्तै उनका चिन्ताका प्रकृति र उनका आगतका कल्पनामाथि विचार र चिन्ता गरे ती सबैका लेखहरूको सँगालोमा मेरा केही शब्दहरू पनि कहाँ राखिने छन् भन्ने कल्पना गर्दैछु । मैले अनुभूत गरेका घटना र तिनको विगतभित्र उनकै वर्णनद्वारा पसेको अनि उनकै परिकल्पनाको आगतको विषयमा पनि सोचिबसेको कुरा तलका अनुच्छेदमा लेखेको छु ।

सन्जोगको सानो सन्दर्भ लेख्छु किनकि यो मैले चन्द्र लक्सम्बा भाइसँग भेटेको कुरासँग जोडिएको छ । नेपाल बेलायत-नेपाल प्रज्ञा परिषद (ब्रिटेन एकेडेमिक काउन्सिल) को सन् २०१५ को नोभेम्बर दोस्रो हप्तातिर एउटा प्रवचन गर्न मलाई निम्तो आएको सन्दर्भमा लन्डन गएको थिएँ । त्यसको निमित्त स्कुल

अफ ओरेन्टल एण्ड अफ्रिकन स्टडिज (सोआस) मा नोभेम्बर १२ को दिन मैले विश्वेश्वरप्रसाद कोइरालाका लेखमा साहित्य, राजनीति र इतिहासको अनौठो संगमको विषयमा एउटा प्रवचन गरें। त्यो प्रवचनपछि अनेकौं छलफल भए। त्यो छलफलमा भाग लिने एक जना व्यक्ति चन्द्र लक्सम्बा पनि रहेछन्। पछि परिचित भएपछि सम्झना गर्नु। राजनीतिक चिन्तन कसरी साहित्यसँग जोडिन्छ र त्यस्तो सम्बन्धका आयाम कस्ता हुन्छन् भन्ने विषय उनले उठाएका थिए। मलाई त्यसपछि पनि उनीसँग यो विषयमा छलफल गर्ने अवसर मिल्यो। पछि मसँग उनले लिएको फार्नब्रोको एउटा रेडियो अन्तर्वार्तामा समेत चन्द्र लक्सम्बाले यो कुरा दोहोर्याएका थिए। मेरो कार्यक्रम आयोजक साथीहरूले अनेकौं ठाउँमा राखेका थिए। लाग्छ डेभिड गेल्लरले यी कार्यक्रमहरू मिलाएका थिए। नोभेम्बर १७ मा उनले अक्सफोर्ड विश्वविद्यालयमा पनि मेरो नेपाली रङ्गमञ्चको परिवर्तनशील गति विषयमा प्रस्तुति राखेका थिए। त्यो भन्दा पहिला अथवा १४ नोभेम्बर २०१५ को दिन सेन्टर फर नेपाल स्टडिज युकेले फार्नब्रोमा स्थान र समयको दूरत्वबाट जन्मने डियास्पोरा चेतना विषयमा एउटा प्रवचन राखेको थियो। त्यो चन्द्र लक्सम्बा र साथीहरूले आयोजना गरेका थिए। त्यसमा भएका छलफलले मलाई धेरै कुरामा चिन्तनशील बनाएको थियो।

मलाई लिन चन्द्र लक्सम्बा फार्नब्रो रेल स्टेसनमा कार लिएर उनकी श्रीमती कल्पनासँग आएका थिए। माइकल हटसँग छुटेपछि म चन्द्र लक्सम्बासँगै गएँ। चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको विषयमा मलाई केही थाहा थिएन। उनले भन्दैजाँदा र मेरा प्रश्नका उत्तर दिँदैजाँदा मलाई उनको विषयमा कुराहरू थाहा हुँदै गए। लक्सम्बा ब्रिटिश गोर्खा सैनिक सेवाबाट अवकाश भएका व्यक्ति थिए। उमेर धेरै नभई अवकाश हुने अवस्था हुँदोरहेछ ब्रिटिश गोर्खामा। चन्द्रले आफ्नो कथा मलाई बिस्तारै भन्दै गए। त्यो एउटा गतिशील जीवनी पढेजस्तो अथवा एउटा ब्रिटिश गोर्खाको कथा पढेजस्तो लाग्थ्यो। मलाई उनले सुनाउनु पर्ने निकै विषय छन् र ती उनको जीवनसँग सम्बन्धित छन् जस्तो गरेर उनले मलाई सुनाउँदै गए। भोलिपल्ट उनले मलाई आफू पढेको र विद्यावारिधि हासिल गरेको सरे विश्वविद्यालय परिसर पनि घुमाउन लगे। सम्भव भए उनका सुपरभाइजरसँग पनि भेटाउने उनको योजना थियो। मिलेन।

उनीहरूले मलाई आफ्नो घर लिएर गए। सहरको अलिक खुला ठाउँमा एउटा चिट्कक परेको घर परिवेशभिन्न पस्ता मलाई आनन्द लाग्यो। तिहारको बेला थियो। म त्यही चाडको परिवेशमा सहभागी भएँ। चन्द्र लक्सम्बा भाइका दुई

भाइ छोरा र बुहारीसँग परिचय भयो । मैले पहिले कसरी हो चिनेकी उनकी जेठी सासूसँग पनि भेट भयो । अनि मैले बोलेको नेपालीमा लिम्बू लबज आउँछ भन्ने कुरा त्यहाँ सबैले भन्दा रमाइलो भएको थियो । तिहार तुड्वा खाएर मनायौं । चन्द्र लक्सम्बाले मलाई भेट्न एक जना भाइलाई बोलाएका थिए । ती ब्रिटिश गोर्खाका मेजर भाइले आफूले काम गर्ने ब्रिगेड गोर्खामा लगेर धेरै कुराका जानकारी गराए । ती ओपेरादेखि चित्रकला र साहित्यका कुरा गर्ने सूर्य राई नेपाली साहित्यका पनि अध्येता हुन् । एक महिनाअघि उनी काठमाडौं आएका बेला उनले र मैले चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको सिर्जनशील मनको विषयमा कुरा गर्यौं ।

चन्द्रले आफू संलग्न भएर अध्ययन गरेका कथा सुनाए । अक्सफोर्डमा शोध तथा प्राध्यापन गर्ने अनि उतै ब्रिटेनको रेडिङमा बस्ने डा. कृष्ण अधिकारी र लोकेन्द्र ढकालले नेपालीहरूमाथि गरेका अध्ययन र सर्भेबाट प्राप्त नतिजाहरू सुनाए । उनले मलाई दिएका प्रकाशनमा “संयुक्त अधिराज्यमा नेपाली” भन्ने कृष्ण अधिकारीले सम्पादन गरेको एउटा किताब थियो । यी अध्येताहरूले “संयुक्त अधिराज्यमा नेपाल अध्ययन केन्द्र” भन्ने संस्था खोलेका रहेछन् । यो किताब उनीहरूले नै छापेका रहेछन् । यो किताब पढेपछि मलाई त्यो भेकमा बसेका नेपालीहरूको थलो देख्न मन लाग्यो । सुरुमा नै यो किताबको परिचयको सिलसिलामा प्राध्यापक सूर्य सुवेदीले लेखेको कुराबाट भन्नु नयाँ कुरा थाहा पाएँ । प्राध्यापक सुवेदीले भनेका छन्, बेलायती सरकारले गोरखालीलाई बसोबास गर्न दिएको कुरालाई ब्रिटिश नागरिकहरूले सकारात्मकरूपमा लिएका छन् । अनि किताबको अर्को महत्त्वपूर्ण पक्ष भनेको त्यहाँ बस्ने नेपालीहरूको सफलताको कथा हो । शिक्षादेखि व्यापार र जीवनका हरेक क्षेत्रमा यो देशमा नेपालीहरूले पाएका सफलताका कथा पढ्दा मलाई नयाँ कुरा थाहाभएको अनुभूति भयो । ब्रिटेनमा नेपाली कामदार मात्र भएर आउँछन् भन्ने कथाको यो अध्ययन पढेपछि र चन्द्र लक्सम्बा र अरू विद्वानहरूसँग कुरा गरेपछि विनिर्माण भएको अनुभव गरें । यो देशमा ब्रिटिश गोर्खाले आफूले बस्न पाउने हक लिए । त्यसपछि तिनका परिवारहरू त्यहाँ बस्न गएका छन् जस्मा वृद्धजनहरू पनि छन् । ती आफ्नो जीवन कसरी चलाइरहेछन् भन्ने कुराबारे चन्द्र लक्सम्बाले मलाई सुनाए । मैले एउटा लेख त्यो बेला कान्तिपुर दैनिकमा प्रकाशित गरें । त्यसबाट तलको एउटा अनुच्छेद राख्न चाहन्छु :

चन्द्र लक्सम्बाले मलाई अल्डरसट् भन्ने टाउन इलाकामा लगे । नेपाली कानेटोपी लाएका, लुगाफाटाहरू उस्तै किसिमले पहिरेका नेपालीहरू यत्रतत्र देखेर चकित भएँ । एउटा पूरै टाउन अमूक नेपाली बजारजस्तो ।

घरका शैली अङ्ग्रेजी अनि तिनका साइनबोर्ड नेपाली र अङ्ग्रेजीमा रोदीघरदेखि अरू अनेकौं नाम बोकेर अगाडि देख्दा म अङ्ग्रेजी साहित्यमा वर्णन गरिएका ती परिवेशमा आफ्नू नेपाल बसिरहेको देखेर चकित परेको मनुवा सिधै बोल्न गएँ। पायन्ट र कोट लाएर ठसठस बिच सडकमा हिँड्दै गरेका भीमकाय नेपाली महिलादेखि चिसो धपाउन हात फुफु गर्दै गोठ हिँडेजसरी लम्केका नेपाली देख्दा यिनका यहाँ घर छन् भन्ने कुरामा मलाई पूरा विश्वास भयो। चन्द्रले भने यहाँ आउने नेपाली “इकोनोमिक माइग्रन्ट,” शरणार्थी होइनन्, यहाँ, रेडिङ् र अरू थलोमा बस्ने अनेकौं नेपालीले नेपालबाट पैसा ल्याएर घर किनेका छन्। मेरा भानिज मदन प्रसाईंले रेडिङ्मा घर किन्न उता जग्गा बेचेर पैसा ल्याएको भट्टट सम्भैं। एक जना सुन व्यापारी भाइको पसलमा पस्यौं। पहिले ती पोखराका रहेछन्। तिनले “अभिसरसँग फोटो खिच्छु” भनेको सुन्दा चकित परें। तिनका होनहार पुत्र भर्खरै बितेका रहेछन्। तिनसँग चन्द्रभाइ र म पनि मौन बसेर सँगै रोयौं। अर्को पसलमा एउटी लिम्बू नानी हजाम काम गर्दै रहिछन्। मैले लिम्बूमा नाम सोधेपछि ती भस्केर कपाल काटेको छोडेर भन्डै चिया लिन दौडेकी थिइन्। (मंसिर १४ २०७२)।

यो छोटो लेखमा धेरै कुरा लेख्ने ठाउँ छैन। चन्द्र लक्सम्बा भाइको एउटा संस्मरणमा लेखिएका यी केही शब्दहरू हुन्। चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको जीवन एउटा गति भएर चलिरहेको खबर म थाहा पाउँथें। ती काठमाडौंमा आएछन् अनि मलाई फोन गरेपछि हिमालयन जाभा कफी हाउसमा हाम्रो भेट भएको थियो। चन्द्र लक्सम्बाले “अब मैले उताको बसाइ सकेर यतै आउने विचार गरेको छु, सर” भन्दा म छक्क परेको थिएँ। तर लाग्यो यी स्वाभिमानी मानिस हुन्। ताप्लेजुडको थलोमा उनले आफूले काम गरिरहेका कुरा पनि उनले मलाई सुनाएका थिए। उनी नेपालको ओपन युनिभर्सिटीमा काम गर्न थालेका रहेछन्। मलाई त्यो युनिभर्सिटीका डिन मेरा पूर्व विद्यार्थी डा. रामचन्द्र पौडेलले भनेका थिए। पछि भेटेर चन्द्र लक्सम्बा भाइले पनि भने। मेरो केही सहभागिता हुनसक्थ्यो कि अनलाइन पठनपाठनको सिलसिलामा भनेर उनले मलाई सोधेका थिए। तर त्यसपछि हाम्रो भेट भएन। पछि अकस्मात सुने चन्द्र लक्सम्बा भाइ आफ्ना परिवार श्रीमती र छोराबुहारी भेट्न बेलायत गएका थिए। त्यहीँ उनलाई कोभिड सङ्क्रमण भयो जस्को कारणले यी महान कर्मशील, धेरैका प्रिय र धेरै सुन्दर विचार र योजना भएका चन्द्र लक्सम्बा भाइको जनवरी २६, २०२१ को दिन अस्पतालमा निधन भयो। एउटा गति र

गन्तव्यको दृष्टि भएका अनि विगतको इतिहास र भविताका योजनाका पुञ्ज यी भाइको निधनको खबरले अत्यन्त शोकाकुल भएँ। अहिले पनि त्यसबाट निस्केको छैन। जनवरी ३०, २०२१ को द काठमाडौँ पोस्टमा उनको एउटा ओबिचुअरी लेखें। त्यसमा इतिहास र एम्नेसिया अथवा विस्मृतिको कुरा लेखें। यो विषय चन्द्र लक्सम्बासँग मैले छलफल पनि गरेको थिएँ। उनले पनि ब्रिटिश गोर्खाको इतिहासमा एम्नेसिया एउटा ठुलो समस्या र कसैको निम्त एउटा योजना हो भन्ने कुरा गरेका थिएँ। अहिलेलाई यत्ति नै लेखेर डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा भाइलाई गहिरो सम्भनासहितको श्रद्धाञ्जलि अर्पण गर्छु।

सेप्टेम्बर २०२२।

मण्डिखाटा, काठमाडौँ निवासी डा. अभि सुवेदी त्रिभुवन विश्वविद्यालय, काठमाडौँका सेवानिवृत्त प्राध्यापक हुनुहुन्छ। नेपाली र अङ्ग्रेजी दुवै भाषामा निरन्तर कलम चलाउने प्रोफसर सुवेदी कवि, नाटककार, स्तम्भकार, अनुवादक, समीक्षक हुनुहुन्छ।

अस्ताएका नक्षत्र : डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा

प्रा. गणेश मान गुरुङ

क्लर्कदेखि डाक्टरसम्म

ताप्लेजुङ जिल्लाको सिकैंचामा वि.सं. २०१७ साल फागुन महिनाको ८ गते जन्मनुभएका चन्द्रकुमार लक्सम्बालाई नेपालीहरूका लागि एउटा उदाहरणीय, बहुआयामिक व्यक्तित्वको रूपमा गणना गर्न सकिन्छ भन्ने कुरामा दुईमत हुने देखिदैन। यस्तो प्रतिभाशाली व्यक्तिको जीवनीबाट हामी सबैलाई केही सिक्ने अवसर प्राप्त भएको अनुभव गरेको छु। नेपालको सन्दर्भमा लाहुरे हुन हुरुक्क हुने समुदायभित्र गुरुङ, मगर, राई र लिम्बू पर्दछन् र लिम्बू परिवारमा हुर्कनुभएका चन्द्र लक्सम्बाले विद्यावारिधि गरी डाक्टर हुन्छु भनेर कहिल्यै सोचेका थिएनन् होला। तर आफ्नो समुदाय भित्रका सुकिलो मुकिलो लाहुरेहरू देख्दा कहिले कता मनमा लाहुरे हुने कल्पनासम्म आएको हो कि भनि अन्दाज गर्न सकिएला। सानै उमेरदेखि उहाँ विद्यालय जाने क्रममा ताप्लेजुङको भानु माध्यमिक विद्यालयबाट एसएलसी उत्तीर्ण भएपछि काठमाडौँको अत्यन्त नाम चलेको र शैक्षिक गुणस्तरको हिसाबले उच्च स्थान पाएको अस्कल क्याम्पस (अमृत साइन्स क्याम्पस) मा आईएस्सी परीक्षा सफलतापूर्वक पूरा गर्नुभयो। शैक्षिक गुणस्तरको हिसाबले अस्कल कुनै बेला एउटा नमुना क्याम्पसको रूपमा परिचित हुँदै एउटा बेस्ले पहिचान लिएर प्रस्तुत भएको इतिहास छ। त्यसैले यस क्याम्पसमा अध्ययन गरेका धेरै विद्यार्थीहरू देशको विभिन्न निकायमा उच्च पद ग्रहण गरी देशको सेवा गर्दै गरेको देख्न पाइन्छ।

अस्कलको विद्यार्थी राजनीति चर्को थियो र देशमा हुने भ्रष्टाचार, अन्याय, अत्याचार विरुद्ध लड्ने एउटा बलियो शक्ति पनि थियो। उक्त अस्कल क्याम्पसमा अध्ययनरत हुँदा विद्यार्थी जगतमा उहाँ कति लोकप्रिय हुनु हुँदोरहेछ

भने उक्त क्याम्पसको विद्यार्थी राजनीतिको नेतृत्व नेपाल विद्यार्थी संघ (नेविसंघ)ले लिने गरेको इतिहास भए पनि उहाँले त्यो बिरासत तोडेर अखिलको उम्मेदवार भइ निर्वाचनमा भिड्नुभयो र अध्यक्ष पदमा निर्वाचित हुनुभएको हिसाबले उहाँको राजनीतिमा पनि राम्रो भविष्य बन्ने थियो भन्ने अनुमान गर्न सकिन्छ । तर पारिवारिक परिवेश र आफ्ना साथीभाइको संगतले मानिसको जीवनमा निककै प्रभाव पर्दछ भन्ने कुरा समाजशास्त्रीय विषयवस्तुभित्र पर्दछ ।

यसरी हेर्दा साँच्चै नै चन्द्र लक्सम्बा पनि ब्रिटिश सेनाभित्र सन् १९८४ मा प्रवेश गर्नुभयो तर एउटा विज्ञान विषयको विद्यार्थीलाई बन्दुक खेलाउन जानु उचित थिएन होला र उहाँ सुरुमा क्लर्कको पदमा छानिनु भएअनुसार आफ्नो काममा जुट्नुभयो । तर उहाँ अत्यन्त मिहिनेती, हेर्दा उहाँजस्तो हँसिलो अनुहार र क्रियाशील ठिटो देखेपछि गोरा साहेब प्रभावित भएर नै उहाँलाई विभिन्न कोणले खासगरी सेनाको अधिकृत भइ काम गर्न सक्ने क्षमता देखेर क्लर्कबाट इन्फ्यान्ट्रीको रूपमा ७ जीआरमा लिएको रहेछ । उहाँले १९ वर्षसम्म ब्रिटिश सेनामा सेवा गरेपछि सन् २००३ मा सेवाबाट अवकाश लिनु भएपश्चात उहाँले बेलायतको सरे युनिभर्सिटीबाट सन् २००५ मा “नेपालमा जीवन पर्यन्त सिकाई” विषयमा विद्यावारिधि गर्नुभएको थियो । तर सैनिक सेवामा हुँदा नै समय मिलाएर उहाँले सोही विश्वविद्यालयबाट पहिले नै एमफील गर्नुभएको रहेछ ।

प्राज्ञिक नेता

उहाँका कृतिहरू हेर्दा उहाँ लेखपढ अर्थात प्राज्ञिक क्षेत्रमा चुर्लुम्म डुबेको देखेको छु । अर्थात् शैक्षिक क्षेत्रमा रमाइ रहेको देखिन्छ । यसको प्रत्यक्ष प्रमाण हो कि उहाँ बेलायतमा रहँदा पनि सेन्टर फर नेपाल स्टडिज (सीएनएस) युकेमा कार्यकारी निर्देशक भै सफलतापूर्वक जिम्मेवारी निर्वाह गर्नुभयो । यसरी नै विश्वकै एक प्रतिष्ठित शैक्षिक संस्था-अक्सफोर्ड विश्वविद्यालयमा रिसर्च फेलो भएर काम गर्नुभयो जुन जीवनको एक महत्त्वपूर्ण अध्याय हो । उहाँका थुप्रै अनुसन्धानात्मक कृतिहरू देख्न पाइन्छ जसमध्ये पोलिसी एण्ड प्राक्टिस अफ लाइफलड लर्निङ इन नेपाल : अ सोसियोपोलिटिकल स्टडी र गोर्खा पेन्सन सम्बन्धी पुस्तक अति महत्त्वपूर्ण छन् ।

पठनपाठनको स्वाद मन पराउने डा. लक्सम्बा सन् २०१८ देखि नेपाल खुल्ला विश्वविद्यालयमा पढाउन लाग्नु मात्र नभइ एमफील र पीएचडीका विद्यार्थीहरूको शोध निर्देशक भएर जिम्मेवारी निर्वाह गर्नुभयो । समाजशास्त्र विषयको पाठ्यक्रम निर्माण गर्न लाग्नुभयो । यसै गरेर गोर्खा भ्वाइसको संस्थापक सम्पादक भएर काम गर्नु भयो ।

सामाजिक अभियन्ता

एउटा समाजशास्त्री भनेको नै सामाजिक प्राणी हो र अरू कसैलाई पनि सामाजिक बनाउन समाजशास्त्रीहरूका लागि गाह्रो नभएको उदाहरणीय व्यक्ति हुनुहुन्छ, डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा । विभिन्न संघ-संस्थामा भएको उहाँको संलग्नता सामान्य सहभागिता मात्र नभै नेतृत्वदायी भूमिका हुनु मननयोग्य रहेको छ । गोर्खा पेन्सनरहरू लामो समयदेखि आफूहरूमाथि भएको विभेदको लडाईंमा उहाँले *ब्रिटिश गोर्खा निवृत्तिभरणसम्बन्धी नीतिहरू* र *भूतपूर्व गोर्खा अभियान : एक समिक्षा* (२०१४, २०१९) मा योगदान दिनुभएको थियो र गोर्खा आन्दोलनमा समेत ठुलो सहयोग दिनुभएको थियो । यसरी नै गैरआवासीय नेपाली संघ युकेमा उपाध्यक्ष र किराँत याक्थुङ चुम्लुङ युकेको सल्लाहकार भएर आफ्नो समाजप्रति गुण लगाउनुभएको देखिन्छ । अफ्रमाइलो र महत्त्वपूर्ण काम भनेकै सन् २०१७ मा बेलायती सरकारले गठन गरेको नेपाल सरकार, बेलायत सरकार र गोर्खा सम्मिलित त्रिपक्षीय प्राविधिक समितिमा विज्ञ भएर काम गर्नुभयो । यो सबैका लागि महत्त्वपूर्ण क्षण हो भन्ने लाग्दछ । विदेशमा बसेर आफ्नो गाउँघरको सम्भना गर्ने व्यक्तित्व डा. लक्सम्बाले आफ्नो जन्मथलो ताप्लेजुड समाज बेलायतको अध्यक्ष भएर जिम्मेवारी बहन गर्न सफल हुनुभयो ।

मेरो अनुभव

मेरो उहाँसँग प्रत्यक्ष भेट भएको थिएन तर उहाँको बारमा थुप्रै कुरा सुनेको थिएँ । समय परिस्थितिको खेल क्याप्टेन टेक बहादुर गुरुङ र बैनी रेशमा गुरुङको छोरी योजना गुरुङ भान्जी उहाँको बुहारी बन्न पुगेपछि उहाँ नातेदारी परिभाषामा पर्नुभएको हुँदा अफ्रम नजिकिएँ र बढी चासो लिन थालें । मेरो आफ्नो छोरी, छोरा, बुहारी र नाति नातिनीहरू भेट्न बेलायत गएको बेला उहाँको सम्धी क्याप्टेन टेक बहादुर गुरुङ र सम्धिनी रेशमा गुरुङ र भान्जी योजनाको कारणले चिनिन पुगेको थिएँ । एकदिन समाजशास्त्र र देशको विकासबारे घण्टौँ गफ गर्ने अवसर पाएको थिएँ खाने बेलामा । उहाँको जीवनभित्रको संघर्ष र सफलता सुनेर म ज्यादै प्रभावित भएको थिएँ । यसबाहेक उहाँ पनि समाजशास्त्र विधाको हुनुभएकोले हाम्रा गफगाफ अफ्र लम्बिएर गएको थियो (सायद हाम्रो गफ अरूलाई बुझ्ने र मनपर्दो नभएको हुनसक्दथ्यो) । जे भए पनि उहाँ एक इमान्दार, परिश्रमी र महत्त्वाकाङ्क्षी व्यक्ति मात्र नभै विद्वान भएको महशुस भयो । केही दिनको बसाइँपछि म आफ्ना छोरा छोरी र नातिनीहरूसँग बिदा भएर हडकड हुँदै नेपाल फर्केँ ।

नेपाल फर्केपछि पनि उहाँको सम्भना आइरहन्थ्यो र त्यस्तो विद्वान व्यक्तिलाई राज्यले सम्भन्नु पर्ने, सम्बोधन गर्नु पर्ने जस्तो लाग्दथ्यो तर हाम्रो देश र

नेताहरू त्यस्तो अवस्थामा, त्यस्तो सोचमा पुगेको जस्तो लाग्दैन । यहाँ त आफ्ना नातेदार र वरपरकालाई अवसर दिने चलन छ । एक दिन लुम्बिनी विश्वविद्यालयका उपकुलपति प्रा.डा. हृदयरत्न बज्राचार्यज्यूले लुम्बिनी विश्वविद्यालय सभाका लागि सदस्यहरू भरसक सबै प्रदेश र क्षेत्रको प्रतिनिधित्व हुने गरी योग्य र सक्षम व्यक्तिहरू राख्न पाए हुन्थ्यो भनी मेरो सानो सल्लाह मान्नुभएको सम्झना मेरो मानसपटलमा अझै पनि ताजा नै छ । उपकुलपतिज्यूले त्यस्तो व्यक्तित्वहरूको नाम दिन आग्रह भएपछि मैले डा. लक्सम्बाको अनुमति लिएर उहाँको नाम पठाएँ । योग्यता, क्षमता र समावेशीकरणको दृष्टिकोणले उहाँ उपयुक्त हुनुहुन्थ्यो र उहाँ नेपाल सरकारबाट लुम्बिनी विश्वविद्यालयको सिनेटरमा नियुक्त हुनुभयो । उहाँ खुसी हुनु ठुलो कुरा भएन तर एउटा सक्षम व्यक्तिको उचित मूल्याङ्कन भएको क्षण मेरो लागि ज्यादै खुसीको विषय हुन आयो । खुसी यस अर्थमा लाग्यो कि एउटा दुर्गम जिल्ला ताप्लेजुङको एउटा लिम्बू परिवारमा जन्म लिएर लाहुरे हुँदै विद्यावारिधि उपाधि प्राप्त गर्न सफल एउटा विद्वानको साहसिक र महत्त्वाकाङ्क्षी एवम् संघर्षशील जीवनी हेर्दा जो कोहीका लागि पनि पठनीय एवम् मननयोग्य हुनेछ । अब त्यो समुदायबाट क्याम्ब्रिज र अक्सफोर्ड विश्वविद्यालयमा प्राज्ञिक काम गर्ने विद्वानको जन्म हुन कति समय पर्खनु पर्ला ? म सोचिरहेको हुन्छु । एउटा ठुलो क्षति भएको छ सिङ्गो नेपालका लागि ।

उहाँले आफ्नो देशमा केही गरौं भन्ने असल मनसाय लिएर ललितपुर ठेचो कोलोनीमा बस्दै आउनुभएको भए पनि आफ्नो घर परिवार र इष्टमित्र भेटघाट गर्ने उद्देश्यका साथ बेलायत जानुभयो तर फर्केर आउन पाउनु भएन । विश्वव्यापी महामारी कोभिड - १९ को लक्षण देखिएपछि बेलायतको फ्रिम्ली पार्क अस्पतालमा भर्ना भई उपचारको क्रममा हृदयघातबाट उहाँको निधन भएको खबरले मलाई ज्यादै दुःखित बनायो । हामी सबैलाई ५९ वर्षको उमेरमा २०७८ साल माघ १३ गते छोडेर जानुभयो । उहाँको उमेर हेर्दा अझ १०/१२ वर्ष काम गर्न सक्षम हुनुहुन्थ्यो तर त्यो अवसर देश र समाजले गुमाएको छ । केही लाग्दो रहेनछ केवल धैर्यता लिनुबाहेक । यसरी नेपाली आकाशबाट एउटा नक्षत्र सदाका लागि अस्ताएको छ । यो अत्यन्त दुःखद घडी भएको छ ।

अन्त्यमा उहाँको आत्माप्रति श्रद्धा सुमन !

प्रा. गणेश मान गुरुङ गण्डकी विश्वविद्यालयका कुलपति हुनुहुन्छ ।

चन्द्र लक्सम्बा, म र नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालय

डा. जीवन खड्का

डा. चन्द्र कुमार लक्सम्बालाई म 'दाइ' भनेर सम्बोधन गर्थेँ । मेरो भेट उहाँसँग २०७६ सालमा भएको थियो । यद्यपि दाइको बारेमा नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयका तत्कालिन उपकुलपति प्रा. डा. लेखनाथ शर्मा, तत्कालिन डीन प्रा. डा. रामचन्द्र पौडेल र अन्य साथीहरूबाट सुनेको थिएँ । स्पष्ट वक्ता, कामप्रतिको समर्पण, इमान्दारिता तथा प्राज्ञिकता उहाँका सामान्य विशेषता हुन् भन्ने कुराले 'दाइ' प्रति मेरो अगाध सम्मानपूर्ण अवधारणा बनिसकेको थियो । मेरो उहाँसँग बसेर काम गर्ने तीव्र इच्छा थियो । उहाँ भूतपूर्व ब्रिटिश गोर्खा सेना हुनुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँलाई मेरो विद्यालयको हेडसर ईमान सिंह राईको प्रतिविम्बको रूपमा देखेँ । उहाँ पनि भूतपूर्व ब्रिटिश गोर्खा सेना हुनुहुन्थ्यो । म मेरो हेडसरबाट साह्रै प्रभावित थिएँ । आज दुवै जना यस संसारमा हुनुहुन्न । म उहाँहरू दुवै जनाप्रति हार्दिक श्रद्धाञ्जलि र श्रद्धासुमन व्यक्त गर्दछु । लक्सम्बा दाइसँगको मेरो पहिलो भेटमा नै म उहाँसँग प्रभावित भएँ । उहाँको मिजासिलोपन, सभ्य प्रस्तुति, आकर्षक व्यक्तित्व, आत्मविश्वास, ज्ञानप्रतिको मोह आदि मेरा लागि आकर्षणका कारण थिए । यसैले मलाई उहाँसँग सहकार्य गर्ने इच्छा थियो । मेरो यो इच्छा नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयले जुराइ दियो । यसका लागि विश्वविद्यालयलाई धन्यवाद छ ।

नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालय २०७३ सालमा स्थापना भई २०७५/०७६ सालबाट तीनवटा संकायहरू अन्तर्गत विभिन्न शैक्षिक कार्यक्रमहरू सञ्चालन गरिएको थियो । हाम्रो सामाजिक शास्त्र तथा शिक्षा संकायअन्तर्गत सामाजिक शास्त्र समूहमा समाज शास्त्र, राजनीति शास्त्र र अर्थशास्त्र विषयमा एमफील तहका कार्यक्रमहरू सञ्चालित थिए । यी कार्यक्रमहरू संचालन गर्न कार्यक्रम

संयोजक तत्काल आवश्यक थियो । सायद २०७६ सालको मध्यतिर होला यसबारे विश्वविद्यालयका पदाधिकारीहरूसँग कुरा राखेँ तर यसबारे लक्सम्बा दाइसँग भने कुरा गरेको थिइनँ । किनकि उहाँलाई Adjunct Professor को नियुक्तिका लागि चर्चा चलिरहेको थियो । तर, प्रक्रिया मिलिरहेको थिएन र Adjunct Professor को नियुक्ति नहुञ्जेल कार्यक्रम संयोजक भएर काम गर्न सहमत हुनुहुन्छ भन्ने कुरामा मलाई विश्वास थियो । यसबारे मैले विश्वविद्यालयका पदाधिकारीहरूबाट सकारात्मक जवाफ पाएपछि लक्सम्बा दाइसँग कार्यक्रम संयोजक भएर सहयोग गरिदिन आग्रह गरेँ । उहाँले मेरो आग्रहलाई सहजताका साथ स्वीकार गर्नुभयो । सायद त्यो दिन मेरा खुसीका दिनहरू मध्ये एउटा दिन थियो । मैले एउटा असल अभिभावक पाएको थिएँ । बौद्धिक सल्लाहकार पाएको थिएँ । मेरो काम गर्ने मनोबल अरू मजबुत भएको महसुस गरिरहेको थिएँ । सिँगै विश्वविद्यालयले एक होनहार बौद्धिक व्यक्तित्व प्राप्त गरेको थियो । विश्वविद्यालयले पदीय रूपमा कार्यक्रम संयोजक मात्र पाएको थिएन एक असल प्राध्यापक, एक अब्बल अनुसन्धाता र नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयलाई अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय बौद्धिक क्षेत्रमा परिचित गराउने सहजकर्ता पाएको थियो ।

विशेषतः उहाँको जिम्मेवारी कार्यक्रमको संयोजन, प्राध्यापन र शोधकार्यको सुपरीवेक्षण थियो । आफू रहुन्जेल यी जिम्मेवारीहरू पूरा गर्नु नै भयो । यसको अतिरिक्त लक्सम्बा दाइले अलिखित विषयहरू जस्तै: विश्वविद्यालयमा काम गर्ने संस्कृति र वातावरण निर्माण, कामप्रति समर्पणभाव, नविनतम र सिर्जनात्मक कार्यमा जोड दिनुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँको कार्यशैलीबाट मलाई अनुभूति हुन्थ्यो कि लिखित जिम्मेवारी पूरा गरेर मात्र कुनै शिक्षक, कर्मचारी वा प्रशासक सफल नहुने रहेछ । अलिखित जिम्मेवारी थुप्रै हुने रहेछन् । आफ्ना सेवाम्राही जस्तै: विश्वविद्यालयमा विद्यार्थीहरू र आफ्ना सहकर्मीप्रतिको व्यवहार, प्रेरणादायी भूमिका, माथिल्लो निकाय र तल्लो निकायहरू बिच समन्वय गर्ने क्षमता पनि उक्तिकै महत्त्वपूर्ण हुने रहेछन् ।

सामाजिक विज्ञान र यससम्बन्धी शोधका विषयहरू उहाँका प्राध्यापनका प्राथमिकता थिए । यिनै विषयहरू प्राध्यापन गर्ने क्रममा छोटो समयमा नै लक्सम्बा दाइ विद्यार्थीहरूको मन मनमा बस्न सफल हुनुभएको थियो । विद्यार्थीहरूले शोध गर्ने क्रममा उहाँ नै पहिलो छनोटको शोध निर्देशक पर्नुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँ दर्जनौं शोधार्थीहरूको निर्देशक हुनुहुन्थ्यो । आफ्नो नियमित कक्षाको अतिरिक्त अन्य स्वदेशी तथा विदेशी विश्वविद्यालयका प्राध्यापकहरूलाई स्रोत व्यक्तिको

रूपमा ल्याइ अनलाइन माध्यमबाट अतिथि कक्षाको व्यवस्था गर्नुहुन्थ्यो। यस विश्वविद्यालयमा उहाँको अन्तिम दिनसम्म शोध निर्देशनमा उहाँले आफ्नो सम्पूर्ण समय दिनुभयो। प्राध्यापन र शोध निर्देशनको अतिरिक्त लेखरचना लेखन र प्रकाशनमा समेत दाइको महत्त्वपूर्ण योगदान थियो। उहाँसँगैको सहकार्यमा लेखन र प्रकाशन गर्न जर्नल पब्लिकेशनको निर्देशिका मस्यौदा समेत तयार पारियो। यद्यपि अहिलेसम्म कार्यान्वयनमा ल्याउन सकिएको छैन। सामान्य अवस्था होस् वा कोभिड १९ को महामारीको समय होस् अन्तिम घडीसम्म विश्वविद्यालयको काममा लक्सम्बा दाइको देनमा कुनै कमी थिएन।

नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालय अनलाइन माध्यमबाट सञ्चालित विश्वविद्यालय भएता पनि कोभिड १९ को महामारीबाट टाढा रहन सकेन। अनलाइन माध्यमबाट कक्षाहरू जसोतसो सम्पन्न गरियो। तर अन्तिम परीक्षा सञ्चालनमा समस्या परिरहेको थियो। यसअघि अन्तिम परीक्षाहरू भौतिक रूपमा नै सञ्चालन गर्ने व्यवस्था थियो। अनलाइन माध्यमबाट परीक्षा सञ्चालन निर्देशिका तयार गर्न आवश्यक थियो। उक्त निर्देशिका तयार गर्न अन्य विश्वविद्यालयहरूका अभ्यास, सरोकार पक्षको चासो, अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय अनुभवहरूलाई समेट्न आवश्यक थियो। यसका लागि खासगरी अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय विज्ञहरू सहभागी गराउन लक्सम्बा दाइको महत्त्वपूर्ण योगदान रह्यो। अक्सफोर्ड विश्वविद्यालय र वकिडघम विश्वविद्यालयका प्रोफेसर हरूले अनलाइन माध्यमबाट परीक्षा सञ्चालनसम्बन्धी आफ्ना महत्त्वपूर्ण अनुभवहरू सुनाउनुभयो। यसबाट अनलाइन परीक्षा सञ्चालन सम्बन्धी निर्देशिका Students' Authentic Assessment System Implementation Framework-2077 तयार गर्न सम्भव भयो। यही निर्देशिकाको आधारमा कोभिड १९ को महामारीमा पनि यस विश्वविद्यालयको अन्तिम परीक्षाहरू सञ्चालन गर्न सकियो।

लक्सम्बा दाइलाई Adjunct Professor को नियुक्ति दिने प्रक्रिया चलिरहेको थियो। उहाँकै अनुसार दाइको योग्यताका प्रमाणपत्रहरू समकक्षता निर्धारण गर्नु थियो। यसका लागि उहाँ बेलायत जानुपर्ने भयो। त्यो समय कोभिडको महामारी संसारभरि नै फैलिएको थियो। दिनदिनै लाखौंको संख्यामा रोगको सङ्क्रमण र हजारौंको संख्यामा मृत्यु हुनेको दर बढिरहेको थियो। हामी सबै असुरक्षित महसुस गरिरहेका थियौं। यद्यपि हाम्रा नियमित कार्यक्रमहरू अनलाइन मोडमा सञ्चालन गरिरहेका थियौं। लक्सम्बा दाइ पनि नियमित रूपमा शैक्षिक कार्यक्रममा संलग्न हुनुहुन्थ्यो। यसै बिचमा १८ जनवरी २०२१ मा मलाई लक्सम्बा दाइको यस्तो ब्यहोराको ईमेल आयो :- “Please, find the attached self-

explanatory email from Professor David Gellner. As I informed you earlier, currently I am receiving COVID's treatment at Frimley Park Hospital." यस ईमेललाई सुरुमा त्यति संवेदनशीलरूपमा लिइँँ । किनकि लाखौँको संख्यामा सङ्क्रमित हुने र निको हुने क्रम जारी थियो । फेरि विकसित मुलुकमा हुनुभएकोले उपचार राम्रै होला भन्ने लागेको थियो । अचानक दाइलाई आइसीयूम राखिएको खबर आयो । यो खबरले अलि मनमा भस्का पर्न थाल्यो । तापनि ठीक हुन्छ भन्नेमा पूर्ण विश्वास थियो । तर ईश्वरको लीला नै होला आखिर लक्षम्बा दाइको मृत्युको दुखद खबर सुन्नु पयो । फेसबुकमा 'Rest in Peace' लेख्नु र '19th February 2021' मा दाहसंस्कार कार्यक्रमको 'Live Broadcast' सहभागी हुनुबाहेक अरू केही गर्न सकिएन । दाइको बैकुण्ठमा बास होस् । दाइसँगका अन्तरङ्गहरू सम्भनामा रहिरहने छन् । हामी र दाइ बीचमा गरिएका प्रतिवद्धता पूरा गर्ने कोसिस गर्नेछौँ । नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयले यहाँले पुन्याउनु भएको योगदानको सँधै-सँधै स्मरण गरिरहने छ ।

अलविदा चन्द्र दाइ !

डा. जीवन खड्का नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयमा शिक्षा विषयका सहप्राध्यापक तथा समाज विज्ञान तथा शिक्षा संकायको कार्यक्रम संयोजक पनि हुनुहुन्छ ।

लाहुरे सरसँगको छोटो शैक्षिक यात्रा

अशोककुमार अधिकारी

“बेलायतजस्ता विकसित राष्ट्रहरूमा त अदालती फैसलाहरूमा समेत पीडितको बौद्धिक पूँजी (नलेज क्यापिटल) र प्रतिकात्मक पूँजी (सिम्बोलिक क्यापिटल) मा परेको क्षतिको पनि लेखाजोखा गरेर क्षतिपूर्ति दाबी गरिन्छ नि”, डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाले पहिलो भेटमा भन्नुभएको यो वाक्यांशले साँच्चै नै मेरो शैक्षिक तथा वैचारिक जीवनयात्रामा घनिभूत प्रभाव पारेको छ । नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयमा एमफीलको पहिलो ब्याचको भर्चुअल कक्षामा एक दिन डीन प्रा. डा. रामचन्द्र पौडेलले भन्नुभयो, “तपाईंहरूलाई स्वतन्त्र अध्ययन (इन्डिपेन्डेन्ट स्टडिज) पढाउन प्रशस्त अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय अनुभव प्राप्त, बेलायतमा गोर्खा सैनिकबाट समेत निवृत्त एकजना विद्वानको व्यवस्था गरेका छौं ।” त्योभन्दा अगावै विद्यार्थीहरूलाई केही अध्ययन सामग्रीहरूसहित अध्ययनमा प्रेरणा दिँदै एक व्यक्तिबाट बारम्बार इमेलहरू आइरहने गर्थ्यो । अनि त्यो इमेल पठाउने ब्यक्ति अरू कोही नभएर उही डा. लक्सम्बा नै हुनुहुन्थ्यो ।

सधैं अनलाइनबाटै कक्षा हुने हुँदा शिक्षक त के, हामी विद्यार्थीहरूको बिचमा पनि भौतिकरूपमा चिनजान हुन पाएको थिएन । नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयल नेपालमा अनलाइनबाट उच्च तहको अध्ययन गर्ने अवसर प्रदान गरेको हुँदा लगभग सबै विद्यार्थी आफ्नो पेसा व्यवसायमा लागिस्केकाहरू थियौं । तैपनि कहिलेकाहीँ शिक्षक नभएको मौका छोपी शिक्षकहरूको बारेमा कुरा गर्न पाउँदा साँच्चै नै विद्यार्थी भएको जस्तो रमाइलो अनुभव हुन्थ्यो । त्यसै क्रममा एकजना पश्चिम नेपालतिरको साथीले भन्नुभयो, “हामीलाई त एक जना लाहुरे सरले पढाउने रेन्त अब ।”

धेरैले कुरा बुभेनन् । कतिपयले बुभेजस्तो गरी चुप लागे । अन्यले 'पर्खौ र हेरौ' भन्ने प्रतिक्रिया दिए । नभन्दै केही दिनपश्चात हामीलाई उनै लक्सम्बा सरले कक्षा लिन सुरु गर्नुभयो । पुरातन शैक्षिक पद्धतिबाटै गुञ्जिँदै आएका हुनाले होला सायद हामी सबैलाई लक्सम्बा सरको शिक्षण अभ्यासले पृथक अनुभूति गरायो । विश्वविद्यालयहरूमा प्राध्यापकहरूलाई भेट्न नसकेर अनि सिकाई सामग्रीहरू नपाएर आजित हुँदै पढ्ने बानी परेका हामीहरूलाई उहाँको शिक्षण सिकाईमा आफैँ अग्रसरता लिनै शैलीले कहिलेकाहीँ लज्जास्पद पनि बनाउने गर्थ्यो । कतिपय साथीहरू त 'तिर्खा धाउने बेलामा कतै खोला धाएको जस्तो त भएन' भन्ने समेत गर्थे । प्रचुर मात्रामा सामग्रीहरू उपलब्ध गराई विद्यार्थीहरूलाई सिक्न उत्प्रेरित गरिरहनु र उनीहरूको सिकाई उपलब्धिका बारेमा बारम्बार जानकारी लिइरहनु उहाँको प्रमुख विशेषता थियो ।

सुरु सुरुमा त धेरैलाई उहाँको शैली चिन्नै निकै समय लाग्यो । उहाँले के पढाउँदै हुनुहुन्थ्यो भन्ने कुरा बुझ्न गाह्रो पनि हुन्थ्यो । किनकि उहाँले कहिल्यै पनि कुनै पनि कुरा सही वा गलत हो भनेर सिधै भन्नु भएन । बरु उहाँ त समाधानका लागि विभिन्न विकल्पहरू प्रस्तुत गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । अनि "तपाईंलाई के सही लाग्छ ?" भनेर उल्टै प्रश्न गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँको यस ढङ्गको शिक्षण रणनीतिलाई धैर्यता राख्न सक्नेले मात्र बुझ्थे । कसैकसैलाई उहाँको त्यो शैलीलाई पचाउन गाह्रो परिरहेको पनि हुन्थ्यो । तर पनि अन्त्यमा जब कुरो बुझिन्थ्यो, अनि सबैजना चकित पर्थे । उहाँ त आफूले बताएर भन्दा पनि विद्यार्थीहरूले सधैं आत्मानुभूति गरेरै सिकुनु भन्ने चाहनुहुन्थ्यो । यस किसिमको विद्यार्थी केन्द्रित फरक शैक्षणिक व्यवहार आधुनिक पश्चिमा राष्ट्रहरूमा देखिएको नूतन शिक्षण अभ्यासहरूको उपज हो भन्ने हामीलाई लाग्थ्यो ।

"काठमाडौँमा रहेका तपाईंका समकक्षीहरूलाई लिएर नयाँ बानेश्वरको ओरेन्ज क्याफेमा लिएर आउनु होला है, भेट्नु पर्छ", बारम्बारको इमेल आदानप्रदान पछि भएको पहिलो फोन सम्पर्कमा उहाँले मलाई भन्नुभयो । महिनाको भर्चुअल भेटघाट वा चिनजानपश्चात भौतिक रूपमा पहिलोपटक लाहुरे सरसँग भेट हुने अवसर मलाई वि.सं २०७६ को सुरुवाततिर जुरेको थियो । पचासौँ विद्यार्थीहरूमध्ये मलाई नै उक्त भेटघाटका लागि संयोजन गर्न छान्नुभएकोमा फुरुङ्ग परें । त्यसबेला काठमाडौँमा रहेका समकक्षी साथीहरू पुष्प पौडेल, कृष्ण पराजुली, बाबुराम बन्जाडे र म गरी चारजना बेलायतबाट दुई दिनअगाडि मात्र आइपुगुभएका लक्सम्बा सरलाई भेट्न उक्त रेस्टुरेन्टमा जम्मा भयौँ । कल्पना म्याडमसमेतलाई लिएर एक

छिन्मा सर आइपुग्नुभयो । हेर्दै जोशिलो, मिजासिलो, तन र मन दुवैले भर्भराउँदो आफ्नो सरसँग भेट्न पाउँदा हामी सबै दङ्ग थियौं ।

उक्त पहिलो भेटमा नै आफ्नो वैचारिक दृष्टिकोण र ज्ञानको दायराको बारेमा अप्रत्यक्ष रूपमा जानकारी गराउनु हुँदै उहाँले विशेषगरी बौद्धिक पूँजी (नलेज क्यापिटल) र प्रतिकात्मक पूँजी (सिम्बोलिक क्यापिटल) को बारेमा फ्रेन्च मानवशास्त्री पियर बोरड्युको सन्दर्भलाई जोड्दै हामीलाई प्रभावित गर्नुभएको थियो । त्यसभन्दा अगाडि हामी कसैले बोरड्युलाई त्यति धेरै चिनेका रहेनछौं उहाँले प्रवासमा दशकौंसम्म काम गरी बेलायती गोर्खा सैनिकबाट निवृत्त समेत भैसकेको हुँदा अब स्वदेशमा नै बसेर प्राज्ञिक अभ्यास गर्ने ईच्छा पनि जाहेर गर्नुभयो ।

तेस्रो सेमेष्टरमा अनुसन्धानमूलक शोधपत्र तयार पार्नुपर्ने हुँदा हामीहरू अघिल्लो सेमेस्टरहरूदेखि नै विषयवस्तु र उपयुक्त गुरु छनौट गर्नका लागि कसरत गर्दै थियौं । अङ्ग्रेजी शिक्षामा विशिष्टिकरण गर्दै गरेको भए पनि बोरड्युको मानवशास्त्रीय सिद्धान्तलाई आफ्नो अध्ययनको विषय बनाउन सके बढी उपयोगी हुनसक्ने थियो भनेर चन्द्रसँगको सुरुको भेटदेखि नै मनमनै सोचिरहेको थिएँ । मेरो उक्त तब सपना साकार भयो जब उनै लाहुरे सरलाई गुरु थापेर सोही विषयमा शोधपत्र अगाडि बढ्यो ।

शोधपत्रको सिलसिलामा चन्द्र सरलाई भित्रैदेखि चिन्ने अवसर मात्र प्राप्त भएन, हाम्रो सम्बन्ध गुरुचेलाको घेराबाट बाहिर पनि आयो । उहाँलाई सम्पर्क गर्न असाध्यै सजिलो थियो । कुनै कार्य व्यस्तताले फोन नउठे पनि केही समयपछि 'कल' फर्काउन कहिल्यै भुल्नु हुँदैनथ्यो । कयौं पटक हाम्रो प्रत्यक्ष भेट हुने गर्थ्यो । धेरैजसो हाम्रो भेट गर्ने ठाउँ थियो पाटन हस्पिटल अगाडिको कफी सप । अनि अध्ययनका साथै पारिवारिक भलाकुसारी पनि उत्तिकै हुने गर्थ्यो हामीबिच ।

उहाँसँग शोधपत्र अघि बढाउन इच्छुक १५-२० जनामध्ये पाँच जनालाई मात्र उहाँले पहिलो समूहमा लिनुभयो । त्यसमा पनि सबै अङ्ग्रेजी विषयका मात्र । उहाँको शोधपत्र निर्देशन शैली भिन्न थियो । हामीले लेखेको कहिल्यै सही वा गलत भन्नु हुन्नथ्यो तर उहाँको कुरा सुनिसकेपछि हामी आफैं सुधार्न लाग्थ्यौं । केही कुरा गर्न उहाँले सुनाकोठीको आफ्नो घरैमा पनि बोलाउने गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । बारम्बार पावर प्वाइन्ट प्रस्तुति गराउने, गोष्ठी, सेमिनारमा भाग लिन लगाउने अनि समकक्षीबाट पृष्ठपोषण दिलाउने उहाँको शिक्षण विधि थियो । यस्ता कृयाकलापको संयोजन गर्ने जिम्मा सरले मलाई नै दिने गर्नु हुँदा म आफूलाई भाग्यमानी सम्झिन्थेँ । । मेरो

अध्ययनले सर प्रभावित हुनुभएको ठान्थेँ म । मेरो लेखाई हेरेर उहाँ भन्नुहुन्थ्यो “तपाईंको थिसिसको भाईवा गर्न सकेसम्म अक्सफोर्ड विश्वविद्यालयका मानवशास्त्र विभागका प्रमुख प्राध्यापक डेभिड गेल्लर वा बेलायतबाटै डा. कृष्ण अधिकारीलाई बोलाउने कोसिस गर्नेछु ।” एकपटक विश्वविद्यालयमा कार्यक्रम गरी डा. कृष्ण अधिकारीको सामु त प्रस्तुति नै गर्न लगाउनुभयो तर डेभिड गेल्लरसँग कहिल्यै भेट गराउन नसक्ने बाटोमा मेरा गुरु सदाका लागि जानुभयो ।

सबै विद्यार्थीलाई उत्तिकै समय दिनु र समान व्यवहार गर्नु उहाँको प्रमुख विशेषता थियो । यो उहाँको एउटा विलक्षण प्रतिभा थियो । हरेक विद्यार्थीलाई लाग्थ्यो सरले सबैभन्दा बढी मलाई मात्र माया गर्नुहुन्छ । एकादिन यसबारेमा हामीले खुलेरै कुरा गरेका थियौं । उहाँले मलाई सधैं भन्ने गर्नुहुन्थ्यो “जसरी भएपनि तपाईंको थिसिस नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयको पहिलो र उत्कृष्ट हुनुपर्दछ ।” यति मात्र होइन उहाँले मलाई जसरी भएपनि पिएचडी गराउने प्रतिद्धता समेत गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । कहिलेकाहीँ म आफैँ भस्किन्थेँ, उहाँ मेरो शिक्षक कि अभिभावक ? किनकि, कुनै एउटा शिक्षक मात्रले यस्तो व्यवहार गर्न सक्दैन । यस अर्थमा उहाँ मेरो गुरु मात्र नभएर विश्वासिलो साथी एवम् अभिभावक पनि हुनुहुन्थ्यो । अभि उहाँ भन्ने गर्नुहुन्थ्यो, “विद्यार्थीलाई पढाएर मात्र हुँदैन, पढाई बमोजिमको रोजगारीको व्यवस्थापन पनि गर्न सक्नुपर्छ ।”

म फुरुङ्ग थिएँ । अनि संसारको सबैभन्दा भाग्यमानी विद्यार्थी ठान्ने गर्थेँ आफूलाई । उहाँले अध्ययनका अलावा अन्य प्राज्ञिक तथा गैरप्राज्ञिक कामहरूको जिम्मेवारी पनि दिँदै जानुभयो जसले गर्दा लक्सम्बा सरसँगको सामिप्यता भन्ने बढ्दै गयो । जस्तो सीएनएस युकेको रिसर्च परियोजनामा फोटो वर्णनात्मक ‘इथ्नोग्राफिक नोट्स’ लेख्नेदेखि ‘ट्रान्सहिमालयन रिसर्च प्रोजेक्ट’को संयोजन गर्नेसम्म । ट्रान्सहिमालयन रिसर्च प्रोजेक्ट उहाँको स्वप्न परियोजना थियो । यसको उद्देश्यका बारेमा सीमित सरोकारवालाहरू बाहेक धेरैलाई थाहा पनि छैन होला । एक दिन मलाई यसको अवधारणा सेयर गर्नुभयो जसको आधारमा मैले प्रतिवेदन तयार पारेर बुझाएको थिएँ । त्यसबाट प्रभावित भइ उक्त परियोजनाको संयोजक भई काम गर्न सरले मलाई नै जिम्मा दिनुभएको थियो । नेपाल र चीनको सीमा ईलाकामा पर्ने ट्रान्सहिमालयन क्षेत्रमा रहेका भौगोलिक तथा जैविक विविधताका बारेमा यथार्थ चित्रण साथै विकासका सम्भावना सम्बन्धी ब्यापक ब्यावहारिक अध्ययन गर्ने हेतुले यो परियोजना अधि बढाइँदै थियो । अर्कोतिर, प्राज्ञिक क्षेत्रमा पनि लेखरचना तथा पुस्तक प्रकाशित गर्ने योजनाहरू पनि सँगसँगै अधि बढ्दै थिए । विशेषतः

उहाँको निर्देशनमा शोधपत्र तयार पार्दै गरेका हामी ४-५ जना विद्यार्थीहरूलाई लिएर 'लोकोलाइजेसन' को विषयमा सबैले लेख तयार पारी पुस्तक प्रकाशन गर्ने योजना तयार भइसकेको थियो । यति मात्र नभएर पछिल्लो चरणमा नीजि शैक्षिक क्षेत्रमा पनि लगानी गर्ने कार्ययोजना अधि बढिसकेको थियो । उहाँकै सल्लाहबमोजिम म एक नीजि कलेजको क्याम्पस प्रमुखको रूपमा काम पनि गर्दै थिएँ । मेरो शोधपत्रको अन्तिम मूल्याङ्कन हुनुभन्दा अगावै छोटो समयमा यति धेरै सहकार्य हुनुले उहाँसँगको सम्बन्ध अनन्त कालसम्म हुनेछ भन्ने लाग्दथ्यो ।

कोभिड-१९ ले संसार अस्तव्यस्त भएको थियो । जसका कारण समस्त शैक्षिक परिपाटी नै भर्चुअल मोडमा गइसकेको थियो । उता यही बेला मेरो बुबा क्यान्सरबाट जीवन र मृत्युसँग अन्तिम संघर्ष गरिरहनुभएको थियो । महिनौँदेखि हरेक दिन बुबालाई हस्पिटलमा रेडिएसनको दोस्रो साइकलका लागि लाने र ल्याउने नै मेरो दिनचर्या थियो । मेरो बुबाको पनि आफ्नो अन्तिम चाहना मैले एमफील पूरा गरेको हेर्ने थियो । यसै त अनलाइन शिक्षा, मेरो शोधपत्रको अन्तिम मूल्याङ्कन पनि भर्चुअल मोडमा नै भयो । लक्सम्बा सरलगायत विश्वविद्यालयका भिषी, डीन, विभागीय प्रमुखहरू तथा अधिकांश गुरुवर्गको उपस्थितिमा मैले थिसिस डिफेन्स गरें । यो विश्वविद्यालयको नै पहिलो शोधपत्र बन्दै थियो । अनि लक्सम्बा सर पनि मैले थिसिस पूरा गरेको हेर्न चाहनुहुन्थ्यो । यसबाट मेरो मात्र हैन उहाँको पनि खुसीको सीमा रहेन । किनकि यो नै उहाँको खुला विश्वविद्यालयमा पहिलो थिसिस सुपरीवेक्षण थियो । उक्त साँझ उहाँले मलाई फोनमा भन्नुभयोः

तपाईंले मेरो सपना पूरा गरी दिनुभयो । विश्वविद्यालयको इतिहासमा नै यो पहिलो थिसिस बन्यो, बधाई छ । युनिभर्सिटी अफ सरेमा मेरा गुरु प्रोफेसर पिटर जार्भिसले भन्नुहुन्थ्यो, 'हरेक शिक्षकको कुनै खास विद्यार्थी हुन्छ, मेरो अन्तिम संस्कारमा पनि तिमी आउन नछुट्नु है ।' अनि म विद्यार्थीहरूको प्रतिनिधित्व गरेर उहाँ (जार्भिस)को अन्तिम विदाईमा फूल चढाउन पाउने भाग्यमानी विद्यार्थी थिएँ ।

उहाँले त्यसो भनिरहँदा मनमनै प्रश्न गरें, 'उहाँले मलाई किन यस्तो सुनाइरहनुभएको होला । के म पनि उहाँको त्यस्तै खास विद्यार्थी हुँ त ?'

धेरै दिनपछि भाईवरमा कल आयो मेरा उही लाहुरे सरको । उहाँ बेलायतको एक हस्पिटलको बेडबाट नाकमा लगाइएको अक्सिजनको पाइप खोल्दै बोलिरहनुभएको थियो । कोभिडको महामारीलाई छल्दै केही महिना अगावै उहाँ

बेलायत जानुभएको थाहा थियो मलाई । त्यसपछि पनि हाम्रो धेरै पटक कुरा त भई नै रहेको थियो तर यो पटक भने केही हप्तादेखि उहाँसँग सम्पर्क हुन सकिरहेको थिएन । हस्पिटलको बेडबाट बोलिरहनुभएको देख्दा मैले आफैँलाई विश्वास गर्न सकिरहेको थिइनँ । “कोभिडले मज्जाले सतायो, त्यसैले सम्पर्क गर्न सकिनँ, सरी है । अब भोलितिर डिस्चार्ज हुँदैछु, त्यसपछि कुरा गरौंला । हाम्रा प्रोजेक्टका कामहरू अगाडि बढाउँदै लैजानु है” उहाँ भनिरहनुभएको थियो, “सीएनएस युकेको रिसर्च प्रोजेक्टमा तपाईंले पठाउनुभएको इथ्नोग्राफिक नोट्स साँच्चै राम्रो थियो नि ।” मैले उहाँको त्यो अवस्था देखेपछि धेरै कुरा गर्न चाहिनँ । काठमाण्डौमा बस्ने उहाँको छोरा बहारको सम्पर्क नम्बर मागेर बिदा भएँ । म भस्किएँ तैपनि पनि भोलि डिस्चार्ज हुन्छ भनेपछि अलिक ढक्क थिएँ । कसरी जान्नु र, यो नै मेरा गुरुसँगको अन्तिम वार्ता होला भनेर!

भण्डै एक हप्ता बित्यो तर फेरि उहाँसँग सम्पर्क हुन सकेन । म्यासेज पठाएँ तर कुनै जवाफ आएन । मनमा धेरै खुल्दुली भयो । अन्त्यमा काठमाण्डौमा रहेका बहारलाई भाइबरमा सम्पर्क गरें । बहारको कुरा सुनेर हातगोडा गलेर आए, म त्यसै सेलाएँ । “बाबालाई डिस्चार्ज हुने दिनमा ब्रेन ह्यामरेज भयो, त्यसपछि भेन्टिलेटरमा राखियो रे, तर सर्भाइबलको जिरो चान्स भएर अहिले हस्पिटलले भेन्टिलेटरको स्विच अफ गर्न परिवारलाई बोलाएको छ रे । त्यसैका लागि म पनि बेलायत जान भनेर अहिले एयरपोर्टमा आइपुगेको छु, दाइ” बहार भन्दै थिए । दैव संयोग पनि कस्तो । म भर्खर आफ्नो पिताजीको शोकबाट तड्कित गरेको बबुरो । पिताजीको स्वर्गारोहणको ट्याक्कै एक महिना पुगेकै दिन बारसमेत मिलेको, मङ्गलबारकै दिन फेरि आफ्नो गुरुको शोकबाट घायल बनेँ । पिताजीले पनि अन्तिम क्षणसम्म भन्ने गर्नुहुन्थ्यो, “लक्सम्बा सरसँगको सँगतले तेरो कल्याण हुन्छ है । साथ नछोड्नु, मौका मिलाएर मसँग पनि भेट गराउनु ।” दुर्भाग्य, जीवित हुँदासम्म मैले उहाँहरूको कहिल्यै भेट गराउन सकिनँ । पिताजीको स्वर्गवास हुँदा पनि गुरुको आडले जीउन भरपूर मद्दत मिलेको आभास भएको थियो मलाई । तर सब चकनाचूर भयो । मेरा सम्पूर्ण योजना र सपनाहरू गतिहीन र अधूरा बने । खैर, मेरो पिताजी र मेरो गुरुको स्वर्गमा अवश्य भेट भयो नै होला । मेरा यी दुवै अटल आदर्श नक्षत्रहरूलाई हार्दिक श्रद्धाञ्जलि ।

अशोककुमार अधिकारीले नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयबाट एमफील अध्ययन पूरा गर्नुभएको छ ।
उहाँ हाल पाकिस्तानमा बस्नुहुन्छ ।

चन्द्रमा र चन्द्र सर

ओमकुमार श्रेष्ठ

उहाँको मृत्युको खबर फेसबुकको भित्ताभरि पोस्टिदा
 यो मृत्यु, मृत्यु हैन भनेजस्तो
 यो मृत्यु, मृत्यु हैन भनेजस्तो हुने
 भन् नजिक पो भनेजस्तो हुने
 कोरोना लाग्यो रे भन्दा साथीहरू भन्नुहुन्थ्यो
 साथीहरू भन्नुहुन्थ्यो
 उहाँ त राइफल लिएर लडेको मान्छे
 उकाली ओराली भीरपाखा चढेको मान्छे
 अनि दृढ विश्वासमा अघि बढेको मान्छे
 यो नाथे कोरोना के हो र ?
 बिडम्बना, एक योद्धाले जीवनसँग हार्नु पच्यो !
 उहाँ त आकाशको चन्द्रमा जस्तो हुनुहुन्थ्यो
 शिक्षार्थीको अन्धकार मनमास्तिष्कमा
 दिव्यज्ञानको उज्यालो छरी दिनुहुन्थ्यो
 हामीलाई सधैं खोजको
 हामीलाई सधैं खोजको भोक भरी दिनुहुन्थ्यो
 आफैं बाटो खन र बुझकी बन भन्नुहुन्थ्यो
 हामी, हामी जब अलिभन्थ्यौं, रुमलिनथ्यौं
 उहाँ चन्द्रमाजस्तै भुल्लुकक भुल्लुकनुहुन्थ्यो

र त हामी हामीले बाटो पहिल्याउँथ्यौं
 उहाँ, चन्द्रमाजस्तै भुल्लुकक भुल्कनुहुन्थ्यो
 र त हामी हामीले बाटो पहिल्याउँथ्यौं
 उहाँ भन्नुहुन्थ्यो
 उहाँ भन्नुहुन्थ्यो मैले बन्दुक समाएँ
 तै पनि कलमसित रमाएँ
 उहाँ भन्नुहुन्थ्यो मैले बन्दुक समाएँ
 तै पनि कलमसित रमाएँ
 हो, हो हामीलाई यही वाक्य प्रेरणाको स्रोत बन्यो
 अभै, अभै यस्तो लाग्छ
 आकाशमा चन्द्रमा उदाउँदा यो त चन्द्र सर हो
 हाम्रो अधूरो, हाम्रो अपूरो यात्रामा
 उज्यालो बनेर बाटो देखाइरहनु भएको छ
 र भनिरहनु भएको छ
 पटक, पटक भनिरहनु भएको छ
 अघि बढ, गन्तब्यसम्म पुग
 म उज्यालो छरिरहन्छ, म उज्यालो छरिरहन्छु ।

ओमकुमार श्रेष्ठ नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयमा एमफीलको विद्यार्थी हुनुहुन्छ ।

सपनाहरू जिउँदै छन्

डा. सङ्गीता श्रेष्ठ 'स्वेच्छा'

मृत्यु जगजाहेर छ
 सोधेर आउन्न
 मृत्युको समाचार
 त्यो पनि
 ढोका ढकढकाएर आउन्न
 तर पनि,
 त्यो अप्रत्याशित खबर
 अपत्यारिलो थियो
 अविश्वसनीय थियो
 अभ्र,
 अकल्पनीय थियो ।

त्यो दृढ अभिलाषा
 हँसिलो मुहारले सिँचेको
 त्यो जोशिलो अभियान
 एक सामाजिक अभियन्ताले रचेको
 त्यो सुन्दर बाटो
 एक पथ प्रदर्शकले कोरेको
 सबैले कुरिरहे
 आँखा ओभानो नभएसम्म ।
 तर,
 उनी आएनन्
 बस् समाचार आयो

यही भन्दै
 कोरोनाको निर्मम बाढीसँगै बग्यो
 कोरोनाको हुरीसँगै उड्यो
 एक अनन्त यात्रामा
 कहिल्यै नफार्किने गरी लम्क्यो
 बस् यसरी नै
 कोरोनाको कहरसँगै
 साथ हाग्नो पनि छुट्यो ।

तर, ती कोरिएका बाटाहरू
 यथावतै छन्
 बुनिएका ति सपनाहरू
 अभ्रै जीवितै छन्
 परदेशमा देशको अस्तित्व गाड्ने
 स्वदेशमा परदेशको शिक्षा बाँड्ने
 त्यो परिकल्पना
 उनको त्यो सपना
 मर्ने छैनन्
 ती खनेका बाटाहरू
 खेर जाने छैनन्
 किर्नाकि
 मृत्यु त केवल
 भौतिक रूपमा भएको छ
 सपनाहरू त यथावतै छन्
 त्यसैगरी,
 ती सपनासँगै सपना देख्ने
 कयौँ जोडी आँखाहरू
 त्यो सपना पूरा गर्ने
 आज नयाँ सपना पनि त देख्दैछन् ।

डा. सङ्गीता श्रेष्ठ 'स्वेच्छा' नेपाल अध्ययन केन्द्र युके (सिएनएसयुके) मा रिसर्च असोसियेटको रूपमा कार्यरत हुनुहुन्छ। उहाँले यो कविता डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको श्रद्धाञ्जलि सभामा वाचन गर्नुभएको थियो।

Section D: Gurkha Soldier and Rights Activist गोर्खा लाहुरे र अधिकारकर्मी

२३

सम्भनामा डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा

जीत गुरुङ

सन् १९८३ अक्टोबर महिनामा म पहिलोपटक धरान पुगेको थिएँ। बेलायती सेनामा एउटा क्लर्कको रूपमा भर्ना हुनका लागि। पहिलो चरणको भर्ना प्रक्रियाहरू पोखरामा सम्पन्न गरेर पश्चिम नेपालबाट हामी ३० जना उम्मेदवारहरू छानिएका थियौँ। अर्को अन्तिम भर्ना प्रक्रियाका लागि धरान जानु पर्ने थियो। उता पूर्वी नेपालको कोटाबाट पनि ३० जना उम्मेदवारहरू अन्तिम चरणका लागि तयार भएर बसेका थिए।

मेरो धरान भ्रमण पहिलो पटक भएकोले ठाउँ, मानिस र त्यहाँको दैनिक हलचलहरू सबै नौलो लागि रहेको थियो। त्यसबेला हाम्रा पूर्वी नेपालका प्रतिद्वन्द्वीहरूमध्ये एकजना निकै चल्तापुर्जा देखिन्थे। उनी सबै जनासँग हात मिलाउँदै, परिचय गर्दै त्यहाँको वातावरणलाई सहज बनाउँदै थिए। उनको परिचय खुलासा भएपछि मात्र थाहा भयो कि उनी चन्द्रकुमार लक्सम्बा थिए।

चन्द्रले अमृत साइन्स कलेजमा विद्यार्थी राजनीति गरिसकेका रहेछन्। साथै हामी बेलायती सेनामा भर्ना हुनुभन्दा अगावै पनि उनले धरानको मेडिकल सेन्टरमा काम गरिसकेका रहेछन्। त्यसकारण उनलाई त्यहाँको कर्मचारीहरू, विधि र प्रविधिहरू अनि रहनसहनबारे राम्रो ज्ञान भइसकेको रहेछ। चन्द्र धेरै मिलनसार र सहयोगी भावना भएका व्यक्ति थिए। हामी पश्चिम नेपालबाट छनौट भएर गएको टोलीलाई उनले धेरै कुरामा जानकारी दिएर सहयोग गरेका थिए। जस्तै, क्याम्पको संरचनाको बारेमा, त्यहाँको रहनसहन, गर्न हुने र नहुने कुराहरू (डूज एण्ड डन्टस्)

को विषयमा । उनको सहयोगले गर्दा त्यो नौलो ठाउँमा जाँदा पनि, बेलायती सेनामा भर्ना हुनका लागि चाहिने प्रक्रियाहरूको सहजीकरणमा ठुलो मद्दत मिलेको थियो ।

धरानमा भर्ती प्रक्रिया पूरा भएर नतिजा प्रकाशन हुँदा पूर्वको ३० जना र पश्चिमको ३० जनामध्येबाट जम्मा २५ जना बेलायती सेनामा क्लर्कको रूपमा भर्ना हुन सफल भएका थियौं । चन्द्र र म पनि त्यही २५ जनाभित्र परेका थियौं । त्यही दिनदेखि चन्द्र र मेरो सम्बन्ध गोर्खा सैनिकको भाषामा नम्बरी अर्थात एउटै ब्याचमा परिणत भयो ।

हामी छनौट भएपछि करिब तीन महिनाको बिदा थियो । त्यसपछि नम्बरी चन्द्र र हाम्रो ब्याचकाहरू सबैजना सन् १९८४ को जनवरी महिनामा पोखरा र धरान क्याम्पमा रिपोर्ट गर्न हाजिर भयौं । पश्चिमबाट छनौट भएका हामी दश जना पोखरामा हाजिर भयौं र चन्द्र लगायत १५ जना पूर्वका नम्बरीहरू धरानमा हाजिर भए । केही समय पोखरा र धरानमा बिताएपछि हामी सबै जना हडकड गयौं र आधारभूत सैनिक तालिम सुरु गर्नुभयो ।

डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा अरू नम्बरीहरूभन्दा अलि पाको र अनुभवी अनि सक्षम सिपाही थिए । त्यसैले हडकडको आधारभूत तालिम उनले सजिलै पूरा गरेका थिए । सैनिक आधारभूत तालिम सकिने बित्तिकै हामी क्लर्कहरू (बाबुजी भनेर पनि बोलाइन्थ्यो) सैनिक प्रशासनको तालिम गर्न थप तीन महिना तालिम केन्द्रमै बस्नु परेको थियो । त्यस तालिममा पनि चन्द्रले राम्रो गरेका थिए ।

लाहुरे पृष्ठभूमिबाट आएको र धरानमा पनि काम गरिसकेकोले होला चन्द्रले जागिरको सुरुवातमै धेरै मान्छे चिनिसकेका रहेछन् । धेरैसँग सजिलै हेलमेल हुनसक्ने क्षमता भएकोले पनि होला उनले तालिमको बेला त्यति दुःख सहनु परेन । चन्द्रले मलाई पनि उच्च तहका धेरै अधिकृतहरूसँग परिचय गराएका थिए । हामी दुवैजना सैनिक जागिरको दौरानमा आफ्नो शैक्षिक योग्यता बढाउनुपर्छ भन्ने मनसाय भएका व्यक्तिहरू परेकोले हाम्रो मित्रता एउटा लाहुरे नम्बरीभन्दा भिन्दै, फरक थियो । हाम्रो भेटघाटमा चन्द्रले आफूले गर्दै गरेको शैक्षिक अध्ययनहरूबारे मलाई सुनाइराखे । मलाई थाहा भएअनुसार चन्द्रले युनिभर्सिटी अफ लन्डनबाट बाह्य विद्यार्थी भएर स्नातक पूरा गरेका थिए ।

ब्याचलर डिग्री हासिल गर्न सफल भएपछि उनले मास्टर्स र एमफीलको अध्ययन पनि थालेको थाहा भयो । पल्टन घरको दैनिकी भ्याएर पनि एकस्ट्रा मुल

एकतिभटीअन्तर्गत पहिलो र दोस्रो डिग्री हासिल गर्न सफल भएपछि उनले पीएचडी पनि सुरु गरेका रहेछन् – लाइफ लड लर्निङ विषयमा। सैनिक जीवनको धेरै दुखकष्टका बावजूद पनि सिपाही चन्द्रले सरे युनिभर्सिटी बाट पीएचडी पूरा गरी डाक्टर चन्द्र लक्सम्बा भएर आर्मीबाट निस्केका थिए।

चन्द्र धेरै मिहिनेती र सक्षम व्यक्ति थिए। आधारभूत सैनिक तथा क्लरिक्ल तालिम सकेपछि सेभेन्थ गोरखा राइफल रेजिमेन्टमा उनको पोस्टिङ भयो। पल्टनमा गएर उनी क्लरिक्ल क्षेत्रमा कर्पोरल दर्जासम्म पदोन्नति हुन सफल भएका थिए। त्यसपछि उनले कार्यक्षेत्र परिवर्तन गरे। उनले प्लाटुन सार्जेन्ट्स ब्याटल कोर्स अत्यन्तै राम्रो अङ्कका साथ उत्तीर्ण गरेका थिए। त्यसपछि उनी गोरखा सैनिकहरूको मूल प्रवाहमा मिसिएर काम गर्न थाले। शारीरिक सक्षमता र सैनिक कलामा निपूर्णता भएकोले चन्द्रले त्यो नयाँ क्षेत्रमा पनि राम्रो प्रगति गरेका थिए। तर उनले त्यो क्षेत्रमा भविष्य नदेखेर होला शैक्षिक योग्यता बढाउनतिर नै बढी ध्यान दिए र उनी सफल पनि भए।

सैनिक जीवनमा अतिरिक्त क्रियाकलापमार्फत आफ्नो शैक्षिक योग्यता बढाउन वा अध्ययन गर्न त्यति सजिलो छैन। भन्नु पीएचडी नै त धेरैभन्दा धेरै दुःख कष्ट भोगेर मिहिनेत गर्नुपर्ने हुन्छ। चन्द्रले यी सबै दुःख र चुनौतीहरूसँग सामना गर्न आफ्नो जागिरको पोस्टिङहरू अलि सजिलो अफिसतिर मिलाएका पनि थिए। जस्तै, काठमाडौँ ब्रिटिस क्याम्प र बेलायतको एउटा मेडिकल रेजिमेन्टको तालिम केन्द्रमा पनि काम गरे। मेडिकल रेजिमेन्ट कियो ब्यारेक्समा हुँदा चन्द्रले पीएचडी सुरु गरिसकेका थिए। उनले पीएचडी गर्दा केही समय सुरक्षा गार्डको काम पनि गरेका थिए। ड्युटीको समय उनले आफ्नो पीएचडीको थिसिस पुनरावलोकन गर्ने गर्दथे।

चन्द्रले जहाँ जुन क्षेत्रमा काम गरे पनि, एक मिनेट पनि समय खेर फाल्दैनथे। हरेक समय र मौकाको सदुपयोग गरे। डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा सैनिक जागिरबाट अवकाश लिएपछि क्याम्बर्लीमा मेरो घर नजिकै काम गर्दथे। म विदामा बेलायत जाँदा खाजा खाने समयमा आएर गफसफ गर्ने गर्थ्यौँ। चन्द्रले आफ्नो अवकाशप्राप्त जीवन गोर्खालीहरूको समस्या समाधान गर्न, गैरआवासीय नेपालीहरूको समस्या समाधान गर्न र नेपालका पिछडिएका समाजको शैक्षिक विकासका लागि समर्पित गर्न लागिपरेका थिए। पछिल्लो समय उनी नेपालको

खुला विश्वविद्यालय र लुम्बिनी विश्वविद्यालयको प्राज्ञ भएर नेपाल र नेपालीको सेवामा लागि परेका थिए ।

मेरो नम्बरी डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बालाई यति कलिलो उमेरमा नै गुमाउनुपर्छ भनेर चिताएको पनि थिइँनँ । उनको नेपाल र नेपालीका लागि केही गर्छु भन्ने सपना साकार हुन बाँकी नै थियो तर अफसोच कस्तो कस्तो दुःख, चुनौती र समस्याहरूसँग नहारेको चन्द्र यो संसारभरि फैलिएको महामारीसँग हारे र कलिलो उमेरमा हामी सबैलाई छोडेर गए । चन्द्रले धेरै राम्रा देनहरू छोडेर गएका छन् । उनलाई नेपाल र देशभित्र र बाहिर भएका नेपाली समाजले कहिल्यै बिर्सने छैन ।

अलविदा, मेरो नम्बरी डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा !

जीत गुरुङ भूतपूर्व गोर्खा सेना हुनुहुन्छ । हाल उहाँ संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघीय शान्ति मिसन माली, सुदूरपश्चिम अफ्रिकामा कार्यरत हुनुहुन्छ ।

Chandra: A Gurkha Soldier and Campaigner

Maj. (retd.) Tikendra Dal Dewan, JP

'Only the good die young' befits the untimely demise of our Dr Chandra Laksamba. Not only will he be missed but his contribution to the Nepali community, be it in the academic field, social support, or his political efforts for the plight of Gurkhas, his loss will be sorely felt.

Dr Laksamba led by example during his time in the British Army and this followed on into his retirement where he remained active in all Nepali community issues. Dr Laksamba was always politically active ever since his student days and firmly believed in social justice. His links with his colleagues now well established in the Nepali political fraternity came to the fore when in 2004 the British Gurkha Welfare Society lobbied for settlement rights for all Gurkhas and their dependants. This network ably enthused the much-needed unanimous political support when the then Prime Minister Right Honourable Sher Bahadur Deuba agreed to allow the UK Government the authority to grant citizenship rights to the Gurkhas based on their service to the Crown. The Gurkhas and their dependants will always remain appreciative to Dr Laksamba for his political initiative and effort.

Dr Laksamba joined the Brigade of Gurkhas as a clerk but seeing his full potential he was transferred to the mainstream of employment when he passed the Platoon Sergeants' Battle Course, a very arduous course, and the door to higher promotions. He passed

this course with flying colours but as he progressed in his career, he changed course and joined the medical wing. This led to his last post as the only Gurkha Instructor in the Defence Medical Services Training Centre from where he then departed on pension.

Nearing retirement he pursued his academic prowess by committing to accomplish a Doctorate in lifelong learning. He managed this while still in full time employment dedicating extra hours. He thus set an example to the rest proving that nothing is impossible if one is devoted and committed to follow their dreams. Credit goes to Dr Laksamba that many Gurkhas have since followed this path.

Dr Laksamba was the co-founder of the Centre for Nepal Studies UK and led the first census initiative which was able to muster near to accurate figures of all Nepalis settled in the UK; this remains a very valuable tool. This was followed by a book on Gurkhas and their plight through thorough analysis which highlights the Gurkha problems, the roles played by the various ex-Gurkha organisations and even suggesting academic solutions to the problems.

He was a man who was never tired of challenges and hard work or working long hours. I have quoted only two of the major aspects of his achievements following retirement from the Army, while he was involved in a broad variety of such studies.

I salute this remarkable gentleman and the family's strong support which attributed to making him the man he became.

Tikendra Dal Dewan, JP, is a retired Major of the Gurkha Services in the British Army. He is also Chairperson of the British Gurkha Welfare Society (BGWS).

Chandra Laksamba: A Campaigner for Gurkha Rights

Gyan Sherchan

Dr Laksamba initially served at the clerical department of the Brigade of Gurkhas in the British army. He became a Colour Sergeant and finished his army career as an instructor in the medical wing at the Keog Barracks. He pursued his PhD studies while he was still serving in the army as an instructor.

He was very interested in the issues of Gurkha rights when he was still serving in the army. At that time Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organisation (GEASO) had launched a campaign for equal pensions for the Gurkhas. He was directly or indirectly involved with the GEASO, a team of GAESO came to the UK in 2003 for a court case hearing, Dr Laksamba was very close with the GEASO legal advisor Gopal Shiwakoti Chintan and Chairman Padam Gurung, meeting them regularly. The court case hearing at the High Court lasted for 3 days which we also attended.

I knew late Dr Chandra Laksamba more closely from the early 2000s, when Gurkhas' campaigns for rights to reside, and equality of pensions and welfare began in the UK. Chandra had been involved in this campaign quite heavily. We came together to establish the British Gurkha Welfare Society (BGWS) in 2004. The BGWS property was bought in Farnborough and it is still owned by the organisation.

During the early campaigns, Chandra played a key role in liaising with solicitor, Mr Tim Heaver, who was also a founder of the BGWS, and some politicians. The BGWS organised a protest

rally at the Home Office in Liverpool. Chandra was also one of the negotiators at the meeting with Home Office at the time. Following this meeting, in September 2004, the British Government made an announcement allowing all Gurkhas and their dependants, who were present in the UK and could prove a link to the country, the right of settle. With no hesitation, fair share of the credit of this success should also go to late Dr Laksamba.

Dr Laksamba remained active to certain extent in the Gurkha justice campaign and supported various ex-Gurkha groups over the time. However, he also supported various other organisations including the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) UK where he was elected as a Vice-Chairman for one term. He initiated a census of the Nepalis living in UK in collaboration with researchers, such as Dr Krishna Adhikari, and produced the first book on the Nepalis in the UK and distributed it in the Nepali community in the UK.

Dr Laksamba was also very interested and, thus, partially involved in Nepal's politics. That is one reason why he decided to go back to Nepal, where he started teaching subjects of his expertise.

Dr Laksamba's and my family have become very close friends since our involvement in the Gurkha campaigns in early 2000s. Similarly, our sons have become friends and started playing football together since their young age.

Dr Laksamba was a very active in all aspects of life concerning the Nepali society in the UK. He is greatly missed; it was an early and unexpected departure. I wish his departed soul to rest in peace in heaven and pray to the god to provide power to his family to stay strong.

Gyan Sherchan is a retired British Gurkha, and lives in the UK

Section E: Diverse professional dimensions and civic participation

बहुआयामिक पेसागत पक्ष र नागरिक सहभागिता

२६

एनआरएनका चन्द्र लक्सम्बा

डा. कृष्ण उपाध्याय

चन्द्र लक्सम्बा !

यो नाम मसँग जोडिने कारण अनेकन् छन् । नेपालमा हुँदा हामी एउटै राजनैतिक परिवारभित्र थियौं । त्यसपछि कैयौं वर्षपछि लन्डनको एउटा खुला राजनीतिक सभामा (२००३/२००४ तिर) मिसेल फोकुको उद्घरणसहित क्रमभङ्गताको बारेमा चर्चा गर्दै गरेको सुनें । त्यतिखेर थाहा भयो लगभग हामी एउटै विचार समूहमा रहेछौं । त्यसदिन मैले लक्सम्बाजीको बौद्धिकताको अभिनव पाटो देखें । त्यसपछि हामी सँगै हुन समय लागेन । राजा ज्ञानेन्द्रको शासनको सुरुवाती दिनमा त्यसको प्रतिकार गर्ने क्रममा विदेशमा सबैभन्दा पहिले 'सोलिडारिटी नेपाल' नामको संस्था खडा गरिएको थियो । नेपालका त्यस बेलाका सबै पार्टीहरूको प्रतिनिधि भएको त्यो संस्थामा मानव अधिकारको क्षेत्रमा रहेको कारणले मलाई संयोजन गर्न भनिएको थियो । त्यसका कार्यक्रम र छलफलहरूमा स्वर्गीय लक्सम्बाको अर्थपूर्ण योगदान हुने गर्दथ्यो ।

त्यसपछि बेलायतमा स्थापना भएको गैरआवासीय नेपाली संघ (एनआरएनए) को तदर्थ समितिमा धेरैजना त्यही सोलिडारिटीमा काम गरेका मित्रहरू हुनुहुन्थ्यो, कोही अन्यत्रबाट पनि हुनुहुन्थ्यो । महन्थ श्रेष्ठको नेतृत्वमा गठन भएको त्यो समितिमा म सहसंयोजकको रूपमा थिएँ । लक्सम्बाजी सदस्यको रूपमा हुनुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँको सादगीपना, सौम्य र शान्त स्वभाव र परिपक्व निर्णय गर्ने स्वभावका कारण अशोक श्रेष्ठको नेतृत्वमा बनेको प्रथम निर्वाचित समितिमा उहाँ उपाध्यक्ष पदमा निर्वाचित हुनुभयो । त्यतिबेला मैले महासचिवको रूपमा वहासँग सहकार्य गर्ने अवसर पाएँ ।

त्यो बेला नेपालको राजनीति विशिष्ट अवस्थामा थियो। राजाको शासनपछि पार्टीहरू संविधान निर्माणको छलफलमा थिए। हामी एनआरएनएको तर्फबाट द्वैध नागरिकताको सवालमा बृहत छलफल र अन्तर्क्रिया सञ्चालन गरिरहेका थियौं। त्यसै प्रयोजनको निमित्त हामीले लन्डनमा एउटा बृहत कार्यक्रमको आयोजना गर्‍यौं। नेपालका सबै पार्टीहरूलाई आमन्त्रित गर्‍यौं। तत्कालीन सभामुख सुभासचन्द्र नेम्वाङ्लगायत त्यतिबेला भर्खर सार्वजनिक भएका माओवादी नेता कृष्णबहादुर महरा, नेपाली काङ्ग्रेसका नेता रामचन्द्र पौडेल, नेकपा एमालेका नेता प्रदिप नेपाललगायत सबै पार्टीका प्रमुख सचेतकहरू सहभागी हुनुहुन्थ्यो। स्वर्गीय लक्सम्बाले कुशलतापूर्वक दुईटा प्रमुख भूमिका निर्वाह गर्नुभएको थियो। पहिलो त उहाँको माध्यमबाट कैयौं नेताहरू आमन्त्रित गरियो। दोश्रो उहाँले त्यो कार्यक्रममा एनआरएनको तर्फबाट गरिने प्रस्तुति र कार्यक्रमको ढाँचाको सम्बन्धमा महत्त्वपूर्ण योगदान गर्नुभयो। उहाँ लगायत अन्य धेरै साथीहरूको कारणले पार्टी नेतृत्वगण द्वैध नागरिकतासम्बन्धी विषयमा सकारात्मक अभिव्यक्ति दिन र प्रतिज्ञा गर्न बाध्य भएका थिए। त्यसपछिका अनेक फोरमहरूमा यस विषयमा उहाँको योगदान रहिरह्यो।

लक्सम्बाजीको बेलायतको स्थानिय समुदायमा अर्को एउटा परिचय छ र थियो। त्यो उहाँको जीवनको मीठो र अनौठो संयोग थियो। उहाँ बेलायती सेनामा हुनुहुन्थ्यो र उहाँ प्राज्ञ (विद्यावारिधि) गरेको व्यक्ति हुनुहुन्थ्यो। यसले गोर्खाहरूको बिचमा अरूको भन्दा फरक ठाउँ पनि बनाएको थियो। एनआरएनका लागि यो एउटा सम्पदा नै भयो। यही कारण थियो, भूतपूर्व सेनाको समुदायमा एनआरएनलाई स्थापित गर्न उहाँ लगायत सिररी लिम्बूजस्ता अरू साथीहरूको विशेष भूमिका रहनु। हाम्रो कार्यकालमा नै एनआरएनमा गोर्खा समुदायको सदस्यता हवातै बढेको थियो। यसले एनआरएन सबै नेपालीको संस्था हो भन्ने सन्देश पनि दियो।

अर्को साह्रै महत्त्वपूर्ण विषय भनेको गोर्खाको पेन्सन विषय पनि एनआरएनको विषयवस्तु बनेको थियो हाम्रो कार्यकालमा। सामान्यतया सबैले यो विषय समेटिनुपर्छ भन्ने तर्क राख्थ्यौं। तर चन्द्रजीका तर्कहरू बडा गहिरा हुन्थे। एउटा बैठकमा उहाँले बेलायतमा भएका नेपालीहरूको जनसङ्ख्या तर्कसहित अगाडि सार्नुभयो। गोर्खाको र त्यससँग सम्बन्धित समुदायको सर्वाधिकताको विषय निकाल्नुभयो। “तिनीहरूले नेपाली समुदायलाई प्रतिनिधित्व गर्छन्। त्यसैले गोर्खाले भोगेका समस्या नेपालीहरूको एउटा मुख्य समस्या हो, र त्यसलाई एनआरएनले प्राथमिकताको सूचीमा राख्नु पर्दछ।” चन्द्रजीको त्यो अकाट्य तर्क

एनआरएनको निमित्त गोर्खा 'अजेन्डा' बनाउने एउटा गतिलो योगदानको रूपमा लिन सकिन्छ ।

एनआरएनको प्रथम सम्मेलनपछि बेलायतभित्र रहेको एउटा समस्याको बारेमा ध्यानाकर्षण भएको थियो । त्यो थियो बेलायतभित्र नेपाली पहिचान । बेलायतमा रहेका अरू समुदायजस्तै नेपालीहरूको कति, कहाँ, के, कस्तो उपस्थिति छ भन्ने यकिन थिएन । त्यसैले पटक पटक बैठकहरूमा तथ्याङ्क लिने विषयमा छलफल हुन्थ्यो र अन्ततः त्यो काम नेपालीहरूबाटै गर्ने निर्णय गरियो । लक्सम्बा सम्बद्ध रहनुभएको सेन्टर फर नेपाल स्टडिज (सीएनएस) युकेलाई त्यो जिम्मा दिइयो, त्यो पनि उहाँकै विशेष आग्रहमा । कारण थियो त्यहाँ नेपाली विज्ञ र प्राज्ञहरू हुनु । त्यो संस्थाले एनआरएनका लागि यो प्रकल्प पनि पूरा गर्यो डा. गोविन्द दाहालको नेतृत्वमा । सुरेन्द्र श्रेष्ठ र डा. राजु श्रेष्ठको पनि उल्लेख्य योगदान रह्यो । यसको ठुलो श्रेय लक्सम्बामा नै जान्छ ।

चन्द्रजी अनुशासनको कुरो मात्र गर्नु हुन्न थियो । आफैं पनि एक अनुशासित एनआरएन नेता हुनुहुन्थ्यो । बैठकहरूको निर्णय प्रकृत्यामा होस् वा त्यसलाई कार्यान्वयन गर्ने विषयमा होस् उहाँ सधैं सचेत रहनुहुन्थ्यो । त्यसैले त्यसपछि एनआरएनभित्र आएका विखण्डनकारी क्रियाकलाप, विग्रह, मत-मतान्तर हुँदा उहाँ सधैं समन्वयकारी भूमिका निर्वाह गर्नुहुन्थ्यो । सम्झना रहीरहने मित्र चन्द्रजीलाई मेरो भावपूर्ण श्रद्धान्जलि ।

डा. कृष्ण उपाध्यायले सोआस्, लन्डन विश्वविद्यालयबाट विद्यावारिधि गर्नुभएको छ । हाल उहाँ स्वतन्त्र परामर्शदाताको रूपमा काम गर्नुहुन्छ ।

किराँत याक्थुङ चुम्लुङ युकेका संस्थापक सदस्य चन्द्र

विजय प्रकाश थेवे

स्वर्गीय चन्द्र लक्सम्बा बेलायतको नेपाली समाजमा परिचित र स्थापित व्यक्तित्व हुनुहुन्थ्यो । उहाँको मिलनसार आचार, सरल स्वभाव र शालीन व्यक्तित्व हामीबिच अभैँ जीवन्त छ ।

समाज र समुदायको उन्नति र प्रगतिमा सधैं चिन्ता र चासो राख्ने उहाँको स्वभाव थियो । यसको किराँत याक्थुङ चुम्लुङ युकेको गठनमा उहाँको लगनशीलता र सक्रियताबाट स्पष्ट हुन्छ । यत्रतत्र छरिएर रहेका लिम्बू समुदायलाई एक सुत्रमा जोड्न सङ्गठनको आवश्यकता थियो । यो उद्देश्य पूर्तिका लागि डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको पहलमा हामी केही साथीहरूको विचार विमर्शपश्चात सङ्गठन निर्माण गर्ने निर्णयमा सहमति भयो । सङ्गठनको मुख्य उद्देश्य लिम्बूहरूको हक र हित संरक्षण गर्ने, नियमित भेलाको व्यवस्था गर्ने, सुख दुःखमा एक अर्कालाई सहयोग गर्ने मुख्य थियो ।

सबै प्रारम्भिक कार्यहरू, जस्तै भेलाको आयोजना गर्ने, युकेमा बसोबास गर्ने सबैलाई सम्पर्क गर्ने, सङ्गठन सञ्चालनका लागि विधि र विधानको मस्यौदा तयार पार्ने आदि सबै कार्यहरूको व्यवस्थापन गर्ने जिम्मेवारी मुख्यरूपमा डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाले जिम्मा लिनुभएको थियो । अन्त्यमा २ अगष्ट २००३ मा युकेको सल्सबरीमा लिम्बू समुदायको प्रथम भेला भयो । भेलामा प्राय सबै लिम्बूहरूको उपस्थिति थियो । उक्त भेलाले श्री खड्कजंग लिम्बू आइबोहाडको अध्यक्षतामा कार्यसमिति साथै विजयप्रकाश थेवे, श्रीमती डा. विना थेवे, डा. फौदराज थेवे, डा.

चन्द्र लक्सम्बा, ढुण्डीराज खापुड पाँच जनाको सल्लाहकार समिति चयन गरेको थियो ।

आज किराँत याक्थुड चुम्लुड युके केन्द्र, क्षेत्र र शाखाहरूसमेत गरी व्यापक विस्तार भएको छ । चुम्लुडले सामाजिक सङ्गठनको हैसियतले गर्नुपर्ने सबै दायित्वहरू सक्रिय रूपबाट गर्दै आएको छ । डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बालाई किराँत याक्थुड चुम्लुड युकेको सुरुवात गर्ने सक्रिय अभियन्ता साथै संस्थापक सल्लाहकारको रूपमा सधैं सम्भना गरिने छ ।

विजय प्रकाश थेवे नेपालका पूर्व मन्त्री हुनुहुन्छ र हाल उहाँ किराँत याक्थुड चुम्लुड बेलायतको पूर्व सल्लाहकार हुनुहुन्छ ।

सन्दर्भ किराँत याथुड चुम्लुड युके:

एक प्राज्ञिक अभिभावकको सम्मान र सम्भनामा

गणेश इजम

डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाज्यूले महाप्रस्थान सुरु गर्नुभएको दुई वर्ष पुन लाग्यो । विश्वभरि फैलिएको कोभिड महामारीले हामी धेरैलाई धेरै अर्थमा टुहुरो बनाएको छ । युकेमा रहेका तमाम नेपालीहरू र खासगरी युकेवासी याक्थुडहरूमा डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाज्यूको फिर्ती बिनाको प्रस्थानले एक प्राज्ञिक अभिभावक गुमाएर टुहुरो भएको महसुस भएको छ ।

उहाँले नेपाल अध्ययन केन्द्र बेलायत (सीएनएस युके) होस् वा गैर आवासीय नेपाली संघ युके (एनआरएनए युके), ताप्लेजुड समाज होस् वा युकेमा प्रकाशित हुने युरोपको नेपाली पत्र, पछिल्लो समय नेपालमा पहिलो चोटी स्थापना र सञ्चालनमा आएको ओपन युनिभर्सिटी होस् वा लुम्बिनी बौद्ध विश्वविद्यालयको सिनेट, भनाँ पर पर धेरै परसम्म फिँजिएर समाजका लागि आफूलाई अर्पित गर्दै गर्नुभएको अनगन्ती योगदानका विभिन्न पाटाहरू सबै यो छोटो लेखोटमा समेट्न सम्भव नै छैन । उहाँका कर्महरू सतहमा उभिएका सुन्दर भवनको स्वरूप हेरेर मात्र देखिन्छ । त्यसको जग र सुर सुरमा राखिएका सुरे ढुंगाहरूमा खोजिए मात्र देख्न सकिन्छ बुझ्न सकिन्छ । म किराँत याक्थुड चुम्लुडको सन्दर्भमा डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाज्यूले छोडी राख्नुभएको नासोहरूको सन्दर्भ मात्र यहाँ चर्चा गर्दछु ।

किराँत याक्थुड चुम्लुङ (कियाचु)को सुरे दुःखा

करिब दुई दशक यता युकेमा स्थायी बसोबासका लागि याक्थुडहरूको आगमन सुरु भयो। याक्थुडहरू स्थायीरूपले बसोबास गर्न थालेपछि सुरुआती दिनहरूमा मरोपरोमा सरसहयोगको आवश्यकतालाई ध्यानमा राखी सन् २००३ मा सल्सबरी भन्ने ठाउँमा याक्थुडहरूको भेला सम्पन्न गरी विधिवत् किराँत याक्थुड चुम्लुङको स्थापना गरियो। विभिन्न क्षेत्रका याक्थुडहरूको उपस्थितिमा स्थापना गरिएको यस संस्थाको हाल १६ ओटा शाखाहरू गठन भई नियमित सञ्चालनमा रहेका छन्। यो संस्थाले युकेभरिका याक्थुडहरूको दुःखमा सहयोग र खुसीका लागि विभिन्न कार्यक्रमहरू गर्दै आएको छ। यो संस्था हरेक कोणबाट हिजोभन्दा आज प्रगति उन्मुख छ। किराँत याक्थुड चुम्लुङ युकेको स्थापनाका लागि जगहाल्ने र सुरे दुःखा गाड्ने काम डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाले गर्नुभयो भन्दा अतिशयोक्ति नहोला। त्यो ऐतिहासिक भेला उहाँले नै संयोजन गर्नुभएको थियो।

चुम्लुङ देनको आर्थिक संकलनको आधार

डा लक्सम्बाज्यूले सीएनएस युकेको स्थापना र त्यसमा क्रियाशील भइ युकेको नेपाली समाजका लागि महत्त्वपूर्ण आधार स्थापनाका लागि नेपालीहरूको तथ्याङ्क सङ्कलन गर्ने काममा आफूलाई अर्पिनु भयो। याक्थुड हुनुभएको नाताले सबै याक्थुडहरूलाई उक्त प्रक्रियामा सामेल गराउन अधिकतम प्रयास गर्नुभयो। फलस्वरूप धेरै याक्थुडहरूलाई तथ्याङ्कमा देख्न पाइयो। तत्कालीन किराँत याक्थुड चुम्लुङ युके केन्द्रीय कार्यसमितिले संस्थाका लागि एक चुम्लुङ हिम (हाल परिवर्तित स्वरूप र प्रयोजनको चुम्लुङ देन) खरिद गर्ने महत्त्वपूर्ण कदम चाल्यो। चुम्लुङ देन खरिद कार्य सफल पार्न आवश्यक अर्थ सङ्कलनका लागि डा. लक्सम्बाको अगुवाईमा युकेवासी याक्थुडहरूको तथ्याङ्क सङ्कलन भइ सोका आधारमा प्रत्येक याक्थुड परिवारले न्यूनतम ३७५ पाउण्ड दिएमा चुम्लुङ देन खरिद गर्न सकिने आधार बन्यो। सोहीबमोजिम हाल चुम्लुङ देनका लागि न्यूनतम ३७५ पाउण्ड लिने कार्य भइरहेको छ।

एकताको मूल कडी

किराँत याक्थुड चुम्लुङ युकेको साङ्गठानिक जीवनमा एक पटक ज्यादै अफठयारो समय आयो। लन्डन क्षेत्रभित्र दुई ओटा शाखाहरू क्रियाशील थिए। साउथ वेस्ट लन्डन र साउथ इष्ट लन्डन। समय क्रममा साउथ इष्ट लन्डन शाखाले ग्रेटर लन्डन

शाखा गठनका लागि केन्द्रमा प्रस्ताव पेश गर्‍यो । ग्रेटर लन्डन नामसहित विभिन्न तहगत साङ्गठानिक संरचना रहने गरी प्रस्ताव गरिएको थियो । उक्त प्रस्तावित शाखाको प्रस्तावित नामले समेट्ने क्षेत्र भित्रै अर्को शाखा क्रियाशील रहेकाले किराँत याक्थुङ चुम्लुङ युके केन्द्रीय कार्य समितिलाई उक्त प्रस्ताव स्वीकार गर्न अष्टयारो पर्न गयो ।

लामो समयको छलफलमा पनि कुनै टुङ्गोमा नपुगेको र हरेक पटकका बैठकहरूमा यसै विषयमाथि तातो बहस भएको हुनाले तत्कालिन आठौं कार्य समितिले 'च्याप्टर क्लोज' गर्ने निर्णय गर्‍यो । ग्रेटर लन्डन शाखा नामाकरण गर्न प्रस्ताव गर्ने पक्षले आफ्नो कुराको सुनुवाई नहुने भएपछि अर्को चुम्लुङ स्थापना गर्न लागेको चर्चा हुन थाल्यो र त्यसको घोषणा गर्ने मिति (जुलाई ११ सन् २०१५) समेत तय गरिएको जानकारी आयो । त्यसै समयको सेरोफेरोमा याक्थुङ महिलाहरूको संस्था माडगेन्ना चुम्लुङको समेत स्थापना गरियो । तर माडगेन्ना चुम्लुङको स्थापना चाहेँ संयोग मात्र पनि हुन सक्छ । यस बारेमा सम्बन्धितपक्षहरूले नै आफ्नो संस्थाको इतिहास लेखन दौरानमा उल्लेख गर्नु हुनेछ । युकेको चुम्लुङ विभाजनको सञ्चारमा पुगेपछि सन् २०१५ को जुलाई ५ गते डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाज्यूले फार्नबरोस्थित नमस्ते मार्टको हलमा दुवै पक्षसहित हामीलाई पनि निमन्त्रणा गरी एक भेलाको आयोजना गर्नुभयो । उक्त भेलाले दुई पक्षबिच सम्वादका लागि माननीय पूर्व मन्त्री विजयप्रकाश थेवेज्यूको नेतृत्वमा ईश्वर आडबुहाड, गणेश इजम, उत्तरमान तिगेला र खुशी लिम्बू रहेको ५ सदस्यीय सहजकर्ता टोली बनायो र उक्त टोलीको अनुरोध र प्रयासको फलस्वरूप नै ११ तारिख हुने भनिएको चुम्लुङ विभाजनको घोषणा भएन । आठौं कार्यसमितिले फेरि सम्वादका लागि 'च्याप्टर ओपन' गरी चुम्लुङ विभाजन हुनबाट बच्यो । डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाले निभाउनुभएको अभिभावकत्वले नै आजसम्म चुम्लुङ एक ढिक्का छ । उहाँले ओभेलमै बसेर चुम्लुङ मात्र होइन अन्य विभिन्न संघ संस्थाहरूमा महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेल्नुभएको थियो । उहाँको परिपक्व अभिभावकत्वको अभाव लामो समयसम्म खट्की नै रहने छ ।

आफ्नै गन्थन र मनको गाँठो

म कोभिडको पहिलो छालमा परी १९ दिनसम्म आइसियुमा बिताएँ र ट्याक्कै एक महिनामा घर फर्किएँ । दाइसँग फोनमा भयानक अनि अनौठो अनुभवबारे लामो कुराकानी हुन्थ्यो । कोरोनाको आकार यसको प्रकृति र प्रवृत्ति, उपचारका प्रसङ्ग र नयाँ तथ्यहरूबारे मिहीन कुराकानी हुन्थ्यो । हौसला दिइरहनु हुन्थ्यो । केही

समयपछि फोनमा कुराकानी कम भयो । म आफ्नै सुरसारमा व्यस्त हुन थालें र दाइ पनि व्यस्त हुनुभयो होला भन्ठानें । अचानक उहाँ हामीबाट टाढिनुभएको खबर पाउँदा स्तब्ध भएँ । उहाँ कोभिडबाट सङ्क्रमित भएको समयमा कुरा गर्न पनि पाइएन । कुराकानीले तात्त्विक फरक नपरे पनि दाइलाई केही सहज बनाउन सकेको भए पनि धन्य हुन सकिन्थ्यो भन्ने लागिरहन्छ । मनमा गाँठो रहिरह्यो । उहाँ कतिको भाग्य बन्नुभयो, कतिको भविष्य बनाउनु भयो, कतिको हितैको साथी, कतिको जीवन सारथी बन्नुभयो । दाइप्रति हार्दिक श्रद्धा सुमन ।

गणेश इजम किराँत याक्थुङ चुम्लुङ युकेको पूर्व महासचिव र हाल केन्द्रीय उपाध्यक्ष हुनुहुन्छ ।

सन्दर्भ ताप्लेजुड समाज युके :

डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा: अ म्यान वीथ अ व्यूटीफूल सोल

मे. (रि.) भुवानी पन्धाक

ताप्लेजुड समाज युकेको तर्फबाट मेरा अनन्य मित्र स्वर्गीय डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाप्रति हार्दिक श्रद्धासुमनसहित केही कुरा राख्न पाउनु मेरो लागि सौभाग्य हो भन्ने ठानेको छु । हामी दुवैजना लामो समयसम्म ब्रिटिश फोर्स र एउटै पल्टन 'सेभेन्थ गोर्खा राइफल्स'मा सँगै काम गर्थौं । तर सैन्य जीवनकालमा हामीले एक आपसमा हाम्रो साइनो, सम्बन्ध के कसो पर्ने हो सोको बारेमा कहिले पनि खुलेर छलफल कुराकानी गरेनौं । कहिलेकाहीँ भेट हुँदा हामी एक आपसमा अत्यन्तै आदरसम्मानका साथ बोलचाल तथा सैन्य जीवनका बारेमा कुरा गर्थौं ।

सैन्य जीवनबाट अवकाश प्राप्त गरेपछि हामी दुवै जना बेलायतमा नै बसोबास गर्थौं । यसै क्रममा ताप्लेजुड समाज युकेले सन् २०१६ मा आयोजना गरेको एक कार्यक्रममा हाम्रो भेट भयो । सो भेटमा हामीले सैन्य जीवनदेखि पारिवारिक जीवनका बारेमा छलफल गर्ने क्रममा उहाँले लक्सम्बा, लक्सम र लोक्ताम एउटै हो भन्ने कुरो राख्नुभयो । मेरी आमा पनि (मेरा मावली) लक्सम भएको हुनाले 'त्यसो हो भने तपाईं मेरो मावली पर्नु भो ! अब साईनो सम्बन्ध के परिणाला ?' भनी छलफल गर्दा उहाँ मेरो मामा पर्नुभयो । त्यसैले त्यो दिनदेखि उहाँ वर्षौं लामो पल्टनियाँ साथीलाई मामा भन्न सुरु गर्नु ।

स्वर्गीय डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा मभन्दा केही अगाडि सैन्यबाट अवकाश लिएर बेलायतमै बस्न सुरु गर्नुभयो । त्यो समयमा बेलायतमा नेपालबाट आउनेहरू कम्ति मात्र थिए र रिटायर्ड भएर यतै बसोबास गर्नेहरूको संख्या पनि खासै त्यति थिएन । बेलायतमा त्यतिबेला समस्त नेपालीहरूको सङ्ख्या पनि कम्ती नै भएकोले एक आपसमा भैपरिआउने समस्यामा सर-सहयोगका लागि ताप्लेजुड समाज युके स्थापना भएको थियो । सदैव सेवामा तत्पर रहने स्वर्गीय डा. लक्सम्बाको समाजलाई नेतृत्व गर्ने उत्कट चाहना थियो । उहाँले समाजको निरन्तर दुई कार्यकाल अध्यक्ष रहेर सन् २००८ देखि २०१३ सम्म नेतृत्व प्रदान गर्नुभयो । उहाँको कार्यकालमा संस्थालाई च्यारिटी कमिसनमा दर्ता गर्दै संस्थालाई बेलायती नेपाली समाजमा उदाहरणीय र समस्त जिल्लाबासीका लागि साभा मूल घर र मूल खम्बाको रूपमा स्थापित गर्नुभयो । यसरी उहाँलाई स्मरण गरिरहँदा उहाँले गर्नुभएको उदाहरणीय कामहरू मेरो मानसपटलमा सदैव छाडेरहन्छ ।

सन् २०१३ को सेप्टेम्बरमा आफ्नो कार्यकाल सफलरूपमा सम्पन्न गरी लक्ष्मी घिसिङलाई अध्यक्षको जिम्मेवारी सुम्पिएर उहाँ सल्लाहकारका रूपमा रहनुभयो । समाजले सन् २०१४ मा बेलायतमा बसोबास गरिरहेका हरेक ताप्लेजुडबासीहरूको सरसहयोगबाट समस्त जिल्लाबासहरूको हितका लागि ताप्लेजुड जिल्ला अस्पतालका लागि पुरानो अस्पताल भवन छेउमा एक भवन बनाउने निर्णय गर्‍यो । उक्त भवन निर्माणका लागि समाजले मलाई परियोजना व्यवस्थापक र डा. लक्सम्बालाई परियोजना परिकल्पनाकारको रूपमा नियुक्त गरेको थियो । यो प्रोजेक्टको जिम्मेवारी हामी दुई जनामा आएपछि हामी भन्ने नजिक रहेर परियोजना कसरी सफल बनाउने भन्ने बारेमा भेटघाट, छलफल गर्न थाल्यौं । बेलायती व्यस्त जीवनमा आफ्नो काम पनि गर्ने पर्ने, बाँकी फुर्सदको समय अझ यसो भनौं परिवारसँग रम्ने, घुम्ने समयलाई कटाएर समाजको काममा हामी निरन्तर लागि रह्यौं । ताप्लेजुड बजारको जग्गाको मूल्य काठमाडौंकै हाराहारीमा महङ्गो थियो । भवन बनाउने निर्णय पारित गरी उक्त परियोजनाको जिम्मेवारी हामीलाई सुम्पियता पनि बजार क्षेत्रमा भवन निर्माणका लागि घडेरी किन्न टुलो चुनौती खडा भएको थियो ।

समाजको न्यून बजेट, ताप्लेजुड बजार क्षेत्रको आकाशिएको घडेरीको मूल्य र हामीसँग भएको रकमले घडेरी खरिद गर्न मात्र पनि मुस्किल परिरहेको निस्सासिँदो स्थितिमा ताप्लेजुडका तत्कालीन प्रमुख जिल्ला अधिकारीको अध्यक्षतामा उपभोक्ता, व्यापारी, सर्वसाधारण तथा विभिन्न राजनैतिक दलका प्रतिनिधिहरू

रहेको सर्वदलीय बैठक राखेर अस्पताल छेउको करिब चार आना सरकारी जग्गा भवन निर्माणका लागि व्यवस्थापन गरिएको थियो । डा. लक्सम्बाको यो प्रयासले ठुलो रकम भवन निर्माणका लागि बचत हुन पुगेको थियो । डा. लक्सम्बाको यो विवेकपूर्ण कदम मेरो मानसपटलमा मात्र नभई ताप्लेजुड समाज युकेका लागि बिसर्नै नसकिने गरी उहाँले दिनुभएको योगदान हो भन्ने मलाई लाग्दछ । यो भवन निर्माण सम्पन्न भएपछि उहाँकै सल्लाहअनुसार यो भवनको नाम “ताप्लेजुड-युके भवन” राखिएको छ र म व्यक्तिगतरूपमा पनि यहाँहरू सबैलाई एकपटक ताप्लेजुड जिल्ला भ्रमणको निम्तो दिँदै जिल्ला अस्पतालको परिसरमा रहेको यो भवन पनि निरीक्षण गरिदिन हुन अनुरोध गर्दछु । त्यहाँ हामी समस्त जिल्लाबासीहरूको माया र भावना बोकेर तपाईं हामी सबैलाई प्रतीक्षा गरिरहेभैं आभास हुन्छ ।

सन् २०१६ मा भएको भवन हस्तान्तरण कार्यक्रममा समाजका तत्कालीन अध्यक्ष लक्ष्मी घिसिङ, डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा, मलगायत जिल्लाका करिब ३०० देखि ४०० जनाको हाराहारीमा अत्यन्तै उत्साहजनक उपस्थिति रहेको थियो । भवन हस्तान्तरण कार्यक्रममा डा. लक्सम्बाले हामी सबैलाई संयोजन गर्नुभएको थियो । त्यसैले उहाँले उक्त कार्यक्रममा नेपाली पोशाक दौरा-सुरुवाल लाएर आउनु पर्ने उर्दी जारी गर्नुभएको थियो । लामो समयसम्म सैन्य जीवनमा रहेको हुनाले कुनै पनि कार्यक्रममा ‘ड्रेस-कोड’ र ‘हुकुम’ लाई मैले व्यक्तिगतरूपमा पनि राम्ररी बुझ्नेकै थिएँ तर आफूसँग नेपाली पोशाक दौरा-सुरुवाल तयारी नभएको र कार्यक्रम तुरुन्तै भएकोले नेपाली पोशाक तयार पार्न मलाई आर्मी भाषामा भन्नु पर्दा ‘स्ट्र्यान्ड टु’ नै लागेको थियो । आफ्नै गाउँ घरमा दौरा सुरुवाल लाएर कार्यक्रममा सहभागी हुन पाउँदा खुसी त निकै भएकै थिएँ तर छोटो समयमै तयार भएर उपस्थित हुनु पर्दा असजिलो पनि लागिरहेको थियो ।

कार्यक्रम सञ्चालन गर्ने जिम्मा पनि डा. लक्सम्बाले नै लिनुभएको थियो । प्रस्टरूपमा कार्यक्रमको रूपरेखा बनाइ त्यसलाई प्रभावकारीरूपमा सञ्चालन भएको देखेर उपस्थित सबैको वाही-वाही उहाँले पाउनुभएको थियो । “लाहुरेहरूले पनि यस्तो प्रभावकारीरूपमा कार्यक्रम सञ्चालन गर्दोरहेछन्” भन्ने टीकाटिप्पणीहरू पनि गरिएको सुनिएको थियो । मन्तव्यकै क्रममा ताप्लेजुड पुख्र्यौली घर भइ हाल बेलायतमा बसोबास गरिरहेका बसन्त गुरूडले “लाहुरेहरू बन्दुक मात्र समाउन जानेका छन् भन्ने आम जनमानसमा रहेको धारणालाई बेलायतको एक विश्वविद्यालयबाट विद्यावारिधि (पीएचडी) गरी डा. लक्सम्बाले गलत साबित गरिदिएको” भन्दै “ब्रिटिश गोर्खाहरूमध्ये पीएचडी गर्ने बिरलै व्यक्तिहरूमा उहाँ पर्दा सबै गोर्खा गौरवान्वीत भएका छौं” भन्नुभयो ।

विद्यार्थी कालमा होस् वा सैन्य जीवनमा, डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा जहिले पनि अब्बल दर्जाको हुनुहुन्थ्यो। कडा अनुशासनको घेराभित्र जीवनको अधिकांश समय व्यतित गर्नुभएता पनि उहाँभित्र रहेको मन कहिले कडा भएन। त्यसैले म उहाँलाई जहिले पनि 'अ म्यान वीथ अ व्यूटीफूल सोल' (अर्थात् सफा मन भएको मानिस) भनेर सम्झने गर्दछु। उहाँ जिल्लाबासीका लागि मात्र नभएर प्रवासमा बसोबास गरिहने सम्पूर्ण नेपालीहरूका लागि एक उदाहरणीय, सम्मानित र कहिल्यै नबिर्सने अविष्मरणीय नाम बनेर रहनुभएको छ।

यस्ता विशाल मनका र बौद्धिक क्षमताका धनी, जिल्लावासीहरूका लागि दिलोज्यान दिएर लागि पर्ने, गोर्खाहरू विरुद्ध जस्तोसुकै प्रकारको असमानताको विरुद्धमा जहिले पनि 'फ्रन्ट लाइन' (अग्रपङ्क्ति)मा उभिने एक निडर व्यक्तित्व अनि समस्त प्रवासी नेपालीहरूका लागि सम्मानित व्यक्तित्वको दुर्भाग्यवश अल्पायुमै हुन पुगेको निधनले हामी सबैले अभिभावक गुमाएका छौं। ताप्लेजुड समाज युकेको तर्फबाट परिवारमा भावपूर्ण श्रद्धा सुमन अर्पण गर्दछु।



प्लेट २९.१: चन्द्र लक्सम्बा र भुवानी पन्धाक, ताप्लेजुडमा अस्पताल भवन उदघाटनमा। (फोटो कल्पना लक्सम्बा, १९ फ्रेब्रुअरी २०१६)

भुवानी पन्धाक ब्रिटिश गोखा सेनाबाट सेवानिवृत्त मेजर हुनुहुन्छ। उहाँ हाल ताप्लेजुड समाज युकेको सल्लाहकार हुनुहुन्छ।

सन्दर्भ बेलायतमा नेपाली पत्रकारिता :

स्मृतिमा डा. लक्सम्बा

नवीन पोखरेल

नेपाल छँदा डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको नाम पीएचडी होल्डर एकजना बौद्धिक भूतपूर्व गोर्खाको रूपमा सुनेको थिएँ। *कान्तिपुर*मा उहाँका केही लेख पढ्ने अवसर पनि जुरेको थियो। गोर्खा आन्दोलनमा स्वर्गीय लक्सम्बाको सक्रियता चाल पाएर मलाई लाग्थ्यो ती व्यक्तिसँग सङ्गत गर्न पाए ज्ञानगुनका केही कुरा सिक्किन्थ्यो कि। मेरो त्यो मनोकाङ्क्षा पूरा भयो जब म सन् २००६ सेप्टेम्बरमा विद्यार्थीका रूपमा लन्डन उत्रिएँ। म पत्रकारिताको विद्यार्थी र पेसामा आवद्ध भइसकेको एक सिकारु पत्रकार थिएँ। लन्डनमा त्यतिखेर पत्रकार कृष्णज्वाला देवकोटाले एकलै 'युरोपको नेपालीपत्र' पत्रिका निकाल्न सुरु गर्नुभएको रहेछ। तर, सात समुद्रपार आएर आफैँ लेआउट, आफैँ सामग्री जुटाइ पत्रिका बाँड्नेसम्मको काम सहज थिएन। केही अड्कपछि उक्त पत्रिका प्रकाशनमा विश्राम लागेको थाहा पाएँ।

वरिष्ठ पत्रकार देवकोटाले सँगै मिलेर काम गरौँ नवीनजी भन्ने प्रस्ताव गरेपछि म सहर्ष त्यही पत्रिकामा जोडिन पुगेको थिएँ। बिरानो ठाउँमा आफूले थोरै भएपनि जानेको काम गर्न पाउँदा म पुलकित नहुने कुरै भएन। त्यही युरोपको नेपालीपत्रको प्रकाशकका रूपमा डा. लक्सम्बा मेरो सामीप्यमा आइपुनुभयो। त्यतिबेला एउटा सशक्त गोर्खा सङ्गठन बिजिडब्लुएसबाट लक्सम्बाले पत्रकार कृष्णज्वालाका साथमा पत्रिकाको स्वामित्व लिनुभएको थियो।

नयाँ व्यवस्थापन र साजसज्जामा पत्रिका निस्कन थालेपछि डा. लक्सम्बासँग मेरो निकट सम्बन्ध बन्यो, व्यवसायिक र पारिवारिक दुवै कोणबाट।

पत्रिका निस्किएको दिन भाउजू कल्पनासँगै उहाँ फ्रिम्ली घरबाट लन्डन आउनुभएको थियो । त्यसपछि उहाँहरू नियमित रूपमा प्रेसबाट पत्रिका बटुल्न आउन थाल्नुभयो । यसरी आउँदा लक्सम्बा दम्पतिले म एकलो मान्छेलाई सधैं केही न केही खानेकुरा बोकेर आउनुहुन्थ्यो । यदाकदा मजाकमा उहाँहरूले “बाहुनको छोराले पो हो त खाने” भन्दै बङ्गुरको मासु र बियर (फोस्टर) ल्याइदिनु हुन्थ्यो । “नवीन सर लन्डनमै बिहे गर्नुपर्छ हामी केटी खोज्छौं” भन्दै जिस्काउनु हुन्थ्यो । त्यो टट्टयौलीमा उहाँमा म प्रतिको चिन्ता र चासो झल्किएको थाहा पाउँथे म ।

पूर्वी लन्डनस्थित प्रेसबाट पत्रिका सङ्कलन गरेपछि कहिलेकाहीँ म फ्रिम्ली नै जान्थें, लक्सम्बा निवासमा । बेलुका घर पुगेर पत्रिका पोष्ट गर्न पट्ट याएर खामभित्र हाल्ने काम गर्दथ्यौं हामी । पल्टनका अनुभवदेखि युकेमा संघर्षका दिन सम्भिएर लक्सम्बा सर गफिएको मलाई अहिले भैं लाग्छ । भोलिपल्ट पोष्ट अफिसमा पत्रिका लैजानेदेखि नेपाली पसल र सप्ताहन्तमा हुने अनेक कार्यक्रममा एकमुष्ट (बल्क)मा पत्रिका बाँड्ने हाम्रो जिम्मेवारी बनेको थियो । बेलायतमा बिल्कुल नयाँ मान्छे मलाई धेरै शहर पुग्ने र यहाँका स्थापित नेपालीहरू चिन्ने अवसर डा. लक्सम्बाले नै जुराइदिनुभएको हो । राजनीति, प्राज्ञिक क्षेत्र र गोर्खा मुद्दाका बारेमा डा. लक्सम्बाको अनुभवबाट मैले थोरै भएपनि बुझ्ने मौका पाएको थिएँ ।

ब्रिटिश लाहुरेको परिचय केवल बन्दुक बोक्ने र इमान्दार सिपाहीका रूपमा दिइन्छ । तर लक्सम्बाको बहुआयामिक र फराकिलो सोच अनि बौद्धिकस्तर लोभलाग्दो थियो । त्यो तहको बौद्धिक व्यक्तित्व भएपनि लक्सम्बाले पत्रिका बाँड्न र बोक्न सङ्कोच मानेको मैले कहिल्यै भेउ पाइँनँ । त्यसमाथि भाउजूको साथ, सहयोग र पत्रिकाप्रतिको लगाव गज्जबको सम्मिश्रण थियो ।

म लन्डन आएको महिना सेप्टेम्बर ‘वार्मअप’ मै बितेको थियो । अक्टोबर महिना बितेपछि पत्रिकाको तलब बापत डा. लक्सम्बाले चारसय पाउण्डको चेक थमाउँदा मलाई त्यो चार हजार बराबरको महत्त्व लागेको थियो । बेलायतको पहिलो कमाइ भण्डै ५० हजार रूपैयाँ भयो भनेर मैले नेपाल रहेका परिवारलाई निकै गर्वका साथ सुनाएको थिएँ ।

वर्गीय लक्सम्बा र उहाँको परिवारसँग बिताएका क्षणहरू मेरो जीवनमा निकै अविष्मरणीय रहे । व्यावसायिकरूपमा लक्सम्बा मेरो मालिक र आफन्त कोही नभएको बिरानो ठाउँमा एउटा अभिभावक बन्नुभएको थियो । केही महिनामा कृष्ण ज्वाला सर नेपाल फर्केपछि पत्रिकाको जिम्मेवारी मेरो काँधमा आएको थियो, म सम्पादक र रमेश सराङ्कोटी व्यवस्थापक । पत्रिका निकाल्ने क्रममा स्वर्गीय

लक्सम्बाले कहिल्यै हस्तक्षेप वा अवरोध गरेको पत्तो भएन । प्राय प्रकाशकहरू पत्रिकामा आफू अनुकूल 'कन्टेन्ट' खोज्छन् । तर, सम्पादकीय स्वतन्त्रता लक्सम्बाले मेरो 'करिअर' मा थपिदिएको बहुमूल्य उपहार थियो । आफू एकजना भूतपूर्व गोर्खा भएको नाताले यदाकदा गोर्खासँग सम्बन्धित लेख वा समाचारमा प्राथमिकता दिन सुझाए पनि उहाँले के राख्ने के नराख्ने कहिल्यै सोध्नुभएन । लक्सम्बाले मलाई सम्बोधनमा 'सर' भन्न कहिल्यै बिर्सनुभएन । मलाई लाग्थ्यो, उहाँमा अरूप्रति सम्मानभाव कति गहिरो छ !

बेलायतको नेपाली पत्रकारितामा स्वर्गीय लक्सम्बाको योगदान चीरकालसम्म रहनेछ । युरोपको नेपालीपत्रमार्फत बेलायतमा नेपाली पत्रकारितालाई मलजल गर्न उहाँले उल्लेख्य भूमिका निर्वाह गर्नुभयो । यहाँ व्यवसायिक पत्रकारिताको चुनौती सामना गर्ने उहाँको साहस मान्नेपर्छ । त्यतिबेला पत्रिका निकालेर मुनाफा हुने अवस्था थिएन । आफ्नै गोजीबाट पैसा हालेर पत्रिका घर घर पुऱ्याउनुका पछाडि उहाँको एकमात्र स्वार्थ बेलायती नेपाली समुदायलाई सुसूचित गराउने नै थियो । आफ्नो नियमित जागिर, अनुसन्धानको जिम्मेवारी, र घरपरिवार तथा समाजलाई दिने समय छुट्ट्याएर पत्रिका प्रकाशनमा समर्पित लक्सम्बाको भूमिका प्रेरणादायी थियो ।

समय बित्दै जाँदा कंडेल गुपले पत्रिकाको स्वामित्व लिएपछि हामी त युरोपको नेपालीपत्रमा निरन्तर अगाडि बढ्यौं तर चन्द्र सरले पत्रिकालाई कम समय दिन थाल्नुभयो । सम्पादकीय जिम्मेवारी र व्यवस्थापनमा ओभ्रेल परे पनि उहाँ हामीसँग नियमित सम्पर्कमा रहनुभयो । डा. लक्सम्बाले 'गोर्खा भ्वाइस' नामक अंग्रेजी पत्रिका निकाल्दा म केही समयभएपनि सँगै जोडिएको थिएँ । यद्यपि त्यो पत्रिका धेरै लामो समय चलेन ।

यो लेख बिट मारिरहँदा मलाई डा. लक्सम्बा हामीबिच हुनुहुन्न भन्न मन भारी भइरहेको छ । यो लेख उहाँले पढ्न पाउनुहुन्न भन्ने विश्वास लागिरहेको छैन । बेलायतको नेपाली समुदायमा मात्र होइन, स्वदेश फर्किएर पनि आफ्नो ज्ञान, सीप आदानप्रदान गर्नुपर्छ भन्ने उहाँको योजना बिचमै विश्राम लागेको सम्झँदा भावुकमात्र हुन सकिने रहेछ । भौतिक रूपमा हामीबिच नरहेपनि स्मृतिमा सधैं रहिरहनुहुनेछ स्वर्गीय लक्सम्बा ।

नवीन पोखरेल कान्तिपुर दैनिकको बेलायतस्थित समाचारदाता तथा नेपाल पत्रकार महासंघ युके शाखाका संस्थापक अध्यक्ष हुनुहुन्छ ।

PART II

Selected Writings of Dr Chandra K. Laksamba

भाग २

डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बाका केही छानिएका आलेखहरू

Section F: UK Nepali Diaspora, Culture and Mobility

युके नेपाली डायस्पोरा, संस्कृति र गतिशीलता

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Counting Ourselves: CNSUK's 2008 Survey of Nepalis in the UK

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Dr Chandra Kumar Laksamba*

Abstract:

Between 2004 and 2007 the UK's Nepali population increased dramatically but the actual figures were not known and many wild estimates circulated.¹ So, in 2008 the Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNSUK) and the Non-Resident Nepali Association UK (NRNAUK) conceived and implemented an ambitious partnership project to systematically understand the size and nature of the Nepali population. Relying entirely on internal resources—the growing network of organisations and personal links within the Nepali community—a large-scale survey, popularly referred to as a 'census', was conducted. The first of its kind among the UK Nepali population, or indeed among Nepali diaspora communities anywhere, the study revealed the size and dynamics of the Nepali population and assessed its level of integration in the UK. The results were published both in local newspapers (CNSUK, 2010; CNSUK, 2011; Adhikari, 2010) and, more discursively and analytically, in book form (Adhikari, 2012). The baseline information has already proved useful for community members themselves, for policymakers, and for academic researchers. In this paper we aim to present an account of the aspirations, process, experience, and lessons gained from the project with a hope that it will serve as a useful model for Nepali

diasporas elsewhere, as well as for other communities with similar contexts and interests. So the focus of the paper is to present a case study of the methods applied as an innovative tool for self-studies, and to present the socio-demographic outcomes of the study in the UK, with some updates from the 2011 UK census as well. Our focus here is not to delve into the nuances or process of migration, or the problems or tensions of integration and community building. This paper while making distinctive contribution in its own right is expected to set important context for, complement to, a range of papers that follow on the UK Nepali community.

Converging ideas and community resources

When Googling the Nepali population in the UK, one is most likely to end up being greeted by Wikipedia pages. On one Wikipedia page, based on the work of the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the government agency that administers the census in England and Wales, reported 42,000 Nepalis in the UK in 2012.² Until 2007 there were no such figures available as Nepali residents in the UK were not included in the ONS list of 60 most common countries by birth or previous nationality. Because of this, around 2007 several Nepali organisations and individuals attempted various estimates as to the size of the Nepali population, ranging from 50,000 to 130,000. The NRNA (International) website had listed the UK Nepali population as 30,000.³ These figures were not only inconsistent but also markedly higher than the 2001 UK census figures of 5,943 (based on country of birth) and the 2001 Nepal census figure of 7,221 (counted as absent from Nepal with a destination in the UK) (Kansakar, 2003). CNSUK decided to carry out its survey in 2008 in order to try to resolve these discrepancies and uncertainties. The survey was popularly referred to as a 'census' of Nepalis in the United Kingdom, because it aspired to include as many people as possible, but, as we will show later, the study was in fact a large survey.

It is one thing to formulate the idea of surveying an entire ethnic minority community, but it is another to carry it out. The main reason why minority communities have not conducted similar surveys in the past must be a lack of resources, since recently migrated populations are unlikely to have the necessary manpower and/or the financial resources required. A number of factors contributed to the

decision to conduct this ambitious project in the UK, mainly: (a) the rapidly rising Nepali population, (b) the emergence of many new Nepali organisations, (c) the availability of expertise within the community, and (d) the aspiration of Nepalis to be recognised as a distinct group within UK society, especially with the approach of the 2011 Census.⁴

Until 1990, the UK Nepali population was very small and consisted of mainly professionals and restaurateurs. In the 1990s more people came in as students; asylum-seekers began to arrive after the start of the Maoist insurgency in 1996. Their numbers further increased in the 2000s. In 2004, when the British Government allowed post-1997 retired British Gurkhas to settle in the UK, there began an exponential rise in the size of the Nepali population in the UK, particularly between 2006 and 2011, though with some fluctuations. Nepalis in that period became one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups in the country; however, it was by no means as fast as the eastern European immigrant communities. For example, between 2004 and 2007 the Polish population in the UK increased about 4.5 fold reaching 405,000. The Portuguese population also increased significantly in this period.⁵ For the first time, towards the beginning of 2008, the ONS entered Nepalis on the list of residents of the 60 most common foreign countries of birth or nationality (ONS, 2011). As a result of this surge in their population, Nepalis living in the UK were not ready to accept the population figure shown by the 2001 UK census, which they thought greatly undercounted the actual population (CNSUK, 2010). In addition, the awareness that there had been a sudden rise in the Nepali population since 2004 triggered community aspirations to receive recognition for their distinct place in Britain.

In March 2005, the NRNAUK was formed under the chairmanship of Mahanta Shrestha (Adhikari and Gellner, 2018). Subsequently, in 2006, a newly elected committee of the NRNAUK led by Ashok Shrestha became interested in contributing something meaningful towards the welfare of the Nepali population in the UK. Around the same time a group of freshly graduated doctoral scholars and other experienced social scientists formed a research institute, the CNSUK. It was led by Dr Govinda Dahal, a demographer and expert on social statistics, along with Dr Chandra Laksamba, Achut

Gautam, Dr Krishna Adhikari, Lokendra Dhakal, Ananda Bhandari, Shree Baral, and later joined by Dr Rajubabu Shrestha. Laksamba was also a newly elected vice-chairman of the NRNAUK. CNSUK members were struck by the lack of good statistics on Nepalis in the UK and were motivated to put their skills to work for the benefit of the community. For CNSUK it was a huge and demanding project to take on alongside their day jobs. Fortunately the interests and priorities of the NRNAUK and CNSUK not only converged, but also complemented each other in terms of resources and capabilities. By 2006, a number of large and tightly knit ethnic, region-based, and professional community groups had come into existence. Their presence and enthusiasm added value to the project idea as they were seen both as vital resources for obtaining access to multiple communities and interested end-users of the research. Within these (mostly) newly formed organisations, the appeal to 'Nepali identity' proved to be very effective.

Ethnic motivation

When Nepalis came to the UK in large numbers, they mostly settled in areas where there already were other Asians. They realised that their neighbours, i.e. Chinese, Indians, Bangladeshis, and Pakistanis, benefited from being recognised officially as an ethnic category. Nepalis frequently experienced filling out an application form for a job or other purposes in which an ethnic category was required. They were immediately confronted by options for Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Chinese; they themselves were forced to tick the somewhat confusing residual box 'Any Other Asian'. This made them want to have their own straightforward ethnic category: having a separate Nepali category was perceived to be convenient in dealing with bureaucracy and, more importantly, would mean being recognised as an ethnic minority group like their neighbours. Above all, the proper establishment of the population is important for allocating national resources to local councils and eventually to the communities concerned.

Population size is certainly one, though not the only, important basis for claiming recognition as a separate ethnic group. With these thoughts in mind, the Nepali community realised that they had to make a proper case in order to claim their own ethnic

category, for recognition as well as for the rightful resource allocation which was believed to have been inhibited by the lack of proper statistics, official or otherwise. Community leaders responded to these arguments, and they recognised that the issue was also a powerful tool to mobilise people both at individual and at collective levels.

The fact that the idea of working towards an ethnic minority category was well received by the community also, to some extent, has to do with the growing influence of ethnic movements in Nepal, even though ethnicity in the UK would only mean at the broader level of Nepali identity. At an initial point during the survey, a small number of people in the UK linked to ethnic activist groups in Nepal suggested that they would like to register their particular ethnicity (e.g. 'Rai' rather than 'Nepali'). They thought that seeking to register a broader Nepali category could prevent the future prospects of being recognised at the sub-ethnic level. However, even UK Sikh activists failed to achieve recognition as an ethnic category distinct from 'Indian'. Sikhs claim to number 600,000 in the UK; when counted under the optional religion question in the 2011 census, they were revealed to number 423,000 in England and Wales (BBC, 2010; ONS, 2012b). Thus, the prospects of seeking recognition at the Nepali sub-national level for ethnic groups with a population of, at most, 25,000 was certainly not a plausible proposition. The idea disappeared as soon as it was raised without becoming an active part of anyone's agenda within the UK Nepali community.

At the same time, Nepali ethnic associations were growing in number, with an active membership and a presence in many parts of the UK. Only a special study such as that proposed by CNSUK would be able to identify and enumerate each ethnic group within the wider Nepali population, which would go part way towards fulfilling activist requests. The UK census would not be able to do this, but the proposed Nepali survey could realise this aim of the ethnic organisations.

As the survey results later indicated, within the UK's Nepali population over 60 per cent are either ex-Gurkhas or members of their immediate families (Adhikari et al., 2012: 47). Thus it is perhaps not surprising that a few individuals were keen to have 'Gurkha' as well as 'Nepali' propagated as the relevant ethnic category. It was

suggested that this would achieve a relatively quicker and more immediate recognition, given the long history of a connection with Britain and the deep affection with which most British people regard the Gurkhas. The very recent achievement of settlement rights for Gurkhas seemed to show that the Gurkhas' allegiance to Britain was proven and accepted. One commentator put it this way: "It's clear that these brave men are the very foreigners that we the British Public want to invite and embrace and allow into our country rather than the illegals and criminals who have not paid a penny, don't want to lift a finger and only want to exploit our easy going benefit system" (Gaunty, 2008: 105).⁶

The suggestion to go for 'Gurkha' as an ethnic group name was, in the end, rejected. Both CNSUK and NRNAUK advocated 'Nepali' instead of 'Gurkha' for various reasons. The term 'Gurkha' is not inclusive in the UK context, since it refers only to that section of Nepalis who served in the British Army. In fact, taken strictly, it does not cover even their family members, who can only be identified as Nepalis. At the time of the survey, as the survey results revealed, ex-Gurkha soldiers made up only 17 per cent of the Nepali population. In the UK context, Nepalis see 'Gurkha' primarily as a profession, and it is only possible to become a Gurkha by first being a Nepali. All Gurkhas are Nepalis (and the vast majority were born in Nepal), but not all Nepalis in the UK are Gurkhas. After informal discussions with members of CNSUK, it was agreed within CNSUK and NRNAUK that 'Nepali' (or its variant form 'Nepalese') was the only inclusive identity.⁷

To everyone's surprise, an enquiry made by the CNSUK with the ONS revealed that the 2011 UK census had made provision for 'Gurkha' as an ethnic category. Even more surprisingly, we were told that, if people indicated Gurkha as their ethnic group, it would not be added to the main 'Nepali' group whereas other alternative responses to the prompt 'Other' (e.g. 'Nepal' or 'Nepalese') would be amalgamated.⁸ It may be assumed that the ONS had consulted someone from a military background who had limited knowledge about Nepal and Nepalis in general. However, with persistent arguments from CNSUK that 'Gurkha' is not an ethnic group (in Nepal), eventually the ONS relented. When the census results were published, all alternatives, including Gurkha, were aggregated together within the main category.

Methods and administration

The availability of resources, as already noted, determined what types of methods and processes of implementation could be applied to the study. Academic advice was forthcoming from advisors in Oxford, Southampton, and Surrey, but in the timeframe required there was no possibility of mobilizing university or research council resources. This meant that CNSUK had to rely on resources internal to the community itself.

Migration is often a chain process and people who have migrated to a new destination try to join or form relational networks (Schrover and Vermeulen, 2005). At the beginning, such networks are often loose and people keep in touch with each other on an individual-to-individual basis. This phenomenon was evident in the Nepali community as people connected to each other first by means of informal networks and only later formalised them as organisations. As mentioned above, by 2006 there existed several Nepali community-based organisations in the UK. Even though there was no frame of reference with regard to size or location of the population, tracing people was possible because of the availability of interwoven informal and formal networks. This connectivity appeared to be a productive resource or 'social capital' which, as survey-takers, we could take advantage of.

Despite its weak structure and recent founding, the NRNAUK, as a champion of the idea, was best placed to bring these scattered resources together. Along with the NRNAUK, several leading organisations, including as the Magar Association UK, Kirat Yakthung Chumlung UK, Sherpa Kidug, Srijanshil Nepali Society, Greater Reading Nepalese Community Association, Pragatishil Nepali Samaj, Burnt Oak Nepalese Community, Sagarmatha Gurkha Community, and the Nepal Embassy, endorsed the programme, extended financial support, and/or helped with data collection. The NRNAUK formed a special steering committee led by its vice chairman, Angkal Jung Lama, to coordinate the data collection process. All four UK-based Nepali weekly newspapers that existed at the time (*Nepali Patra*, *Nepali Sandesh*, *Naya Sandesh*, and *Everest Times*),⁹ Nepali TV, and British Forces Broadcasting Services (BFBS) Gurkha radio joined forces to publicize the project. Over 200 individuals, businesses, and social organisations took part in the

study by helping to fill out survey forms, by entering data, and/or providing financial support. The list of those who helped to identify new respondents through a snowballing process stood in four digits. Of the overall estimated project cost £313,447, £16,480 in cash was raised through community efforts; the remainder consisted of voluntary contributions from community members and CNSUK's officials, either in kind or in terms of time contributed.

Obtaining details about every person of Nepali origin living in the UK was the primary aim of doing the 'census'. However, a number of factors forced this original aim to be modified: the lack of any pre-existing frame of reference (sampling frame and locations of respondents); limited time and financial resources; and the wholly voluntary nature of participation. The original ambitions for the research were scaled back, but the aim of coming up with a headcount was retained as was the objective of trying to capture key community characteristics by means of an in-depth household survey of a selected sub-set of respondents. The objective of obtaining the overall population size was met through a different, improvised method of estimation by towns and cities; as a consequence, the study, initially popularised as a 'census', became in fact a large-scale survey. To qualify as a census, according to the United Nations, a study needs to have four features: "individual enumeration, universality within a defined territory, simultaneity and defined periodicity" (United Nations, 2008: 8). The present study had its universe limited to Nepalis in the UK, and it did not enumerate all individuals within that universe; or rather, the final head count was produced using a mix of different methods.

The study followed an evolutionary trajectory and went through five interconnected phases: conceptualisation of research; designing the instrument; testing, delivery, and administration; estimating the overall population; and the final stage of reporting and advocacy. Rather than delving into the generic phases, here we attempt to introduce two more important and innovative aspects: a comparison of survey instruments with standard England and Wales census questionnaires (2011), and the process involved in the estimation of population.

The study comprised three interconnected yet separate samples, as shown in Figure 31.1. The samples were: (a) a household listing with a population of 18,508; (b) an in-depth household

survey of a sub-set of (a), with a population of 7,881; and (c) an estimate of the total population (72,173). The first sample covered a limited set of variables such as sex, ethnicity, family size, and place of residence, whereas the second was far more detailed, covering household information, individuals' biographies, education and employment, religion, migration, health, organisations, integration, and maternal health. The first sample enabled us to ask and answer the questions about the internal ethnic composition of the Nepali population. The second and third sets taken together got as close as possible under the circumstances to a full census.



Figure 31.1: Two samples and an estimate in the 2008 CNS UK survey of UK Nepalis.

Source: Adhikari (2012).

In this connection it is worth comparing the 2008 survey with the results of the 2011 England and Wales census questionnaire (Table 31.1). While standard census elements were borrowed to make the 2008 survey comparable with the census figures, the questionnaire was tailored to specific community needs by adapting the alternatives suitable to the community. A prime example of this is the question on religion: in the optional question on religion, the UK census allows respondents to tick only one religion (including the non-religious category). This fails to reflect the practices of people of Nepali origin some of whom, as discussed further below, follow more than

one religious practice (Gellner and Hausner, 2013).

Table 31.1: Comparison of the England and Wales Census 2011 and CNSUK Survey 2008

Questions	UK Census 2011 (England and Wales)	CNSUK survey 2008
Household	Household details with residents; types of housing, ownership/tenancy type, number of rooms, central heating, cars, etc.; address	All residents (but allowing residents' names to be withheld if desired); housing: most of the same questions (excluding those related to car). Address optional Added: Plans to buy house; use of internet; optional: phone number and email address
Individual	Name; sex; date of birth; marital status; second address; student status; country of birth; date arrived UK; health status and care; general health status and disability; national identity; passport held; ethnic group, main language, level of spoken English, address previous year; disability; qualifications; employment status and details	Included: Most aspects, but no full date of birth or arrival in the UK; Excluded: Second address; national identity; main language; address last year; passport holding; detailed nature or length about work; Added: ethnicity (in Nepal), multiple religious choice/mixed religion; watching/reading English media; qualifications: education and personal training; international students; plans to leave the UK
Visitor	Visitors details included	Not included
Integration	No questions	Security, mixing, political participation, voting, problems faced in the community
Organisation	No questions	Participation in organisations, types, activities attended
Maternal health	No questions	Age at marriage; children born, died, alive

Source: Adhikari (2012) and ONS (2012a).

The UK census is compulsory and non-participation is punishable by law, whereas the CNSUK's survey was voluntary and only guided by de facto community compliance. The UK census data are published after 100 years, whereas there is no provision (as yet) for the CNSUK data to be released and they are governed by the UK Data Protection Act, enforced through registration with the Information Commissioner's Office. Because the CNSUK survey was optional, only the minimum necessary information was asked

for, and people were given the option to omit questions to which they did not wish to respond. We asked respondents to indicate only the month and year of their birth or to simply mention their age in completed years, because the date of birth is a sensitive issue and there was no need for the study to ask for this. Similarly, we did not ask for any information on visitors, nor did we count them in the overall population.

Normally, a census is carried out keeping a particular date as a point of reference for counting the population, even if there is subsequent follow up to ensure the participation of as many people as possible. The CNSUK's survey was conducted throughout the calendar year of 2008; for the purpose of counting the overall population, we used 31st December 2008 as a point of reference.

The survey questionnaire had questions about organisations, level of social integration, and maternal health issues that are not included in the UK census. Understanding the circumstances related to the integration of Nepalis in the UK was also an important motivation behind carrying out this study in the first place. Furthermore, asking people to voluntarily provide their telephone numbers made it possible to produce the publication *Directories of Nepalis in the UK* in 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2015 (CNSUK, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015). These small books have become vital resources for the Nepali community and beyond, not only for accessing information but also in promoting social capital through increased connectivity and resultant cooperation at both individual and institutional levels.

Early on in the process of research it became clear that it was not going to be possible to obtain a form from every Nepali in the country. The first two samples on their own provide much information but could not provide us with the total population size. Other methods were required. First, the population of serving Gurkhas and their families was obtained under the Freedom of Information Act from the Headquarters Brigade of Gurkhas (HQBG). Then, identification of other populations made use of the contacts that had been formed while carrying out the other two samples. We established that there were Nepalis residing in 327 towns and cities, including various towns within the Greater London area. The list of contacts we had was mostly of the leaders of various community

organisations where they existed. We contacted five key informants from each site (except in places with small populations, where we contacted one or two only). We asked them to research and give us a best possible count of the population in their sites. We first compared the five independent estimates. Where the deviation was high, we asked them to refine their estimates. Being community leaders, many key informants had a ready figure to hand. A few sites with larger populations were broken down into area segments to facilitate the estimate. Then we averaged the figures to come to a final estimate. Our analysis showed that the larger the city/town, the larger the level of error in the (over) estimation. We estimated that the error margin ranged between 0 and 15 per cent. Over all, this pragmatic method, which owes something to the rapid rural appraisal advocated by Chambers (1983), seemed fit for the original purpose.

Results

The detailed results of the survey and other related statistics have been published elsewhere (Adhikari 2012; CNSUK, 2012); here we summarize the most important results, along with some secondary information where available.

Specifying population: The survey showed that by the end of 2008 the Nepali population in the UK was 72,173 and that earlier statistics from various sources were far from being accurate, especially the 2001 UK census figure. One must recognize that there is likely to be some element of error in this figure and that the actual figure could be slightly lower. Since then there has been a further surge in immigration, mainly due to changes in the immigration rules in 2009 allowing ex-Gurkhas, who had four years or more service and retired before 1997, to come and settle in the UK. The arrival of over 12,000 students and their dependents in 2009 and 2010 also pushed the population up. However, a large number of them left the UK between 2011 and 2015 due to strict immigration policies. Hence, the Nepali population in the UK has increased since 2008, but not by as much as many Nepalis claim. The 2011 UK census gives a total Nepali population in England and Wales of 60,202. Similarly, the Scottish Census 2011 records that 1,268 people born in Nepal

live in Scotland.¹⁰ Given the general tendency of immigrants and ethnic minority groups in the UK not to participate fully in censuses, the recent census result is low, but is not surprisingly so. These figures prove, as we had long argued, that the ONS's previous figures (annual estimation by country of birth, and previous nationalities, as well the number in the 2001 census) were wrong (Adhikari et al., 2012; Adhikari, 2013a, 2013b).

Immigration categories: Nepalis entered the UK under four main immigration categories: British Gurkha soldiers, Students, Work and Employment (non-army), and 'others', which includes both British National Overseas (BNO-Hong Kong) and asylum seekers. Of the total population counted, over 60 per cent were Gurkhas and people related to them. Between 2004 and 2010, a total of 19,025 students and their dependents came to the UK from Nepal but many of them have already left the country. In the same period, 5,205 came under employment-related visas or as dependents.¹¹ The number of those arriving as BNOs is not separately available from immigration sources, but one in 10 Nepalis in our survey was born in Hong Kong.

Geographical distribution: The study showed that Nepalis were spread across 327 towns/cities of all four countries of the United Kingdom. They have reached all nine regions of England, and in total were residing in 65 counties, districts, or unitary authority areas. As with other ethnic minorities in the UK, they are overwhelmingly concentrated in England (96%). The 2011 census results confirm those of the 2008 survey while providing more precision. More than one third of Nepalis live in and around (outer) London while two fifths live in South-East England. About 50 per cent of the population is found in the following ten areas (in population order, largest first): Rushmoor, Greenwich, Brent, Reading, Ealing, Hounslow, Shepway, Ashford, Hillingdon, and Harrow (of these only Rushmoor, Reading, Shepway, and Ashford are not in London). Of the 326 areas identified in England and Wales by the recent census results, 75 per cent have fewer than 100 Nepali inhabitants. Despite the tendency to concentrate, the Nepali population, according to recent Census results, is nowhere more than 6.5 per cent of the local population.

Even in Rushmoor (Aldershot and Farnborough)—where in January 2011 the size of the Nepali population became a political issue when the local MP, Gerald Howarth, wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister, complaining that local social services were unable to cope (Rushmoor Borough Council 2011; Adhikari, 2011)—Nepalis comprise just 6.5 per cent of the total population. Census results show that, in fact, the council's total population rose only by 2,828 (3.3%) between 2001 and 2011, and that the present Nepali population of Rushmoor stands at 6,131 (ONS, 2012a). This figure has been disputed and some claim that there are over 9,000 Nepalis, constituting about 10 per cent of the population in Aldershot and Farnborough areas (GetHampshire, 2012).¹² Even though some people were in all probability missed out by the census, it is implausible to assume that the missing figure is so high as to make the population of Nepalis living in Rushmoor Borough in excess of 9,000.

Origin: Nepalis in the UK were born in 16 different countries. 80 per cent were born in Nepal, 10 per cent in Hong Kong, and 5 per cent in the UK. Small numbers were born in countries such as Brunei, India, Malaysia, Singapore, and Germany. In Nepal, they come from 64 of Nepal's 75 districts but the majority are from the hill districts which are the traditional sites of Gurkha recruitment. 75 per cent come from 15 districts, including Kaski, Kathmandu, Sunsari, Myagdi, and Syangja.¹³

Demographic phenomena: The study revealed a relatively balanced sex composition of the population (53% male, 47% female) and is very close to the 2011 Census results in England and Wales (55% male and 45% female).¹⁴ Age-wise, the population was dominated by economically active people with a mean age of 28 years; the population of those between 18 to 60 years old was 70 per cent of the total. Those over 60 were only 5 per cent and children under 16 were 25 per cent of the overall population. However, since 2009, with the arrival of pre-1997 retired Gurkhas, the population composition has been changing; the elderly now comprise a much larger proportion of the Nepali

population. Nonetheless, the 2011 census of England and Wales results show very close figures in terms of the distribution of population by age group. This might indicate the non-inclusion of a large number of elderly Gurkhas in the UK census. Thanks to the Gurkha recruitment policy, the caste/ethnicity composition is markedly different from that of Nepal (see Figure 31.2). Gurungs, Magars, Rais, and Limbus together form only 12.83 per cent of Nepal's population; at 67.07 per cent, their proportion within the UK's Nepali population is more than five times as high. Overall, 26 caste or ethnic groups were found in the UK, compared to 125 listed in the 2011 census in Nepal.

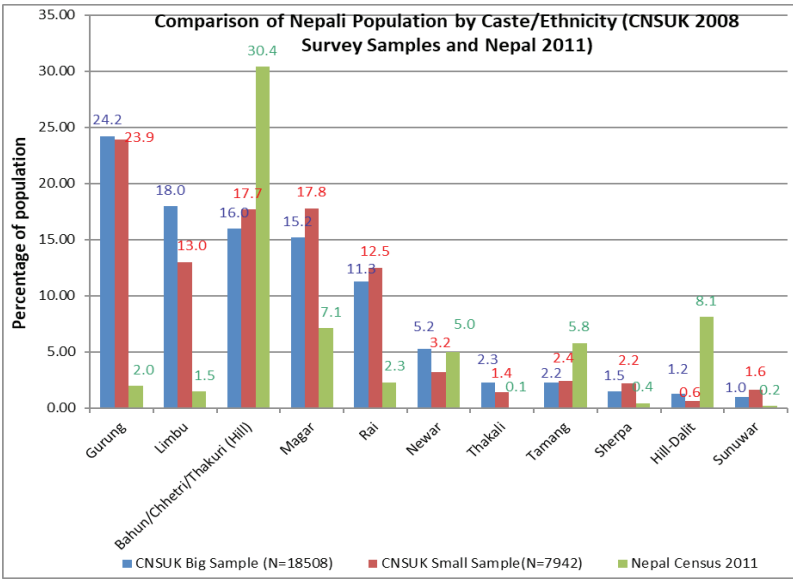


Figure 31.2: Nepali population by ethnicity, comparing the UK and Nepal

Source: CNSUK survey samples (2008); and Nepal Census (2011).

Note: Groups such as Madhesi, Muslim, Dewan, Ghale, Marwari, and Dura have been omitted as their population in the UK is too small to show up in the figures

Multi-religious practices: The results of religion are also very different from the Nepal's figures, for three reasons: (a) the types and ratio of ethnic mix which, as shown above, is very

different from that of Nepal; (b) new ethno-political anti-Hindu rhetoric as well as an emphasis on returning to Buddhism and/or old ethnic religions (Gellner, 2001; International Crisis Group 2011); and (c) the unique method of capturing multi-religiosity of the people adopted in the survey. The biggest group (42%) of Nepalis in the UK was reported to be Hindu followed by Buddhists (29%) and Kirat (10%). The UK census data showed slightly different results mainly due to methodological differences: 53.9% Hindu, 27.7% Buddhist, 3.6% Christian, 1.4% no religion, and 12.5% did not want to say. It showed less than 1% following Muslim, Sikh, Jewish, or other religions. An interesting aspect of the survey is that it captured multiple religious identities, such as 'Hindu and Buddhist', which one in every six people follow (Hausner and Gellner, 2012; Gellner, Hausner, and Shrestha, 2014). National censuses, whether in Nepal or the UK, have so far failed to reflect this reality. Even though Hinduism and Buddhism are two minor religious groups in the UK (with 1.5% and 0.4% respectively) (ONS, 2012b), their presence in the Nepali population has contributed to noticeable increases in places where Nepalis are concentrated. The 2011 census highlighted the fact that "... Buddhism was predominantly greater within the London areas with the exception of Rushmoor which saw the highest increase since 2001 of 2.9 percentage points to 3.3 per cent" (ONS, 2012b: 8). Rushmoor has become a new centre for Buddhism in the UK (BBC, 2012).¹⁵

Highly employed low-profile workforce: The CNSUK's study revealed vital labour market indicators pertaining to the Nepali population in the UK. It showed that only 3.78 per cent of Nepalis were unemployed (1.37% male and 7.6% female).¹⁶ 2.6 per cent of the sample or 188 were self-employed through small or medium enterprises. Almost half of the 271 Nepali-owned businesses were restaurants or related services (CNSUK, 2011). Of the total employed, only 4 per cent were in 'higher professions', such as doctors and senior managers, and 7 per cent were in 'middle professions', such as nurses and chefs. This suggests that the majority (more than 85 per cent) were pursuing careers in lower classified jobs. For those with qualifications from Nepal, particularly other than medical, nursing, and

engineering-related qualifications, there was a high mismatch between the level of education and occupation. For example, fewer than one in four with such degrees were employed in higher or middle professions, while half of them were in non-professional jobs; 43.8 per cent with science qualifications were in non-professional employment, while 12.6 per cent were in higher or middle-ranged professions; 43.7 per cent with teaching experience in Nepal were in non-professional work, while 19.1 per cent were in higher or middle-range professional work (Laksamba, Dhakal, and Holford, 2012). It is to be expected that the second generation of Nepalis, even those with non-medical UK qualifications, will do better than the first generation, among whom many recent non-UK medical graduates are still finding it hard to qualify for UK jobs (Laksamba, 2014). Overall, the findings indicated that, at least in the UK context, Nepalis emphasize and value work, and prefer not to rely on state benefits, wherever possible.¹⁷

There is a growing number of organisations dominated by particularist membership groups: As the Nepali population is rising, so is the number of their associations. Most of these organisations are formed based on caste/ethnicity, affinity circles, regions of origin, regions of present residence, or occupation. Caste/ethnicity-based organisations are large and strong in terms of mobilisation, involvement of members, resources, ownership, unity (relative lack of conflict), and the density and intensity of their activities. Broad-based groups, mainly region-based, are present in good numbers, but are relatively weaker than the former.

Slow and constrained integration and social mobility: Nepalis are integrated among themselves through various informal and formal overlapping organisations based on multiple commonalities, including common region of origin in Nepal, common region of residence in the UK, and common occupation or profession. Being a non-resident Nepali is the most overarching basis for them to be integrated with each other and there exists a common organisation called Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) (Adhikari and Gellner, 2018). However, Nepalis are more integrated within their own

caste/ethnic sub-groups than they are with other Nepalis, as is evident from the number of specialised ethnic organisations. When it comes to integrating within the wider society in Britain, it is positive but rather slow, particularly in terms of participation in formal political and civic forums. People are frequently members of many organisations, but in the vast majority of cases (93%), they become members of only Nepali or Nepal-focused groups.

Problems with and limits on integration: The six problematic areas raised by respondents to the survey related to education, security, health, (English) language, employment, and transportation. A large number of respondents (74%) felt that the labour market system in the UK was not (completely) fair, and only half felt that there was equity in access to local services. Similarly, a large number (68%) also felt that they did not fit well into the wider society in everyday situations. As Nepali settlement is very recent, it is unsurprising that participation in civic and political institutions and links with and access to government mechanisms are very limited. So far, there have been 11 elected and one co-opted local councillors from the Nepali community—of whom nine are currently serving (2016), and two have become Deputy Mayors, and recently, for the first time from the Nepali community, one has become Mayor (of a town council), of their respective councils—and a few people have started to participate in various mainstream civic forums. While another eight Nepalis have unsuccessfully tried their luck in the local council elections, so far no Nepali has even tried to become a candidate for the election of Member of Parliament. These internal and external built-in constraints have slowed down the process of integration and social mobility. On the other hand, the survey showed that most Nepali households have an internet connection and many of them (with settled status) either have bought or were planning to buy a house in the near future.

The rising number of British Nepalis: The study also examined people's immigration status and citizenship. A vast majority (84%) of the sampled population in the UK were still Nepali nationals while 1 per cent were neither Nepali nationals nor British. The up-to-date immigration information beginning

from 1990 shows that, by 2015, there were 28,322 former Nepali nationals who had become British citizens (see Figure 31.3). The rate of Nepalis becoming British citizens in recent years is high with peak in 2013, when it has started to decline. Many are in line to become citizens after fulfilling the five-year residence requirement. However, the hurdle of citizenship requirements, i.e. the ever-increasing difficulty of tests in the English language and the examination on 'Life in the UK' means that many elderly ex-Gurkhas who have been allowed to settle will always remain disfranchised, and thus Nepali nationals.

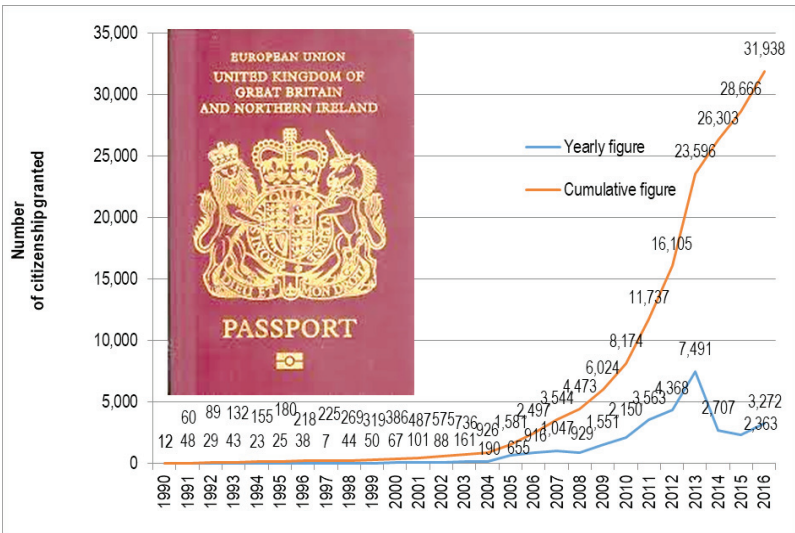


Figure 31.3: Former Nepali nationals as British citizens.

Source: Home Office (2017).

Dissemination and advocacy

There has been growing interest from various walks of life in the UK in the results of the CNSUK survey. Those enquiring about information regarding the Nepali population include MPs, local government agencies, policy makers, Headquarters of the Brigade of Gurkhas (HQBG), researchers, students, Nepali community organisations and other diaspora organisations, and individuals. Many agencies, including the Nepal Embassy and UK government offices, have redirected enquiries to CNSUK regarding the Nepali

population in the UK. In 2010 CNSUK organised sharing and feedback sessions, as well as programmes honouring volunteers and supporters without whom the research could not have been done. Several articles have been published in Nepali newspapers in the UK, and findings have been disseminated through radio and TV interviews. Apart from filling the knowledge gap on Nepalis in the UK, the 2008 survey has been and will be a benchmark for future studies. It has already served as a vital source for a growing number of studies in the UK. CNSUK itself used the 2008 information as the sampling frame for the 300-household survey of religious practice as part of the 'Vernacular Religion' project on the Nepali diaspora in partnership with the University of Oxford and the editors of this volume.¹⁸ In January 2012 a book entitled *Nepalis in the United Kingdom: An Overview* (Adhikari, 2012) was published in English based on this study and on other up-to-date secondary information related to the Nepalis in the UK. It was distributed both in the UK and in Nepal (Pearson 2013). Similarly, CNSUK initiated a further study to understand the dynamics of the social mobility of the Nepali community.

The book that contained survey results has been useful in informing policies at the local level and gradually it has started to have an impact. Government agencies have organised meetings with CNSUK in order to improve their policies relating to Nepalis. A good example is the repeated meetings of HQBG with CNSUK to discuss how they could better understand and support the community of retired Gurkhas in the UK. Several local government authorities have acquired information related to their areas and made budgetary allocations as a result. Similarly, even before the 2011 census results were available, various local councils, including Rushmoor Borough Council, received additional budgetary allocations from central government to support newly settled Gurkhas who were not covered in the previous budget (Cockroft, 2012).

Three linked examples of the way in which local government has received the CNSUK findings and publications may be given here. First, shortly after the arrival of Nepalis in the area had been represented in a somewhat negative way by Gerald Howarth, the MP for Aldershot, Alex Crowford, the Mayor of Rushmoor Borough Council, spontaneously promoted the book in his blog as follows:

The book...which contains many references to Aldershot and Rushmoor... is a timely contribution, which explores and analyses the pathways to integration, as it is available just as Rushmoor Borough Council prepares for the first meeting of its newly formed Task and Finish Group on Community Cohesion on 8 March.¹⁹

Second, Surrey Heath Borough Council organised an exhibition called 'Nepali Connections: An exhibition celebrating the local Nepalese population, Nepalese culture, Nepal, the Gurkha background and how Surrey Heath has become home' between 21 April and 30 June 2012 to celebrate Nepali people's migration and settlement in the Surrey Heath Area. The exhibition featured diverse cultural, social, and economic aspects of life in Nepal. The Mayor of the Borough, Tim Dodds, ceremonially declared the exhibition open while holding a copy of book *Nepalis in the United Kingdom* in his hands and referred to it while delivering his opening remarks. Taking a point from the book, he urged Nepalis and the Nepal government to initiate a process that would allow them to access the same benefits in the UK as citizens of Commonwealth nations. About 60 copies of the book were sold by the museum shop during the course of the exhibition.



Plate 31.1: Mayor Tim Dodds and Nepali residents of Surrey Heath

Third, in November 2013, Frimley Park Hospital, NHS Foundation Trust brought health professionals, community workers, and policymakers together in a 'Nepalese Health Show' to promote knowledge about health issues related to Nepalis in the UK and to coordinate and improve future health policy and practice. CNSUK officials shared their findings and the organizers bought 115 copies of *Nepalis in the UK: An Overview* to distribute to all the participants.

The CNSUK 2008 survey was not only an independent study in its own right, but also an exercise in action research that involved the community in a census-like process. It probably contributed to a higher level of participation among Nepalis in the 2011 UK census than would otherwise have been the case. CNSUK remained in constant touch with the UK census agencies in terms of informing them of the interests and requirements of the Nepali community, pointing out gaps and lapses of statistics, sharing new findings, pointing out inconsistencies in the 2011 census process, and connecting the Nepali community with the census-implementing agencies across the length and breadth of the British Isles. Participating in the national census is not only legally mandatory, but also essential from the community's point of view. Local governments receive budgets based on the population count, and understanding types of people and their living conditions helps to tailor plans to the specific needs of the communities concerned. Previous experience shows that a large number of people from minority ethnic categories in the UK usually remain uncounted in the census. About one in four of the Bangladeshi community that has been in the UK for many decades were omitted in the 2001 census and their numbers had to be statistically adjusted (Adhikari, 2012: 157). Nepalis, being new migrants and lacking knowledge about the importance of the census, would very likely have been left out in even greater numbers had there not been a huge exercise to make people aware of the importance of the census by involving them in the community-led study and subsequent educational campaigns.²⁰ Even after the large coordinated campaign and linkage with the ONS, we believe that a substantial chunk of the Nepali population was still missing in the 2011 UK census. The post-census enquiry by CNSUK showed that many people did not participate in the census either because they did not receive a form, or because they did not know about it, or because the household head did not bother about

it, or was afraid to include lodgers. Yet, over all, the UK census recorded a good number of Nepalis and the results show that in England and Wales there were 60,202 Nepalis in March 2011. As stated, this is still an undercount, and the true figure could be above 80,000 (Adhikari, 2013b).

Lessons and conclusions

Several lessons can be learned from this study. We highlight here some of the more important ones.

UK immigration data was far from capturing reality

Our analysis shows that some immigration data are not accurate in the UK. At least in the case of the Nepali population in the UK, which was grossly under-represented, data about immigration was proved wrong by the official census itself.²¹ On the other hand, the lack of proper statistics and understanding about Nepalis paves the way for continued wild guesses about the size and dynamics of the population. The habit of exaggerating population size may be a general human tendency, but it is strikingly so among some Nepali communities in the UK, and a few other countries, such as Australia and the USA (Adhikari 2013a). Systematic study of the size and dynamics of a population helps to understand the strength, problems, and needs of that population. In order to advocate for support in integration or for other rights, one has to be able to make a well-researched and informed case. The study of Nepalis in 2008 has tried to do exactly this.

Community social capital is an important element and has a role to play in successful community development

Organizing a 'census' is a big project requiring very considerable resources. For example, the UK population census cost huge amounts (about £500 million in 2011). Despite the resources expended, about 3 million people failed to fill in the forms in 2001 (Telegraph, 2011). In 2011 the ONS adopted a strategy of massively mobilizing the voluntary sector in order to increase community participation. This is the same strategy that our Nepali 'census' relied on in 2008 but more intensively. Relying on the community not only meant getting endorsements and support in making community members aware of the project, but also enabled an increasing local ownership of the project and the raising of much required resources. Due to the

culturally embedded institutions of community/familial cooperation, Nepalis stay connected with each other, formally and informally, with or without modern (electronic) social networking. The study proved that community members can take multiple roles such as: respondents, enumerators, funders, and owners of the project. Despite being relatively weakly integrated into the wider society, due to their recent arrival in the UK, good connectivity among themselves was still a powerful resource or 'weapon of the weak'. Thus, we may say that the 2008 survey was a 'census' of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Having said that, it would be naive to think that studies like this receive support from everyone in the community. After initial doubts and suspicions were clarified, many joined in and assisted in the process whole heartedly. However, a few people continued to be opposed and to speak against it, either because of personal differences, or because they suspected a political agenda, or because they remained unconvinced that knowledge would bring power, or even maybe unconvinced that any power would come to them as a separate category even if so recognised. In this context, the level of commitments and priorities also varied, even from one set of NRNAUK officials to another. Normally people at NRNA, particularly in the UK, show little interest in research, as it is regarded as academic work beyond their field of concern, which properly belongs in universities and research organisations. However, it was an exception that the support from the NRNAUK to the 2008 survey was very high. Furthermore, the resistance shown by a small number of individuals also stemmed from the perception that the survey could be harmful as it might expose Nepalis to, and make them a target of, rightwing nationalist groups. Although, this concern may appear genuine especially in the post Brexit Britain, it is not well founded for four reasons. First, ethnic figures cannot be concealed as national censuses clearly reveal them. Second, personal data from both the CNSUK survey of 2008 and the national censuses are not disclosed (for 100 years). Third, Nepalis have made great contributions to Britain, most obviously as Gurkha soldiers, and, so far, have not done anything negative so as to become a target of race-hate groups (Parker, 1999). Finally, far-right groups will choose their targets on the basis of general perceptions; the existence or otherwise of demographic studies is irrelevant to them.

The successful implementation of the survey project bore witness to the coordinating power and legitimacy of the broad-

based organisation, NRNAUK (Adhikari and Gellner, 2018), and also to the neutrality and objectivity of the CNSUK as a research organisation. It showed also that, when activities of common interest are organised, people are willing to put aside narrow differences and to work hard to support them.

Clarity about who the Nepalis are is important

One aspect requiring clarity in the study was the definition of who counts as Nepali. 'Nepalis in the UK' generally includes British Nepalis—former Nepali nationals who have become British citizens—as well as other Nepalis who reside in the UK but are not British. The second category of people includes both settled and temporary residents, but not visitors. There are other groups included in Nepalis in the UK whose immediate former or present nationality is not Nepali, nor are they British citizens, but they are still people of Nepali origin. These include people who come from Hong Kong, the European Economic Area, or other countries, and who, before becoming nationals of those countries, were either Nepali nationals themselves or had parents who were. This excludes Indian, Bhutanese, and Burmese Nepalis as their (and even their parents') immediate country of origin is not Nepal even though they are people of Nepali origin.

Despite this definition, people of Nepali origin from Bhutan, India, or Burma are likely to have built a close bond with people from Nepal living in their locality and may participate in cultural activities, while some people from Nepal might not feel or want to be close to each other at all. The ethnic politics and polarisation and resultant chasms in Nepal have had an influence on inter-ethnic relations in the UK. There is no figure to determine the size of Indian, Bhutanese and Burmese Nepalis in the UK. While in a broader cultural sense all are regarded as Nepalis in the UK, for the purpose of the census only those whose recent or previous nationality is Nepali were counted.

Religious practices of Nepalis can be mapped in an innovative way

One of the important aspects of the CNSUK's survey was to innovate and test mapping religions of Nepalis in the UK. Nepalis are often regarded as practising syncretic religion and as being a religiously tolerant people. Yet neither Nepal's census nor the UK census allows

people to identify themselves as multi-religious. No wonder their results are contestable. This survey allowed people to choose a combination of religions; many people took this opportunity.²² This method was further applied in the Vernacular Religion survey of 2010 conducted by CNSUK and Oxford University and was further improved. In essence, this suggests that censuses, at least in Nepal and other South Asian countries, may benefit from following our methods in their census projects.

Action research and ownership

Finally, this research shows how, at relatively small cost, new findings that are of real relevance to people can be generated, if there is sufficient will, energy, and motivation behind them. In fact, participatory action research like this is not only itself a process of knowledge-building but can at the same time be empowering. Knowledge generation goes hand in hand with community development and increased civic engagement, and supports the struggle for integration with the wider society. Even though very few systematic research projects like this have been attempted, this project has shown that doing research this way is both possible and useful. Rapid and participatory assessment tools (Chamber, 1983) may have been designed for community development in Third World countries, but there is no reason why they cannot be adapted and combined with quantitative methods for use in the context of the developed world.

Contributors:

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Dr Laksamba is a founder of the CNSUK, where he worked as its Executive Director and senior researcher. He was an Adjunct Professor at the Nepal Open University.

Notes

¹ This article originally published in Gellner and Hausner, 2018, is reproduced here with permission from the Oxford University Press.

[Adhikari, K.P & Laksamba, C.K. (2018). Counting Ourselves: CNSUK's Survey of Nepalis in the UK 2008 in D.N. Gellner and S.L. Hausner (eds.), *Global Nepalis: Religion and Culture in a New Diaspora*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 303–31.] We are grateful to Dr Govinda Dahal, Dr Rajubabu Shrestha, Mr Lokendra Dhakal, Mr Ananda Bhandari, and Mr Shree Baral who were part of the research team, and NRNAUK and other research partner institutes and individuals for their support in the collection of the data.

- 2 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepalis_in_the_United_Kingdom_(accessed 12/06/2012).
- 3 www.nrn.org (accessed 01/07/2012). NRNA later updated its website, listing the Nepali population figure supplied by the CNSUK based on the research being discussed.
- 4 One of the goals of the survey was to have 'Nepali' accepted as an ethnic category in the UK Census 2011.
- 5 Computed based on the ONS's migration statistics based on country of birth of 2004 and 2007.
- 6 In fact Nepalis were not universally welcomed. In Aldershot, a military town, when it seemed that local GP services were struggling to cope with the newcomers, Nepalis faced considerable hostility (see Adhikari, K.P., 2011; Gellner, 2014; Pariyar (2018).
- 7 In the run-up to the UK 2011 census, during the awareness campaign conducted by CNSUK, there was not a single demand for, or enquiry about, 'Gurkha' as a category from members of the Nepali community. However, there was an enquiry from a native British man who had served in the British and Indian Gurkhas, acting as an advisor to a grouping of Nepali Janajati groups, and his proposal was to write 'Nepalese', rather than 'Nepali', under 'Other'.
- 8 Email correspondence with ONS (22/03/2011) seeking clarification about the use of terms in questions 15, 16, and 18, and options on religion.
- 9 Since 2011 *Nepali Sandesh* and *Naya Sandesh* have ceased to appear in print form; several other online news portals have started up.
- 10 The population by Nepali ethnicity (including Gurkha) is even

lower: 1,232.

- ¹¹ On 28 January 2002 the UK Government started a points-based Highly Skilled Migrants Programme (HSMP), in which people satisfying the required number of points could come and work in the UK without having any specific job offer, which was essential for the Work Permit system. HSMP and its new avatar, Tier 1 General Migrants programme, have now been closed. The previous Work Permit system as an immigration category was replaced in November 2008 by a points-based system, Tier 2 (General).
- ¹² Local MP Gerald Howarth expressed his dismay on the 2011 census results: “...*Given that we have gone from practically nothing to around 10% of the entire population being of Nepalese origin, how can they say the population has only grown by 3%? I find it pretty inexplicable and I'm sure my constituents would find that too. I do not think people will buy into that.*” (www.gethampshire.co.uk)
- ¹³ Relatively few Nepalis from the plains region (Tarai-Madhes) have migrated to the UK. Sunsari is a combined plains and hill district, and includes the hill town of Dharan, where many ex-Gurkha soldiers had settled, having migrated from other districts of the eastern hills.
- ¹⁴ This is in strong contrast to Nepali populations in countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and India, where women are discouraged from migrating mainly for security reasons.
- ¹⁵ This is also because a Buddhist Community Centre UK (BCCUK), run by Nepali Buddhists, was set up and acquired a disused BT building for more than £400,000, entirely raised within the community. This was converted into a Tibetan Buddhist monastery and community centre. When the BCCUK invited the Dalai Lama to visit Aldershot (Rushmoor Borough) in June 2012 as part of the fundraising drive, more than 6,000 people turned out at Aldershot FC stadium to meet him. He returned in June 2015 to open the new centre.
- ¹⁶ The computation of the unemployment rate considers only those who are of economically active age and actively seeking a job. Hence this excludes over 1 in 5 Nepalis who are out of the job market and are not actively seeking employment due to full-time education. The 2011 Census showed 3.13% males and 5.47% females as unemployed. What is surprising and unexplainable in the Census report is that

25.6% Nepalis were reported inactive. This could be due to errors made while filling out the forms.

17 Casey (2010: 5) makes the same observation. The newly arrived elderly Gurkhas a exceptions, most of who have to rely on pension credit as their pension is too low or do not get any at all.

18 The full team of this project included the two editors of this volume, the two authors of this paper, Shrestha and Gellner, (2018). 14), Dr. Rajbabu Shrestha, and Dr Florence Gurung (see Gurung, 2018).

19 <http://mayorofrushmoor.wordpress.com/2012/02/29/nepalis-in-the-united-kingdom-an-overview/>

20 Upon completion of the 2011 UK census, the ONS wrote to CNSUK to acknowledge the contribution made by CNSUK.

21 After publishing the 2011 census results, the ONS discovered a mistake: they had undercounted – by over half a million – EU migrants for a decade. The previous estimation of migrants' population based on the birth, death, and other official immigration figures proved wrong (Dawer, 2013). A huge discrepancy was also discovered between ONS's estimation of Nepalis in England and Wales by country of birth and the actual population as shown by the 2011 census (Adhikari 2012).

22 See Hausner and Gellner (2012), Gellner and Hausner (2013), Pariyar et al. (2014), and Gellner et al. (2014) for some preliminary results of this mapping.

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Education and Employment

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Lokendra P. Dhakal
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The aim of this chapter is to explore and examine the state of education and employment (and the relationships between them) among Nepalis in the UK¹. Focussing on current local labour markets, it seeks to identify the main trends in education, training and qualification, and how these can help an individual's employment and income. The chapter is based on information derived from the large scale survey conducted by CNSUK in 2008 (for detailed methodology see Adhikari, 2012b). The general trend of employability has been deduced by comparing education levels, gender and other variables. The chapter starts with the education and learning environment of Nepalis in the UK and their employment situation. A few sectors of employment are predominant; the relationships between these sectors and their unique features, and specific groups within the Nepali community – Gurkhas, International students and women – are discussed. The discussion focuses on how education can be used for the wider benefit of Nepalis in the UK.

Education and learning for migrants: A powerful instrument

The 2008 CNSUK survey highlights the fact that the population of Nepali ethnicity has increased significantly and steadily since 2004. Nepali migrants who came to the UK during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were mostly professionals and worked in medicine, engineering, and the academic and service sectors; a few also worked in restaurant businesses. The main motive in those days was educational advancement. In recent decades, however, the pattern of

migration has changed. Substantial numbers still come to study: these constitute the second largest group of Nepalis who arrived in the UK over the last two decades. In the 1960s, students typically had high profile jobs or came from affluent backgrounds in Nepal; only a very small number continued to stay in the UK after they had completed their studies, and they tended to have been offered professional jobs. Apart from students, the more recent migrants have either arrived in the search of paid employment or as refugees or asylum seekers. Broadly speaking, most of the recent immigrants can be considered economic migrants. Since former and serving Gurkhas (British soldiers of Nepali nationality) have been allowed to settle, they have constituted the largest number of Nepali immigrants in the UK (see Adhikari et al., 2012). The Nepali community therefore comprises people from various socio-economic and educational backgrounds. The migrants also come at varying ages, and have different abilities, educational needs, and skill requirements to participate effectively in the labour market.

The link between education and employment is well established. This relationship is even more pronounced in migrant communities. Good education, and good educational qualifications, provides better chances both to secure better and more highly-paid occupations, and help migrants to take opportunities of many other aspects of life. This is also true of post-school education; but becoming educated does not, of course, necessarily mean obtaining higher degrees. Learning can be non-formal and informal, as well as formal. Indeed, what we learn within formal education is often now insufficient to meet the demands of global competition. Migrants in particular need to learn and adapt to new local contexts and needs. In order to keep knowledge and skills up-to-date in today's fast-changing global society, learning needs to be continuous or "lifelong". Lifelong learning helps refresh and refine knowledge and skills in response to changing job market contexts. In the following section, we explore and analyse education and employment among the Nepali diaspora in the UK, to find out their education levels, adaptability and employability.

Education and employment – as it stands

In this section the results of the 2008 CNSUK survey are presented in relation to six themes: a) level of education, b) training and qualifications, c) labour market-employment and unemployment, d) matching qualifications with occupations, d) professional associations, e) self-employment, and f) job satisfaction.

Level of education

The 2008 CNSUK survey estimated the total population of Nepali origin residing in the UK at 72,173. A total of 7,881 people selected through snowballing process filled an in-depth household questionnaire which solicited information regarding education and employment. Figure 32.1 outlines the educational level amongst this sample and details the percentages at each level. The level of literacy in Nepal is still very low (of people aged 6 years or above, it is 60.25% (CBS, 2001)) as educational opportunities have been limited. However, in the 2008 CNSUK survey questionnaire, more than 99 percent of Nepalis in the UK mentioned themselves as literate. Reporting oneself to be literate does not of course mean one is functionally fully capable of communicating in English. In one question, around 97 percent respondents indicated- 'can communicate in English'. 94 percent of respondents also claimed to watch TV, listen to the radio or read newspapers in English. These are just examples of their attempts to learn and deal with things in English. When it comes to daily interaction, and doing business in English, the scenario is quite different. Anecdotal evidence on the growth of language services (e.g. language interpretation) among the Nepali community suggests that functional language skills and functional literacy are limited to a subset of the Nepali community.² In addition, when the new wave of pension-aged retired Gurkhas and their spouses are considered in the data, the level of literacy and functional literacy will be much lower than what the survey has shown in 2008.

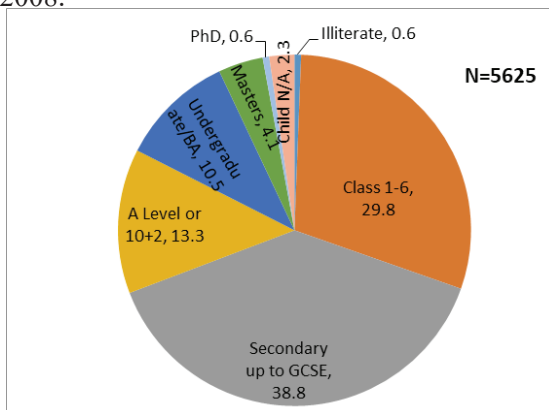


Figure 32.1: Education level of Nepalis in the UK

Source: CNSUK survey 2008

Figure 32.1 show that, including school-aged children, nearly seven in ten Nepalis have qualifications at or below school-leaving level. Another 13.3% have A-levels or '10+2' (from Nepal) whereas 15.2% have university degrees ranging from undergraduate to PhD.³

Overall, nearly one in every four Nepalis in the UK is under 15 years old and about one in five is of school going age. There are fewer women than men with university degrees, although the gender imbalance is less pronounced for school-level qualifications. Broadly, the levels of education correlate with age to a small extent. There is little difference by sex, though there are slightly more illiterate women (1%) than men (0.3%), and there are more men (6.1%) than women (3.1%) with masters qualifications or above. More men than women have only high school qualifications, mainly due to retired ex-Gurkhas having joined the army when they finished school (normally they do not advance their qualifications further). Nearly nine in 10 retired Gurkhas have education at or below secondary level, compared with only two-thirds of non-Gurkhas. Most Nepali people of pension age have only primary education. Three-quarters of those aged 45-49 have education of high school level or below. Needless to say those holding higher level jobs also tend to be better-educated, while the unemployed tend to be less well-educated (72% holding high school qualifications or below). Overall, two-thirds of those doing non-professional or menial jobs have completed their education at high school or earlier. However, one-third of those holding such non-profession or menial jobs are better qualified, including a few with PhDs. With regard to age, more than a quarter of 18-25 years olds have university degrees, while half of them have A-levels or 10+2 qualifications. There is no great difference with regard to region, but people (Nepali) in London and Scotland have somewhat higher levels of qualification.

Turning to sub-ethnicity, the educational distribution varies only a little (see Figure 32.2). However, there are significantly more Bahun, Chhetri, Thakuri (combined) and Newar with university education than other groups.⁴ Two in five Bahun/Chhetri/ Thakuri and one in three Newars have university qualification, compared with one in 10 Gurung, one in 10 Rai, one in 11 Limbu and one in 16 Magars.

These educational differences seem due again, to Gurkha recruitment, and to sub-ethnicities like Bahun, Chhetri and Newar who come to the UK mainly by the virtue of their educational qualification, such as study or work. Similar disparities in educational outcome are also found in Nepal. Despite these differences, nowadays most of Nepalis place high value for education of their children.

Of course, employability is not dependent solely on formal educational qualifications. Various occupational and professional qualifications also have important role in preparing and succeeding in labour market. Here below we explore and assess training and other qualifications of Nepalis in the UK.

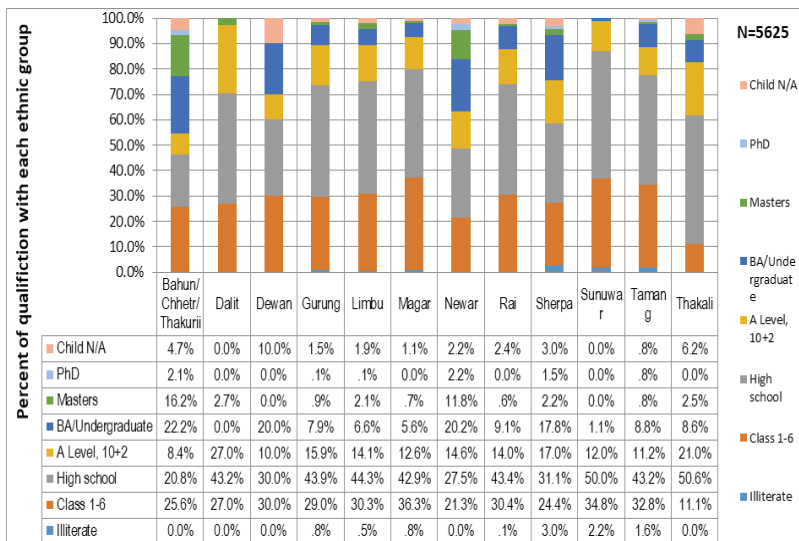


Figure 32.2: Educational qualification of Nepalis in the UK by sub-ethnicity

Source: CNSUK Survey 2008

Training and qualifications— readying for labour market

In the 1960s, the first professionally qualified Nepalis in the UK were medical doctors who chose to settle. Later, medical nurses, engineers, academics and restaurateurs followed. After 1990 came small number of lawyers, teachers, lecturers, accountants, journalists and caterers. Additional migration in recent years was triggered by the Highly Skilled Migration Programme (HSMP) visa provisions

introduced in 2002. CNSUK (2008) data in Table 32.1 shows the types of training and qualification held by Nepalis in the UK.

Table 32.1: Training and qualification of Nepalis in the UK

Types training or qualifications	Frequency	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Medical profession (Doctors)	32	0.53	0.53
Nursing	147	2.44	2.97
Engineering	81	1.34	4.31
Accountancy, Auditing, Banking and Management	98	1.62	5.93
Social Scientist	48	0.80	6.73
Teaching	142	2.35	9.08
Legal/lawyer	16	0.27	9.35
Pharmacist	20	0.33	9.68
Scientist	19	0.31	10.00
Catering	204	3.38	13.38
Security/Military	1105	18.32	31.69
Caring	161	2.67	34.36
Others (Specify)	837	13.87	48.23
No qualifications	539	8.93	57.17
N/A Student 16 or over	852	14.12	71.29
N/A 15 or under	1732	28.71	100.00
Total	6033	100.00	

Source: CNSUK survey 2008

Table 32.1 also indicates the level of preparedness among the Nepali community for active participation in the labour market. The results show that some sectors (e.g. security) attract an overwhelming greater focus than others. About one in five Nepalis in the sample had been trained in the security sector due to the fact that most Nepali immigrants (and their family members) come from a British army background. Security has been the main field of employment for men, whereas nursing, care and 'other' professions have employed the majority of Nepali women. There is a general correlation between higher-level professions and higher-level education. Overall, about one in ten people have no training and qualifications at all. Those with no training and qualifications also have lower levels of formal education; these are more often women (15.2%) than men (4%). With regard to ethnicity, the pattern resembles that for education levels and ethnicity (see Figure 32.2).

Professional associations

Since the 1980s, Nepalis in the UK have formed associations to support their respective professions, gain collective strength and to

develop their skills. One of the earliest was the Nepalese Doctors Association, formed in 1985. Within the medical sector, the second such grouping, the Nepalese Nurses Association UK, was established in 2008. The Association of Nepalese Accountants UK was established in 2002, the Britain Nepal Lawyers' Association in 2009, and the Society of Nepali Engineers in UK in 2010. The Nepalese Caterers Association was established in 2004 by caterers who had worked in the UK.

All these associations work toward improving the skills and knowledge of their respective members. Their published objectives and general goals include: capacity building; exchange and networking of ideas and expertise; facilitating in job search and registration; advocacy; and counselling and coaching programmes. Some also undertake charity work to raise money and resources for awareness building and supporting the needy, both in the UK and Nepal.

Besides the above profession-specific Nepali associations there are two major academic and research forums, namely: the Britain Nepal Academic Council (BNAC) and the Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNSUK), both of which promote academic research, seminars and conferences with a focus on Nepal and Nepali culture.

Labour market: employment and unemployment

In this section, we examine the employment and labour market situation of Nepalis in the UK. The discussion covers various forms of economic activity: employment, unemployment and self-employment through established trading firms.

Table 32.2: Labour market indicators of Nepalis in the UK

Various labour market indicators	Percent		
	Male	Female	Total
Overall sample population studied (N=7232)	52.46	47.54	100
Size of labour market (16 yrs or above, women up to 59 and man up to 64 yrs) (5440 of total 7232)	75.6	74.9	75.27
Unemployment rate (unemployed and actively seeking job/ total active age population) (N=158)	1.37	7.6	3.78
Employment rate of active age population	75.81	67.52	72.3
Active age population in full time education	22.4	25.4	23.94

Source: CNSUK Survey 2008

The Nepali labour market in the UK comprises 75.27 percent of the Nepali population (see Table 32.2): or, in another words, three in four Nepalis in the UK are of economically active age (women aged 16-59 and men aged 16-64). The unemployment rate was calculated using International Labour Organisation's definition of a person as unemployed if they are not employed and are actively seeking employment or are available for work. The unemployment rate was calculated as the ratio of unemployed people with all those of economically active age. On this basis, the unemployment rate of Nepalis in the UK in 2008 was 3.78 percent. Women's unemployment (7.6%) was much higher than men's (1.37%). In reality, the unemployment rate of women also contains women looking after family without being in paid employment; hence, their actual unemployment rate could be significantly lower. Apart from students, no information on economic inactivity was obtained, such as unavailability for work due to long-term illness or disability. The proportion of the population of economically active age in full-time education was 23.94 percent (22.4% male and 25.4% female). This is to be due to students doing courses at A level or above include a large number of international students. In fact, a large proportion of those in full-time study also have part-time work.

Nepalis in the UK have taken up a range of employment and occupations. Without counting serving Gurkhas, the largest number is in the security industry, followed by catering services. Several work in the care and housekeeping, factory-warehouse and sales-related work. A relatively small number work as doctors, engineers, nurses, accountants and social or technical researchers. Several also run business and are self-employed. The employment and occupation of Nepalis in the UK can therefore be categorised into four major parts: Higher profession, middle profession, non-profession, and business (self-employment) (Figure 32.3). Apart from those who are in employment or self-employment, most work in non-professional sector including housekeeping, sales, factory work, security/guarding, care (assistants), etc. The non-professional work involves the notorious 'three Ds': Dangerous, Dirty and Difficult. One in 20 are in middle professional works such as nursing and chefs whereas one in 10 of them have works involving higher professions such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, scientists, social scientists, managers and accounting. One in 20 people have some kind of trade business or self-employments.

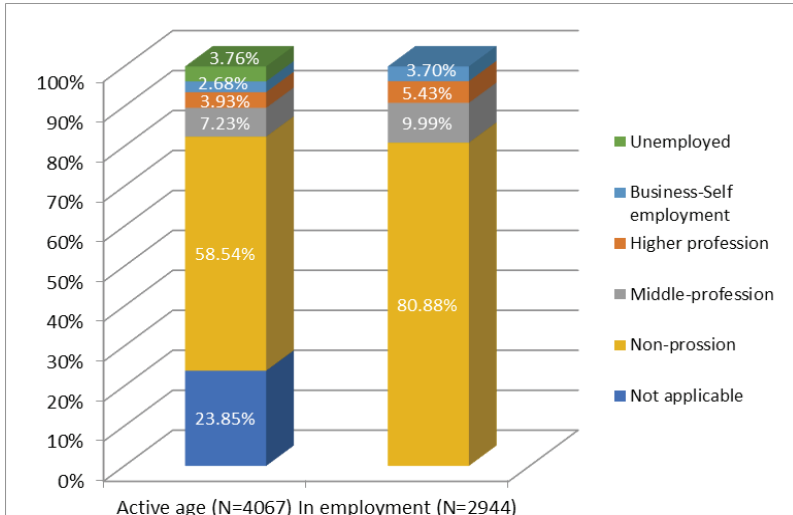


Figure 32.3: Employment of Nepalis in the UK by professional levels and types (of active age and in-employment)

Source: CNSUK survey 2008

Although the proportion of medical doctors in the CNSUK sample was small, it is informally estimated that there are around 300 medical doctors working in the UK. This sector is also attracting many second generation Nepalis; anecdotal evidence suggests over a dozen foreign trained Nepali doctors have recently arrived with qualifications from countries such as Nepal, China, India, Bangladesh and Russia.

Nursing is the other most preferred profession, and about 500 nurses from Nepal have joined the UK Nursing register between 2004 and 2008 but Adhikari (2008) estimates a total of between 700 and 1000 Nepali nurses are registered and working in the UK. Hausner (2011) mentions that many hundreds more Nepal trained and qualified nurses have migrated to the UK and await full accreditation. The Nurses from Nepal made up of one of the largest number of foreign registrants with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) in the UK, and in 2007-2008 they were the fifth largest number (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2008). Similarly, there are hundreds of engineers and other Nepali professionals in the UK. Banking, accounting, auditing and management sector is also attracting many students and the number of

those graduated from the UK universities is also on rise.

Considering the total population (both active and inactive age), the employment result by gender shows that there are slightly more men (5%) than women (2.6%) in the higher professional sector, likewise there are more men (60.8%) than women (55.3%) in non-professional sector. No gender differences stand out in the middle professions.

With regard to age, 94 percent of people aged 16-18 years were in full time education and only 0.3 percent were unemployed. Similarly, of young people aged 18-24, over three-fifths were in education and only 1.5% were unemployed. The unemployment ratio is highest among men over sixty (7.1%).

Matching training and qualifications with occupation- adaptation is a 'key'

A further analysis of the relationship between training and qualification and employment shows that many people with high levels of training and qualifications are in higher or middle professions (Table 32.3). However, many with higher professional qualifications are in non-professional or menial work, and some are even unemployed. Half of those with a social science background are doing non-professional or menial work, along with over two in five from teaching, over one in three from accounting, and about one in five from nursing, engineering, and legal backgrounds.

People with social science degrees face tough competition in the labour market. However, most of those from such a background in the CNSUK study were fortunate enough to be employed or self-employed. For school teachers, the requirement to obtain a UK teaching qualification was reported to be the major hurdle. The qualifying process was both time consuming and expensive, and many do not seem interested in pursuing it.

Table 32.3: Comparison of categories of training and qualifications with type of occupations among Nepalis in the UK

Training and qualifications	Occupational category						Total
	Higher profession	Middle profession	Non-profession	Unemployed	Not applicable	Business-Self employment	
Medical doctor	79.2%	0.0%	4.2%	4.2%	12.5%	0.0%	100
Nursing	0.8%	65.6%	24.0%	1.6%	8.0%	0.0%	100
Engineering	59.7%	1.4%	19.4%	5.6%	11.1%	2.8%	100
Accountancy, Auditing, Banking and Management	32.5%	3.6%	37.3%	1.2%	24.1%	1.2%	100
Social Scientist	23.7%	0.0%	50.0%	2.6%	15.8%	7.9%	100
Teaching	14.3%	4.8%	43.7%	4.8%	29.4%	3.2%	100
Legal/lawyer	35.7%	14.3%	21.4%	7.1%	0.0%	21.4%	100
Catering	0.0%	51.1%	30.8%	0.0%	3.3%	14.8%	100
Security/Military	0.2%	2.8%	94.7%	0.9%	0.9%	0.5%	100
Caring	0.0%	1.4%	89.6%	3.5%	2.8%	2.8%	100
Pharmacist	17.6%	5.9%	64.7%	0.0%	5.9%	5.9%	100
Scientist	6.3%	6.3%	43.8%	0.0%	43.8%	0.0%	100
Others (Specify)	3.0%	5.0%	77.8%	2.8%	7.2%	4.1%	100
No qualifications	1.1%	3.3%	66.5%	17.6%	6.5%	5.0%	100
N/A Student 16 or over	0.0%	0.1%	1.2%	0.0%	98.7%	0.0%	100
N/A 15 or under	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	99.9%	0.0%	100
Total	157	274	2229	133	2757	105	100

Source: CNSUK survey 2008 (N= 5,655).

The proportion of employed lawyers is moderate. Although few in number, all qualified lawyers seem to be employed – but not all in their professional field. The number of practising lawyers could rise as the UK Government adopted a new rule in mid-2011 allowing Nepali lawyers, with three years of professional experience in Nepal, to practise law in the UK provided they pass the Qualified Lawyer Transfer Test (QLTT).

The 2008 CNSUK research suggests that many Nepali professionals whose professions were not in high demand in their local labour market have switched to new professions. Many of the Highly Skilled Migration Programme participants, who were unable to get their preferred professional job had either given up their professions or had opted to change profession. As a result, few were trying to adjust to the demand of labour market by taking up jobs in the retail, service, security and food sectors or turning toward self-employment. Others have started trade businesses, such as restaurants, grocery stores, property management and launderettes.

Self-employment through small and medium level enterprises

Nepalis are trying to establish, adapt and contribute to the demands of their local labour markets. The economic squeeze of recent years has hit every sector hard. The diversity in occupation that Nepalis have taken up reflects their adaptability. Low levels of unemployment compared to UK nationals, reflects Nepalis' intelligence in their choice of job.

Nepali entrepreneurs have opened up their businesses in the UK since 1970s. Initially these were mostly in the food and catering sectors in and around London. Later more food outlets were started in Scotland and Wales. Since 2000, as the Nepali population started to grow, a variety of businesses has emerged.

CNSUK (2010) and (2011) published Directories of Nepalis and listed the businesses owned by the Nepali community in the UK as in Table 32.4. This Table shows 271 established firms run by Nepalis, spanning 19 sectors. However, a further observation showed that a few other businesses run by Nepalis were missed out in the Directories, while new ones have emerged, such as, cleaning companies, jewellery shops, tailoring services, money transfer services and internet based businesses. In term of number

of business outlets, restaurants top the list, with 122 Nepali owned restaurants and food outlets reported. Other businesses are lesser in number but growing as Nepali population increases and employment opportunities diminish. People with an entrepreneurial frame of mind have been slowly opting to run their own businesses, individually or collectively. In this respect, the Nepali community seems little different from its Asian neighbours. Chinese and Indian migrants started enterprises and promoted entrepreneurship when their populations grew (Mascarenhas-Keyes, 2008). The data from CNSUK (2011) suggested that these self-employed businesses are mostly spread around England, with only a few in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This fits with the demographic pattern of Nepali population in the UK.

Table 32.4: List of trade business and self-employment entities run by Nepalis in the UK

SN	Types of firms	No.	Percent
	Restaurants/bars/cafes	122	45.0
	Grocery (retailed and wholesale)	22	8.1
	Educational institutes	17	6.3
	Legal/immigration	16	5.9
	Travels	16	5.9
	Miscellaneous	16	5.9
	Accounting, auditing and taxation	12	4.4
	Media	12	4.4
	Money transfer	6	2.2
	Hotel	5	1.8
	Security	5	1.8
	Driving instruction/school	4	1.5
	Entertainment (party, music, photography)	4	1.5
	Laundry	3	1.1
	Language translation	3	1.1
	Mortgage	2	0.7
	Motor/Taxi	2	0.7
	Real estate/properties	2	0.7
	Wholesale suppliers/distributors	2	0.7
	Total	271	4.4

Source: Directories of Nepalis in the UK 2011 (CNSUK, 2011)

They not only serve clients of Nepali ethnicity alone; they also cater to the needs of the broader British society. A very few market Nepali traditional and cultural products; and these are also small in size. Some are doing on-line business: one sole trader (Sudip Gautam also known as Dario Lopez as a trade name) became Britain's biggest seller on eBay in the year 2010 (Lawson, 2011).

Apart from restaurants, the second most popular area of self-employment is in retail sector- also a feature of other south Asian migrant communities (Digby, 2003). This sector does not require professional or technical skills or significantly large capital outlay, and is therefore relatively safe to operate. To optimise costs these businesses are mostly run by families or their close friends. Most prefer to employ co-ethnic labour, again a common trend among entrepreneurs from south Asia and Africa (Basu and Altiney, 2002). The majority of businesses employ at least some family members. Husband and wives, brother and sisters work alternately or on part-time patterns: in this way they achieve a competitive edge.

Satisfaction with employment – 'mostly yes'.

Job satisfaction generally results from matching jobs with the workers' skills. However, there are a variety of factors that influence this. Overall, 86 percent of Nepalis who were working were happy with their job (Figure 32.4) - a very positive indicator. Breaking the figures down by age group, those aged 30-35 are less satisfied (84%) than the age groups immediately below and above. However, there seems no significant correlation between age and satisfaction. The more highly educated seem less satisfied (70% for Masters) than the less-well-educated (A level and 10+2) (90%); job satisfaction among the illiterate is 100%. No difference is apparent in job satisfaction by sex. Turning to ethnicity, differences are also small: the combined group of Bahun, Chhettri and Thakuri (77%) and Thakali (76%) were only slightly below of all other groups. Former Gurkhas seem to have higher satisfaction (92.8%) than others (82.8%). There is no major regional difference, but those in greater London area were slightly less satisfied (78.2%).

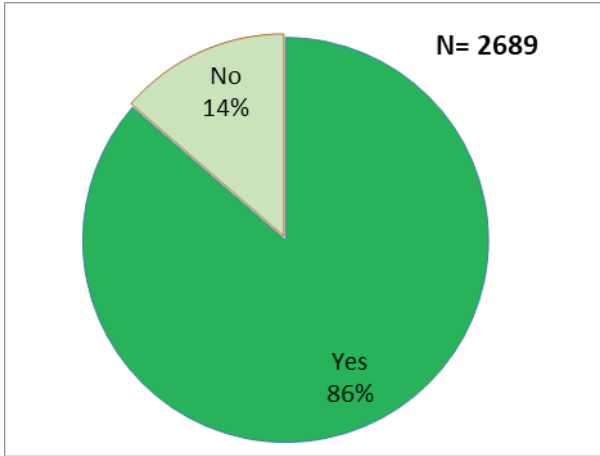


Figure 32.4: Satisfied with job

Source: CNSUK survey 2008

In general, job satisfaction figures from the CNSUK survey (2008) vary across sectors. Some sectors are overwhelmingly positive, while others had more mixed responses. In general, when the job undertaken by an individual matched the skills or training of that individual, the satisfaction level was high across all regions of the UK, both sexes and all age groups. But, generally, when the job undertaken had no relationship with an individual's education, training or skills then the satisfaction level was weak. Thus, most of the respondents who reported dissatisfaction are ones who have professional qualification and were doing low or menial work.

Thematic discussion: Gurkha, students and women

Gurkhas – an active force in labour market

'Gurkha' is the generalised term for a serving or retired Nepali soldier in the British army. After serving a certain number of years in the British army the Government now allows them to settle in the UK, if they wish. Similarly, with recent decision, soldiers who retired before 1997 are also allowed to settle and work.

The CNSUK survey 2008 shows that more than six in ten Nepali population in the UK are Gurkhas and their dependants. The Gurkha group can be further classified into two broad groups: serving

Gurkhas, and ex-Gurkhas. Serving Gurkhas and their dependents are generally better off and more resourceful than the other group, and hence have access to better education (e.g., dependents are subsidised by the government to study in private schools of choice). As a result, their employment opportunities tend to be better. On contrary, ex-Gurkhas are generally pensioners, and have relatively limited resources to exploit. They therefore have lesser capacity to invest in better education and for life needs.

In addition, every year one to two serving soldiers of the Gurkhas Signals (regiment within the Brigade of Gurkhas) get the opportunity to pursue a BSc in Electronics. Similarly, annually, two to three serving soldiers from Gurkha Engineer Department get the opportunity to do a BSc in Mechanical, Electrical and Civil Engineering. These are some skilled-based job opportunities available for limited number of serving Gurkha soldiers. Some serving Gurkhas' wives are currently practising as medical doctors in the NHS and some are studying medicine and nursing in Nepal, India, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Even the ex-Gurkhas and their children seem to be putting added emphasis on the education. There are a few Gurkha veterans who have completed higher degrees including PhD, medical courses, engineering. Others have obtained skill-based vocational training and qualifications. The majority of ex-Gurkhas under the age of 60 are employed in the security industry. There are four security companies owned and run by ex-Gurkhas. Some Gurkhas are in the cleaning and restaurant business. Families of ex-Gurkhas, most being less well-educated, work mainly in housekeeping and cleaning jobs. However, a few who have gained education work as a qualified staff nurses (most hold the qualification from Nepal but some are currently studying Nursing courses in the UK) and are working in NHS. The second generation (families of ex-Gurkhas) is getting equipped for the UK labour market too. Approximately 30 sons and daughters of retired Gurkhas as qualified medical doctors are in the process of passing the UK's medical qualifying examination. Two medical doctors and one doctor in dentistry have already joined the Royal Medical Corps and Dental Corps respectively. It is also estimated that every year average 20 ex-Gurkhas, children are graduating from the UK universities.

A recent study (Gurung, 2011) conducted in Kent and in the Borough of Rushmoor on Gurkha settlement and their integration process has indicated that working age Gurkhas are the most economically active and self-reliant social group in the UK. The study also highlights that 80% of these working age Gurkhas have proficiency in English language and their children are in education, employment or training. Beside this, 72% are involved in some sort of voluntary work in their local communities. The study further shows that the employment rates of Gurkha men and women under 60 years of age are 95.1% and 92.6%, respectively. The study also finds that 8.8% of males and 1.3% of females are self-employed or are themselves employers (employing up to 370 individuals).

All of the above evidence points that serving and former Gurkhas and their families are moving carefully to secure opportunities within the labour market. And, as stated above, serving Gurkhas, their families and ex-Gurkhas and their dependants under the age of 60 are very much a productive element of the UK workforce. There is also evidence that an overwhelming percentage of serving and retired Gurkhas' families are not dependent on government benefits (Gurung, 2011). Despite having lower level of education, many retired Gurkhas have a good level of English, often better than many non-Gurkhas qualified in Nepal. Gurkhas also have arguably learnt to adapt and have some marketable practical skills, such as being commonly seen as 'best fit' for the security industry. However, most of the Gurkhas aged 60 years and above who do not receive a work pension, due to the government rule, are dependent on pension credit (see Laksamba, 2012).

International students – A missed opportunity

UK universities and colleges have attracted many students from Nepal since the 1950s. Many of them came to take short-term training, skill-based long term studies or a full time education. A few students studied science, commerce, humanities, arts, language, literature, and education during the 1960s and 1970s. Records show that the number of students arriving increased rapidly since the 1990s (see Adhikari et al., 2012).

Tuition fees have grown much more rapidly than consumer prices, but there has also been an increase in living costs. An unpublished report (Bhattarai, 2009), indicates that until changes

in the rules regarding student visas and educational institutions, both the number of students employed and the hours they work had increased over the years. Most Nepali students expect to have to get jobs to help pay their college expenses, as neither the students themselves nor their parents will always be able to pay the costs of full time education.

Since 2008 Nepali students have also utilised the UK government's Post-Study Work (PSW) programme (which ends in April 2012). The PSW allows the most talented students from non-EEA nations who have graduated from the UK universities to transfer category that allows them to involve in employment or self-employment. This helps students gain work experience, and hence works as a transitional route for professional development.

However, with changes in the UK visa rules restricting work and post-study work opportunities to students and their dependents and restrictive immigration terms would mean that the UK is and will no longer be one of the most sought-after education destinations for Nepali students. The stricter student visa regulation of 2011 (coupled with the current economic downturn) has discouraged new students from Nepal to come to the UK. There is also evidence that a sizeable number of Nepali students are now voluntarily returning to their home country.

Women in the work force – enriching household capital

Participation of Nepali women in the workforce is in general very high. Aside from anecdotal events, the CNSUK survey 2008 found that in general two in three Nepali women of working age are involved in some sort of paid work whereas one in four of them are in full time education. Overall, 7.6 percent are unemployed.

The majority of the working women possess a basic level of education, and limited language skills, which leads them to do unskilled and menial jobs. Only a small percentage of Nepali women are employed in the professional sector, the majority of who are trained in the health sectors and work as medical nurses. Looking at education and income relationships, Nepali women are more likely to work full-time than part-time.

The data from 2008 CNSUK survey suggests that Nepali women are well represented in the British labour force compared

with other south Asian immigrants (e.g. Pakistani and Bangladeshis) (see Dale *et al* 2002; and Dobbs, Green and Zealey, 2006) for comparisons). The reason for this can be attributed to the general Nepali cultural practices and attitudes toward women working outside the home: in a Nepali community, across all sub-ethnic groups, working women are highly respected and opinions toward women in work are quite positive. When they do the paid work and earn, they receive more respect and gain more power in household and community level decisions.

Many social and household-level benefits result from the high level of women's participation in the labour force. It has helped to make women more independent; these working women are more confident and relatively well versed in English than Nepali women who are not in employment; again those who have already better level of English and more confident are likely to get (better) jobs than those who lack them. They play a key role in household decision making and investment plans. Nepali women in work have enriched their individual family economies, and contributed to capital formation among the Nepali community and the British economy as a whole.

There are of course some downsides to the increased level of participation of man and women from a household in work: for example, less time is available for children and family; increased job stress carried over into familial settings; and some health (including mental) problems. However, these shortcomings are outweighed by the financial, attitudinal and moral level benefits that women's participation in the work force has generated.

Conclusions

Education has been the emphasis of the Nepali community since the start of migration in the UK. It was considered to be essential for employment opportunities. Data presented in this chapter also shows that Nepalis are trying to reinvent themselves in their new permanent home.

The CNSUK survey 2008 indicates that trends in education, both in school and college/university are encouraging. In primary and secondary education some problems emerged for children newly

arrived from Nepal, chiefly due to differences between the two countries' educational systems, learning English, and adapting to the educational environment (Casey, 2010). These are common among migrant groups. Children however seem to resolve this within a few months of study with their own added effort, and parental help. Generally Nepali communities are clustered in working class areas; hence, there is a greater chance that the children will be attending relatively under-performing schools and will need additional backup in their studies from either parents or tutors.

The 2008 CNSUK survey also showed that a significant proportion of Nepali A level graduates were applying for university.

The Nepali community is generally reluctant to access government benefits (Casey, 2010). Only on rare occasions does one see a member of young Nepali community in a dole queue. Nepali culture values work highly; but the desire to be in job is due to cultural ethics coupled with current needs. While some newly arrived pensioners are obtaining benefit supports, the working age population is overwhelmingly active in the labour market. It is also evident from studies that a high number of Nepalis of economically active age are working. In contrast, among ethnic minorities in the UK as a whole, only 61% are in employment - around 13% below the UK population as a whole (Clark and Drinkwater, 2009). However, most Nepali men and women, partly due to their low-level qualifications, are found in non-professional or menial jobs. This was also the case among early migrants either coming from Indian sub-continent or from parts of Africa (Li et al, 2008).

The decline in service and manufacturing sectors has hit every community hard, and the Nepali community is not immune. The current economic squeeze has impacted especially hard on groups which have come to the UK more recently, who have experienced some discrimination in an attempt to obtain few jobs which are available in the labour market. However, CNSUK survey 2008 suggests that majority of Nepalis have managed well.

Education is important both for professional and personal gain. A minority of Nepalis in the UK are highly qualified, while the majority lack standard education. While education, training and other qualifications alone are not sufficient conditions for a successful career building, an education of some sort is often paramount to

future success for any migrant community

The new generation of Nepalis needs not only to look for opportunities for career enhancement, but also to improve their skills by means of lifelong learning. As education levels improve, the economic and social class position of Nepalis in the UK can be expected to improve. But this will take a long and steady effort from the Nepali community.

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Notes

1. This paper was included in the *Nepalis in the United Kingdom: An Overview book* (Laksamba, C.K., Dhakal, L.P., & Holford, J. (2012). 'Education and Employment' in K.P. Adhikari (ed.) *Nepalis in the United Kingdom: An Overview*, pp. 69–90. Reading: CNSUK.). Data used in the paper came from the CNSUK's survey in the UK in 2008.
2. Functional literacy in this paper is understood as a person to be functionally literate when he/she could read and write enough to be effective in the normal activities of life.
3. In Nepal secondary school is completed after passing grade 10 and subsequent school leaving certificate examination conducted by a government's exam board. The students study for further two years of higher secondary qualifications which is known as 10+2.
4. As defined in Adhikari, 2012b, since we have regarded Nepali as an ethnic minority group in the UK, to avoid confusion in meaning various sub-groups within the Nepali community are defined as sub-ethnic groups.

Social Mobility of Nepalis in the UK: A Case Study of Fairfax Road, Farnborough

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Introduction

The Nepali community in the UK is new and yet it is one of the fastest growing ethnic minority groups in England.¹² There has been a steady rise in their numbers in the UK between 2001 and 2016 (currently estimated at around 100,000). This is due to changes in the immigration rules in 2004 and 2009 allowing Gurkhas and their dependants to settle in the UK. Keeping this population growth in mind, the Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNSUK) conducted a survey in 2008 and established a demographic benchmark and came up with several useful findings, which were reported in a book, *Nepalis in the United Kingdom: An Overview, 2012* (Adhikari, 2012a). Building further on this study and focusing specifically on youth and their families, the CNSUK is currently conducting a pilot project to study the social mobility of the Nepalis in England by undertaking case studies in Farnborough and Reading. The aim of the study is to understand how the Nepali community is performing in terms of education and occupation in relation to British classes, and what their likely status would be in the future. Since standard sociological studies of class dynamics and social mobility tend to exclude many small, yet growing, ethnic minority communities in

the UK, this study is expected to be of significance to the community, policy makers and academics. This short piece presents a case study of Nepali migration and mobility in Fairfax Road, Farnborough, a place that has seen an exponential rise of Nepalis, mainly ex-Gurkhas and their families since they first settled there in 2001. In 2004 there were approximately 25 Nepali households (comprising 100 people) in the whole of Farnborough and three of them were in Fairfax Road.

During the 15-year period, since 2005 Nepali households in Fairfax Road have increased 10-fold to 36, which makes up about 80% of households in Fairfax Road. Our preliminary case analysis suggests that there is a reasonable socio-economic progress (measured mainly through educational achievements, employment and house ownership) among the Nepali community in Fairfax Road. The majority (30) of these households own property, and their employment rate is nearly 100%. This suggests that they are laying the essential foundation for future social mobility.

We define social mobility as a movement of individuals or groups in the social class order or social position over a period of time. It takes place in many ways: vertically (upward and downward) or horizontally; intra-generationally; relatively or absolutely (Goldthorpe 1980; Platt 2005). There are primarily two major theoretical traditions to study social class in the UK: Goldthorpe's seven-class scheme based on occupations; and, Savage and Devine's seven-class scheme based on economic, social and cultural capital as used in the BBC's Great British Class Survey (Savage and Devine, 2013). Delving into theoretical discussions is beyond the scope of this paper. In this paper, we simply aim to describe some of the findings of the case study to suggest the dynamics and the direction of the nascent Nepali community in the UK.

Fairfax Road, Farnborough



The study began with an exploratory exercise that we call social mapping to collect data. While the overall study applies a mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) to collect data, this paper is based on a case study, which employs ethnographic methods including interviews, observation, and formal and informal interactions, to acquire in-depth insights into the community dynamics. The data have been analysed using simple quantitative tools, such as tabulation and qualitative content analysis.

Results: demographic changes between 2001 and 2016 in Fairfax Road

In 2001, there were 3 Nepali households on Fairfax Road. The first Nepali to move and live in this road was a Limbu family, the family continues to live there and own the house. Before moving here, the head of this household used to live in Aldershot where he retired from his job as British Gurkha. A kind of chain migration started thereafter: within three months, his nephew and another friend (Rai) also bought properties next to his, totalling three Nepali families living on the same stretch of road. At that time, they used to have a joint family dinner every Friday on a rotational basis. Made of nine Limbus and four Rais, there were altogether 13 people, of whom eight were males and five females. Among them were five boys (one born in the UK in 1997) and two girls. The average family size was 4.3. All eligible adult members were in full-time employment. None of them were elderly or on pension credit. Today (2016), the total population of Nepalis living in this road has risen to 139. They are of diverse backgrounds, but they are predominantly ex-Gurkhas and their families. Of them, 51 are Gurung, 26 Rai, 23 Limbu, 21 Magar, 6 Tamang, 5 Ghale, 4 Sunuwar and 3 Newar. 14 Limbu members moved out of the road over the years. The road has conspicuously metamorphosed today in terms of race or ethnicity: the majority of the houses (30) on the road are owned by Nepalis. There are more Nepali females (74) than males (65). Among them, there is an elderly ex-Gurkha couple, and one elderly Gurkha wife (widow) who live on state benefits (pension credit). The remainder are in full-time education or employment. The average family size is 3.9.

Below, we explore further the migration of Nepalis in Fairfax Road, their educational and employment situation, and property ownership, while making passing reference to the existing local community. In Table 33.1, we present educational and employment information of the second generation who are out of education (about half of them studied in Nepal, and most of them are counted

as first-generation immigrants), and in Table 2, information about the second generation who are currently pursuing higher education.

Education and employment

Almost all of the first-generation Nepalis residing in this road are ex-Gurkhas. As mentioned above, they are in full-time employment. Some of them have also pursued further educational qualifications after leaving the Army. One ex-Gurkha and another Gurkha's wife started their studies from GCSE and completed a BSc Hons in sociology and BSc nursing respectively from the University of Surrey. The graduate ex-Gurkha is working in the hotel industry while the graduate ex-Gurkha spouse is with the NHS. However, the first-generation Nepalis here have faced a number of difficulties in the course of their attempts to integrate. Some of them have language difficulties, leading to reduced opportunities for better-paid job prospects. Those elderly Gurkhas, who migrated within the past seven years, have reported language and other barriers to access welfare services, while bearing social pain of living separately from their families, who are denied visa due to their age.

In order to improve understanding of the differentiated positions of the second generation Nepalis in terms of their education and employment, we divide them into two distinct cohorts on the basis of their place of studies (country) (Table 33.1).

Table 33.1: Education and employment of second-generation Nepalis

Place of studies	Education level	Occupational achievement
Educated in Nepal	1 x B Com, 5 x BAs (TU)* and 1 x BBA (KU)*, 6 x Class 12 and 2 x SLC	Army (1), Care Assistance (3), Security Officer (2), House Keeping (2), Airport Baggage Handler (1), Bus Driver (1), Chef (1), NHS Porter (1), Sales Assistant (1) and Food Service Assistant (2)
Educated in the UK	1 x MA, 6 x BSc Hons and 1 x BA 2 x Dental Nurse, 5 x A Level and 1 x GCSE	Cohesion & Integration Officer (1), Computer Engineer (1), Cashier (1), Nurse (2), Hospitality Manager (1), Business Manager (1), Insurance Broker (1), Dental Nurse (1), Care Assistant (2), Army (1), RAF (1), Assistant Manager (1), Warehouse Operator (1) and Plumber (1)

*Tribhuvan University (TU) and Kathmandu University (KU)

The highest level qualification of the first group who studied in Nepal is BA and the lowest is the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) level (roughly equivalent to GCSE). Those who studied in the UK have a similar position on average with the exception of one, who has a Master's degree qualification. Though both groups are in full-time employment, the table clearly shows the differences in terms of their occupational status: those who graduated from Nepal are working as low level menial workers, such as baggage handlers, porters and care assistants, and so on. On the other hand, most of those who were educated in the UK are working in areas of employment that require managerial expertise. This shows that those educated in the UK are likely to have an edge over those educated in Nepal, perhaps in comparative terms it is due to variations in academic quality and employability. We are unable to explore this fully because a number of younger Nepalis (Table 33.2) are currently pursuing higher education in the UK and other European countries and we need to see how they will do in the future. Below, we look at their educational status.

The majority of this group received their primary to higher education in the UK and consider English as their first language. So far, their educational performance is promising. As Table 33.2 shows, there are four persons studying for post-graduate degrees specialising in highly technical/professional disciplines: Aeronautical Engineering, Pharmacy, Law, and Computer Networking. Eight of them are pursuing undergraduate degrees in attractive professional fields, such as Medicine, Business Administration, and Finance and Accounting. There are two in the local Sixth Form College who are aiming to become a medical doctor or a linguist.

Table 33.2: Currently pursuing higher education

Highest education level passed	The level currently studying	The area of specialisation
BSc (Hons)	MSc (Final Year)	Aeronautical Engineering
BSc (Hons)	MSc Pharmacy (Final Year)	Pharmacy
BSc (Hons)	LPC (Final Year)	Law
BSc (Hons)	MSc (First Year)	Computer Networking
A Level	BA (Final Year)	Business Administration
A Level	BSc (Final Year)	Nursing
A Level	BSc (Final Year)	Nursing
A Level	BSc (Final Year)	Occupational Therapy
A Level	MBBS (Second Year)	Medicine
A Level	BSc (Second Year)	Computer Science
A Level	BSc (Second Year)	Nursing
A Level	BSc (First Year)	Finance and Accounting
GCSC	A Level	English Language
GCSC	A Level	Physics, Chemistry and Math

Heading towards better social class?

Initially Fairfax Road was a relatively less vibrant settlement with many unemployed people, with falling population due to the continuous outmigration of the local community. Our study shows that this settlement has gone through a tremendous transformation in the past 15 years due to immigration. There were only three Nepali families living here in the early 2000s and the number today has risen to 36. The majority of the Nepali families own their own property and hardly anyone is unemployed. The property value has increased over the years with the area becoming more attractive to live in. The community is getting vibrant and is productive as far as economic activities are concerned, indicative of conducive environment for, and possible achievement of upward social mobility. This is also reflected in the satisfaction with members' achievements expressed by the Nepali community in the area. A father of two children said: "I am fully satisfied with the educational achievement of my children. My son is studying for an MSc Aeronautical Engineering degree and my daughter for MBBS." Another parent (lady) expressed her satisfaction very pragmatically while also making reference to the local community: "Yes, our children are doing well in the sense that

those capable are studying and those not so capable are working full time. We, parents, are also doing well. I feel we are doing far better than the original local residents in Fairfax Road socially and economically. The majority of them live in former council houses belonging to the Rushmoor Borough Council (now First Wessex Housing Association)." One of our young second generation respondents stated: "I am sure, with ability and hard work, Nepalis will achieve top-level positions in the Britain in the next 20 years." We noted Nepali youths being attracted (or encouraged by parents) predominantly to technical fields. There is therefore a distinct lack of diversity across other disciplines. The number of those studying for a degree in the arts and social science fields is negligible.

The younger generations are integrated relatively well locally with the British system and society. In a way they have the best of both cultures (origin and destination). However, the attachment to Nepal for some is not as strong as it is for the older generations (Adhikari and Gellner, 2012). Perhaps these youths can be categorised safely as a true 'British Nepali' generation.

Conclusion

The social mapping and the case study of the Nepali diaspora of Fairfax Road, Farnborough, suggests that the Nepali community is making productive use of available means and social environment, while accumulating and enhancing capital assets necessary for social mobility. The in-depth household and individual interviews have further indicated that the social, cultural, and economic capital, brought in by the community, has played a pivotal role in charting the pathways of social mobility of the Nepali diaspora in the UK. The hardworking culture of Nepalis has also added economic value in the process. Nepalis are culturally active, and have high social capital at bonding (community level) even though they lack social capital at wider level (both vertically and horizontally). However, these resources and limited successes have not yet ensured a broad-based achievement in terms of class schemes in the UK. Nepalis may be deemed to be doing relatively well in terms of Savage and Devine's class schema (which considers economic, social and cultural capital) than Goldthrope's schema (which considers occupations). To identify the trajectory and the degree of social mobility of the Nepalis in the UK, further in-depth research is being carried out in Farnborough and Reading. We need to make a longitudinal analysis, and learn from the experience of other communities, particularly the South Asian, to see to what extent the current trend of higher

educational achievements of the Nepali youths will result in the higher occupational achievements and in upwards social mobility in the future.

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Lokendra Purush Dhakal is the Executive Director of Centre for Nepal Studies UK.

Notes:

- ¹ This paper was presented by Dr Chandra K Laksamba at the Britain Nepal Academic Council conference in Liverpool in April 2016. It later appeared in the *British Nepal Society* journal and can be accessed from this link: https://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/bnsj/pdf/bnsj_40.pdf
- ² The authors would like to acknowledge that the results presented in this paper come from the Big Lottery funded research project (2015-2016) (Project ID: 0010253632) on “Ethnic Minority and Social Mobility: A Case Study of the Nepali Community in England.

Education, Employment and Social Mobility of Nepali Doctors, Nurses and their Children in the UK

Dr Chandra K. Laksamba

This article is about the employment and social mobility of Nepali doctors, nurses, and their children in the UK.¹ It mainly explores the past and present trends and highlights possible future directions. Hence, the article is more descriptive than analytical.

The presence of Nepali doctors in the UK can be traced back to the early 1950s. Nepali doctors came to the UK mainly to pursue higher medical degrees, such as: Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS), Member of the Royal College of Physicians (MRCP), Member of the Royal College of Pathologists (MRCPATH), Member of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (MRCOG), Fellow of Royal College of Anaesthetists (FRCAS), Member of Royal College of Psychiatrists (MRCPsych), Member of the Royal College of General Practitioners (MRCGP), and so on. MRCP, FRCS, FRCAS, MRCOG, MRCPsych, MRCPATH, MRCGP are UK postgraduate diplomas which require sitting an examination. By contrast, Fellowships, for instance, FRCP, FRCOG, FRCGP, FRCPsych, and FRCPATH, are honorary diplomas, which are generally awarded after working several years in the respective field of medicine without having to sit for any exam.

Drs Mrigendra Raj Pandey (first Nepali MRCP), Surya Bahadur Basnyat (first Nepali FRCS) and Kanti Giri (first Nepali MRCOG), S.K. Pahari, Dambar Bahadur Karki, Ishwar Lal Acharya, C.P. Maskey, Siphala Pradhan, Sabitri Gurung, Dibya Shree Malla,

Raghubir Vaidya, Mahendra Prasad, Dwarika Prasad Manandhar, Laxman Paudyal and Laxmi Narayan Prasad came to the UK for higher medical degrees under UK government scholarship programmes in the 1950s and 60s. Dr Hemang Dixit, who did his MBBS degree in London in the 1950s, is the first Nepali MBBS doctor qualified in the UK.

Since the 1960s, Nepali doctors have started to settle and practise in the UK on and after completion of their higher degrees. In the process of medical practice, Nepali doctors were able to reach the specialist positions such as: Dr Shambhu Adhikari is the first Nepali consultant physician, Dr Badriman Shrestha is the first Nepali consultant surgeon, Dr Prem Bikram Hamal is the first consultant pathologist, Dr Rekha Shrestha is the first consultant obstetricians and gynaecologist, the late Dr Ramji Gautam was the first consultant anaesthetist, Dr Kesharlal Shrestha is the first psychiatric consultant, and Dr Anil Tuladhar is the first consultant paediatrician. Dr Pinaki Prasad Acharya (father of the late Shailaja Acharya, former Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal and leader of Nepali Congress) was the first Nepali doctor to have worked as a General Medical Practitioner (GP) in the UK.

According to Dr Raghav Dhital, OBE, Dr Phauda Raj Thebe and the present Joint Secretary of NDAUK, Dr Beena Subba, today there are about 300 doctors from junior level to consultants (approximately 30 are consultants), who are carrying out medical practice across the UK. The Centre for Nepal Studies UK

(CNSUK)'s large-scale survey of 2008 estimated 200 Nepali doctors in medical practice in the UK. Most of them came to the UK since the early 1960s and stayed back on and after their studies. In addition, CNSUK estimates 100 Nepali doctors, qualified in and around 2009-2014 from various different countries (including the UK), joined the UK's National Health Service (NHS) and roughly 50 junior doctors are currently in the process of joining the NHS. The majority of junior doctors are spouses, sons and daughters of serving and ex-Gurkha soldiers. Approximately ten children of Nepalis in the UK are currently studying medicine in the UK universities including Oxford and Cambridge. About 50 children of Nepalis living in the UK are pursuing MBBS and equivalent medical degrees from Nepal, Bangladesh, China, India, and other European countries.

In 1985 Nepali doctors practising in the UK established their own association, called the Nepalese Doctors' Association UK (NDAUK). According to Dr Arun Jha, Chairman NDAUK, the organisation is open to all Nepali doctors. Its main aims and objectives are to promote comradeship among the Nepali doctors in the UK; to provide a forum for regular meetings; to publish a newsletter/souvenir; to exchange ideas, news and views; to contribute to the development of the health service in Nepal within the NDAUK's capacity; to sponsor charities in Nepal and the UK; to establish a link with similar associations in Nepal and elsewhere; to facilitate exchange of medical students and doctors between Nepal and the UK.

In addition, since early 2000s the NDAUK has been conducting once a year a programme called 'Support for New Doctors and Trainees in the UK'. It is focused on imparting skills and knowledge, which is very helpful for newly arrived junior doctors in their adaptation and employment processes. This programme is also an example to all Nepali professional organisations in the UK in order to help in generating knowledge and skills for newcomers.

Many sons and daughters of the Nepali doctors in the UK have followed their parents into the medical profession. For example, Ranjita Dhital (pharmacist), Drs Robin Sherchan, Rishav Dhital, Jitendra Thebe, Numa Thebe, Alicia Shrestha, Anne Shrestha, Donna Shrestha, Shivani Shrestha, Sabrina Shrestha, Kishore Lekhak, Animesh Jha, Akhilesh Jha, Anish Dhital, Kamala Dhital, Prativa Dhital, Dhiraj Tripathi, Siri Gautam, Bobby Hamal, Anup Pradhan, Pravin Joshi, Mona Karki, Lekhak Jnr, Olga Prajapati, Sarbendra Pradhanang, Mr Bijaya Rajlawat, Anu Shrestha, Nitesh Sharma, Sanjeeb Nepali (dentist), Kapil Rijal (dentist), Sandesh Acharya, Nanu Acharya Hamal, Ava Acharya, Ghosh Jnr, Sophie Dhungana Bhandari, Meghan Dhital, Nandan Gautam, Anil Ghosh, Akash Karki, Prasima Shrivastava, Sangeeta Shrestha Sharma, and Sharmila Shrestha.

In the case of Nepali nurses, about half a dozen Nepali female nurses joined 'The Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps' as a Nursing Officer in the late 1950s. Apart from the armed forces, the first Nepali male nurse to work in the UK was Mr Rajendra Chhetri. He arrived at St Peter's Hospital, Chertsey, Surrey, on a freezing

January day in 1969. After some trials and tribulations he finally made it to State Registered Nurse. He spent most of his nursing career with the challenges of the Mental Health Nursing and retired in 2013. Another Nepali nurse, Mrs Tuka Chhetri, came to the UK in the 1980s. She has worked continuously in the nursing profession since her arrival. In addition, she has also done health-related charity work, such as the establishment of child birthing centres in different parts of Nepal. A significant migration of Nepali nurses only started in the early 2000s after the implementation of the UK Government's Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP). According to the President of Nepalese Nurses Association UK (NNA UK) Mr Basu Lamichhane, the NNA UK has been representing all the Nepali Nurses living in the UK. However, obtaining the true figure of how many nurses are living and practising in the UK has been a daunting task as they are scattered across the country and many of them show little interest to be involved in organisations such as NNA UK.

With the introduction of a policy requirement of International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Level 7 for nurses who wish to practise in the UK, a large number of Nepali nurses are finding difficulty in achieving the Level 7. Before, they only had to score IELTS Level 6 followed by the completion of an adaptation course, which automatically used to qualify them to be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). Mr Lamichhane said, approximately only 60 per cent of Nepali nurses are in their profession. Taking this into account, NNA UK is planning to provide training and guidance to Nepali nurses for their adaptation and IELTS courses. The association also gives advice and guidance to members in registering with the NMC and the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and other professional bodies. NNA UK has been supporting the members who are in need and sought help by providing confidential advice and suggestions on employment-related issues, such as: unfair dismissal, employment rights, and opportunities. Following the successful organisation of a conference at the beginning of this year, the NNA UK is also planning to conduct a nursing profession-related conferences on a regular basis to enhance knowledge and skills suitable for the rapidly changing globalised world.

Being himself a male nurse, Mr Lamichhane has been encouraging many Nepalis males to consider nursing as a profession. In the UK and many developed countries, the ratio of male nurses stands up to 40 per cent. This is a profession with plenty of options and career opportunities. In recent years, significant numbers of second-generation Nepalis, mainly ex-Gurkhas' sons and daughters, are becoming qualified in the nursing profession from UK universities. They have joined the NHS, as they do not have to do IELTS, familiarisation courses, and prerequisite exams. CNSUK also estimates that there are more than 10 male nurses qualified from the UK universities who are currently working in the NHS. There are very small number of male nurses qualified from Nepal who are in practice in the UK.

In conclusion, Nepali doctors in the UK are economically, professionally, and educationally better off than other recently migrated Nepalis. In the case of Nepali nurses, they are still in a transitional stage, in the process of integration and establishment. A small number of young doctors and a large number of nurses are finding difficulties in passing the pre-requisite exams. Doctors and nurses qualified outside the UK have to pass tough professional entry exams, including an English-language proficiency test, in order to practise in the UK. In addition, this article also clearly indicated that the success rate in the medical profession of second-generation Nepalis in the UK is highly promising.

Contributor:

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Notes

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Shrines and Identities in the Britain's Nepali Diaspora

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Abstract

This paper examines the tension between publicly affirmed religious identification and private religious practice among the UK's Nepali diaspora population¹. It compares census and survey figures for religious affiliation with religious shrines in people's homes. In some cases there is complete 'congruence' between the religious affiliation and home worship (most strikingly in the cases of Sherpas, whose affiliation and shrines are unequivocally Buddhist). Among many other groups there is plenty of evidence of multiple belonging. The most common case is singular identification for census purposes and multiple practice, but there are also many instances of multiple identification. For example, Gurungs frequently affirm a Buddhist identity, when asked for their religion; but when given the option to be both Hindu and Buddhist, they opt for that as more closely describing their actual practice. Many Kiratis keep no shrine at home because they believe that their tribal tradition is properly aniconic. The material clearly shows that the distribution of ecumenical attitudes is not random, but reflects particular ethnic, regional, and caste histories within Nepal. The ethnic/caste make-up of the UK's Nepali diaspora is not identical to that of Nepal, mainly because of

the history of Gurkha recruitment; and this is reflected in the higher proportion of Buddhists in the UK. Despite this, it is likely that the findings of this study would be replicated in an urban context in Nepal.

Key words: diaspora religion; multiple belonging; religious shrines; Hinduism; Buddhism; personal religiosity.

Introduction

Migration often (though not always) gives rise to diaspora populations.¹ Where there are diaspora populations, there are often (but not always) public conflicts over culture and religion. In the study of such conflicts, Vertovec (2011) suggests, social anthropologists are in a good position to question the homogenizing and totalizing views of culture that are often invoked. In particular, anthropologists are able to examine how far the conspicuous ritual and political statements made in the public sphere reflect what people actually do in the rest of their lives. In other words, they (and anyone who shares their commitment to ethnographic fieldwork) are well placed to ask and analyse in what ways Baumann's 'official discourse' is in tension with 'demotic discourses' (Baumann, 1996). The issues raised by this tension are perhaps nowhere more salient than in contexts of changing identity such as religion in diaspora.

In this article we ask what kinds of relationship there are between the actual practices of private shrine-making by Nepali migrants to the UK (most of whom arrived after 2004) and the complex and contested processes of public religious identification, which are perhaps easier to track and generalise about (though, as will be seen, they are very far from being straightforward). The Vernacular Religion (VR) project brought together anthropologists from the University of Oxford (Gellner, Hausner), with Nepali social scientists based in the UK, who had set up their own research organisation, the Centre for Nepali Studies UK (CNSUK), including the two co-authors (Laksamba, Adhikari) and Rajubabu Shrestha, as well as one full-time researcher (Bal Gopal Shrestha). As part of the project, in 2010–2011, Adhikari, Laksamba, R. Shrestha, and B.G. Shrestha surveyed 300 households. The households were selected randomly (but with care to have representation from all sub-groups) from a larger non-random sample of 2,151 households (7,842

individuals) put together by CNSUK two years earlier (see Adhikari 2012 for details). Along with information about age, education, and employment, the VR survey of 300 households collected detailed data on levels and kinds of religious practice. After every interview, the respondents were asked permission to photograph their shrine, if they had one.

Our focus on ordinary shrines in people's homes may seem unusual. Historians of art have, not surprisingly, tended to focus on outstanding images and objects of veneration, on objects of great ritual significance, or on objects that might be of interest to Western art dealers because of their visual or practical uniqueness—although there are notable exceptions (see Garnett & Rosser, 2013). Anthropologists of material culture have naturally reacted against this trend and concentrated on mundane or popular art (e.g. Pinney, 2004), but religious art, or that used in devotional contexts, tends to be considered the domain of the specialist. Here we focus on the vernacular ritual objects that are used by Nepalis for everyday worship in their homes and in order to create private sacred spaces in a new country. We suggest that diaspora Nepalis² use various material strategies to express their relationship (or lack of relationship) to different religious currents (Buddhist, Hindu, shamanist, and other, including a blended religiosity), but also that particular patterns of expression are difficult to ascertain: like other modes of visual self-representation, personal preferences or circumstances may determine the configurations of a shrine as much as religious identifications do. Sometimes shrines are fully aligned with explicitly asserted political or ethnic affiliations, while at other times they seem to be entirely independent of or even at odds with them.³

The emergence of Nepali national identity

The stretch of hills and adjoining plains and mountains on the southern flanks of the Himalayas that we know today as Nepal was united under a single ruler, Prithvi Narayan Shah, for the first time in the 1760s. His descendants continued their conquests both west and east in the decades that followed, but with the Treaty of Sugauli signed with the East India Company in 1816, Nepal was restricted, more or less, to its present boundaries (four districts in

the mid and far west Tarai were added as a reward for backing the British in the 1857 Indian rebellion). The idea of uniting all the diverse subjects of the Shah dynasty within one state system was expressed by the Muluki Ain or National Legal Code of 1854. It was supposedly modelled on the Code Napoleon, which the then Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana had learned about on his visit to Paris (Whelpton, 1991). But a legal code less like the Code Napoléon it would be hard to imagine, since it was built on the principles of traditional Hindu law, and therefore sought to maintain and reinforce caste differences: Brahmans (in line with the Hindu idea that killing Brahmans, women, children, or cows were great sins) were not subject to capital punishment, and in fact many punishments varied with the caste of the offender.

The notions of Nepal as a nation, Nepali as a national language, and the country as a cultural unit, only began to be promoted, and then very tentatively, only in the first half of the twentieth century while the country was still under the dictatorial rule of the hereditary Rana Prime Ministers (Burghart, 1984). The nation-building period par excellence came only with the introduction of King Mahendra's non-party Panchayat regime (an authoritarian and modernizing guided democracy under the leadership of the king).⁴ This configuration lasted thirty years, from 1960 to 1990, when it was overthrown by a revolution known as 'the People's Movement' (*jan andolan*). Favourite slogans of the Panchayat regime—alongside those emphasizing the leadership of the King and the role of the monarchy in bringing democracy, and advancing development, and guaranteeing national integration—were variations on 'unity in diversity' and 'religious tolerance' as hallmarks of Nepal. Political parties were banned: it was claimed that they encouraged sectional (or 'communal' as it is known in South Asia) interests. Organisations representing particular ethnic groups were not permitted. There was no positive discrimination for 'tribals' or 'untouchables' (Dalits) as established in India from 1947. The dominant ideology was that all Nepalis, whatever their background, were now equal (an official position that—as figures collected later and presented in the second column of Table 35.1 prove—hid considerable advantage for high castes). Foreigners who asked about caste occasionally found themselves rebuked for bringing up something that no longer existed.

These dynamics all changed with the collapse of the Panchayat regime in 1990 and the reintroduction of party politics. The new constitution still banned parties based on communal interests, but increasingly ethnic parties were formed anyway. There was an enormous efflorescence of ethnic activism (Lawoti, 2005; Gellner et al., 2008; Hangen, 2010); a decade later the ethnic issue was pushed still further up the political agenda because of the support it received from the Maoists (Hutt, 2004; Lawoti & Pahari, 2010; Adhikari, 2014; Jha, 2014). The election of a Constituent Assembly in 2008, where the Maoists were the largest party, was followed rapidly by the removal of the king, and declarations that federalism, republicanism, and secularism would be foundational principles of the new constitution. This first Constituent Assembly collapsed in May 2012 without being able to produce a constitution (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016a). New elections were held in November 2013 (Gellner 2014b), which resulted in a very different balance of power: the Maoists were reduced to third place and the role official opposition. Following the devastating earthquakes of April and May 2015, a new constitution was declared in September 2015. However, the country immediately became mired in controversy and ethnic conflict, as the Tharus and Madhesis in the plains protested against what they saw as discriminatory provisions.

The years of increasing political turmoil, starting just before 1990, were also the years in which migration from Nepal took off. Nepalis have long migrated, usually in search of land, and latterly in search of jobs and other forms of livelihood. Thus, there are millions of Nepalis in India, particularly in northeast India, where they are famous as cattle herders. Many of these migrants continued onwards into Burma and others went still further into Thailand in the first half of the twentieth century. A second type and wave of Nepali migration began even before Indian independence in 1947, but accelerated after it: here Nepalis, rather than migrating east in search of land, went south and west looking for jobs as coolies, porters, waiters, and watchmen in the towns and cities of India. A third wave of migration began in the late 1980s as Nepalis started to go further afield: to the Gulf, to Southeast Asia, to Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. Others began to arrive in Europe, particularly Britain, and in North America and Australasia: many came as students, many others were economic migrants, at both low income levels and higher ones, in

'highly skilled migrant' or 'skilled work' visa categories. In Britain there was the special link with the Gurkha brigade of the British army: in 2004, post-1997 retirees were given the right to settle in Britain; following a public lobbying campaign and the defeat of Gordon Brown's government on the issue in 2009, pre-1997 retirees with at least four years' service were finally granted the same right.⁵

The more settled and better-off of these diaspora populations were and are in increasingly close touch with events in Nepal and often provide support for particular movements and parties within Nepal. They also support philanthropic efforts in Nepal and increasingly in their new locations in Britain. Although far removed from their homeland, they tend to recreate, or create in a new form, the cultural and religious practices of Nepal. Indeed, new forms of religious practice and identity found in the diaspora are also, interestingly, found in Nepal: the links across space appear much stronger than the fact of displacement in this regard, although it may well be that moving countries in the first place enables some known forms of religious activity to change in certain ways. Sometimes, however, the shifts in Nepali political culture have produced changes in religious practice, and these new forms move equally quickly to the diaspora.

Changing religious and cultural identities

Given the fact that Nepal encompasses terrain stretching from the Tibetan plateau and high Himalayas in the north to the flat Gangetic plains in the south, taking in foothills (which would count as mountains anywhere else) in between, it is hardly surprising that Nepal is culturally extremely diverse. It could well be argued that it is even more diverse than mere geographical determinism would predict, exemplifying a sociological pleasure in luxuriant diversity for its own sake, packing in as much linguistic, cultural, and religious difference as is humanly possible within short distances from valley to valley and village to village, divided as they are by ridges, rivers, and forest. Certainly Nepalis are proud of this range of cultural practice and language, although it is not easy to govern such a diversity of communities.

One illustration of this diversity can be seen in the official recognition of fifty-nine Janajati groups ('nationalities') as well as

numerous caste groups making a total of 125 castes and Janajati groups registered in the census of 2011. Before 1990 Janajati groups were usually referred to as 'hill tribes' (or just 'tribes' – some of them, like the Tharus, are in fact found in the plains), Since 1990, they have often been, loosely, called 'ethnic groups'; they correspond to what in India are called Scheduled Tribes (but their proportion of the population in Nepal is much higher than it is in India). A still unpublished 2011 government field survey by Professor Om Gurung, an anthropologist at Tribhuvan University, suggested that a further twenty-five groups should be recognised (it also found that two of the fifty-nine officially listed groups did not exist). Several of these fifty-nine groups are tiny, with some having fewer than 100 members. The main ones are large: e.g., Magar (1.8 million), Tharu (1.7 million), Tamang (1.5 million), Newar (1.3 million), Rai (0.6 million), and Gurung (0.5 a million). These sizable populations have, over the last two decades, become major players in Nepal's ethnic politics, in Nepal and sometimes in the diaspora.

The major macro-categories—Khas-Arya, Dalit, Janajati, Madhesi ('people of the plains')—and their referents are shown in Table 35.1. Membership in the macro-categories is disputed and fluid. For people in the plains, everyone in the hills is a Pahadi: Khas-Arya, Dalit, and Janajati alike. Who exactly should belong in the Madhesi category is a highly political and contentious subject. Some Tharus (in the east of the country) are happy to be included in Madhesi political movements; others (more in the west) are vociferously opposed to being clubbed together with Madhesis. The term Janajati was fixed, for a time, by government recognition granted in the late 1990s. In 1994, Janajati intellectuals declared 'Janajati' to be equivalent to 'Adivasi' (indigenous). But as the political advantages of indigeneity became clearer, the category expanded, so that in the dying days of the Constituent Assembly's tenure, in May 2012, the government even conceded indigenous people's status to the Bahuns and Chhetris—the highest Hindu castes—thereby approximating Nepal to the Northeast of India where almost 100 per cent of the population is indigenous.⁶

Table 35.1: Major castes and ethnic groups of Nepal

Parbatiyas ('hill people') (Khas-Arya plus Hill Dalits)	Hill minorities (Janajatis)	Language loss among hill minorities	Taraians/ Madheshis ('plains people')	Others
Bahun 12.2%	<u>Magar</u> 7.1%	68%	<u>Tharu</u> 6.6%	Muslims 4.4%
Chhetri (incl. Thakuri) 16.6%	<u>Newar</u> 5%	34%	Yadav 4%	
Dalit (hill) 9.2%	<u>Tamang</u> 5.8%	11%	(+ many small castes incl. Tarai Dalits and Janajatis)	
	<u>Rai</u> 2.3%	16%		
	<u>Gurung</u> 1.9%	50%		
	<u>Limbu</u> 1.4%	14.5%		
Totals 38%	c.25%		c. 32%	5% = 100%

Sources: Nepal Census 2011 census (total: 26,494,504) with figures for hill minority language loss from 1991 census.

Notes: Dalits = former Untouchables; Janajatis, underlined, are mainly those who were formerly called hill tribes. Estimated figures for language loss are taken from Whelpton (2008: 59). All figures and some labels are likely to be disputed. The total of all Janajatis, when Tarai Janajatis are also included, is 37.2% according to the 2001 census. The label 'Madhesi' is particularly disputed. Bahun and Chhetri Parbatiyas have recently (since the 2013 election) come to be labelled 'Khas-Arya'.

Table 35.2: Ethnic/Caste breakdown of Nepalese populations in different contexts

Group	Nepal, pop'n census 2001	Proportion of Establishment jobs in Nepal	Proportion in Gurkha regiments 1894-1913	Darjeeling 1941	Sikkim 2005-06	UK 2009	Delhi 2000
N=	23.15m	1,526	35,443	236,434*	432,198	18,801+	402#
Bahun	12.7%			3.5%	9.4%		
Chhetri (incl. Thakuri)	17.3%	66.3%		11%	16.45%	19.3%	38.3%
Newar	5.5%	15.2%		5.2%	5%	6.9%	1.2%
Tamang	5.6%			18.3%	9.1%	1.4%	
Magar	7.1%		36.1%	7.3%	3.6%	13.9%	
Gurung	2.4%		23.8%	6.5%	7.9%	22.2%	
Rai	2.8%		14.1%	24%	18%	8.3%	34.3%
Limbu	1.6%	7.1%~	13.4%	7.5%	13.2%	9.6%	
Tharu	6.7%						
Yadav	3.9%					0.3%^	
Muslim	4.3%	11.1%				0.01%	11.9%^
Dalit	12.8%	0.3%~		11.5%	8.6%	1.3%	14.1%
Other	17.3%		12.6%	5.2%	8.7%	16.79%	

Calculating language loss figures from 2001 and 2011 censuses is less reliable because many ethnic organisations campaigned for people of group of X to return 'mother tongue' as X, regardless of whether it was spoken or not.

Notes

Categories are not always exactly equivalent. In column one the Dalit figure is controversial; Dalit organisations claim percentages as high as 20% on the grounds that many Dalits are entered as high castes. In column two Bahuns and Chhetris are not distinguished and hill Janajatis are amalgamated, including some 'other' groups. Separate figures for Yadavs and Muslims are not given, but Madheshis as a whole have 11.1% of the top jobs.

*this was 63% of the total Darjeeling population of 376,369; ~refers to all Janajatis; ~refers to Hill Dalits only; ^refers to all Madheshis

+number surveyed; total estimated population of Nepalis in the UK in December 2008: 72,173. #number surveyed, out of a total estimated population of 136,000.

Sources: Nepal census; Neupane (2000) as adapted in Onta (2006); Ragsdale (1990); Pradhan (1982); Tanka Subba (personal communication, based on Govt. of Sikkim socio-economic survey, 2005-06); CNS-UK survey (*Nepali Sandesh* 8/9/09, pp. 1,3); Neupane (2005).

In the diaspora these larger macro-categories (Dalit, Janajati, Madhesi, and Khas-Arya, as shown in Table 35.1) continue to be important but to a lesser extent than in Nepal (where, since 2008, proportional reservations for political seats and quotas for jobs in public service depend on them). Exactly how diaspora ethnic politics play out depends very much on the size of the population. Where Nepalis are few (as in Scotland or in Belgium), distinctions between different castes and ethnic groups are downplayed. Where the population is larger, internal differences begin to loom larger as well (Gellner et al., 2014).

Table 35.3: The religious breakdown of Nepal according to the decennial censuses

Religion	1952/4		1961		1971		1981		1991		2001		2011	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Hinduism	7,318,392	88.9	8,254,403	87.7	10,330,009	89.4	13,445,787	89.5	15,996,953	86.5	18,330,121	80.6	21,551,492	81.3
Buddhism	707,104	8.6	807,991	9.3	866,411	7.5	799,081	5.3	1,439,142	7.8	2,442,520	10.7	2,396,099	9.0
Islam	208,899	2.5	280,597	3.0	351,186	3.0	399,197	2.7	653,218	3.5	954,023	4.2	1,162,370	4.4
Kirati									318,389	1.7	818,106	3.6	807,169	3.0
Christianity			458		2,541		3,891	<0.1	31,280	0.2	101,976	0.5	375,699	1.4
Jainism			831		5,836		9,430	0.1	7,561	<0.1	4,108	<0.1	3,214	<0.1
Nature													121,982	0.5
Bon													13,006	<0.1
Others	684						365,445			26,416	0.1	86,095	0.4	
Unstated			5,716	0.1				2.4	18,138	0.1				
Total	8,235,079	100	9,412,996	100	11,555,983	100	15,022,831	100	18,491,097	100	22,736,934	100	26,630,809	100

Sources: H. Gurung (1998: 95), Dahal (2003), and 2011 census; percentages do not always add up to 100 because of rounding; the last digit of the total for 1981 has been corrected from '9' to '1'; the total for 2001 is left as reported in the 2001 census even though it is 15 too few.

Table 35.4: Religious affiliation in Nepal and the UK compared

Religion	% in Nepal (2011 census) (N= 26.6 million)	% in UK (CNS-UK survey 2008) (N= 7,881)	% in UK (VR survey 2010) (before prompt) (N=1,993)	% in UK (VR survey 2010) (after prompt) (N=1,993)
Hindu	81.3	41.4	48.3	38.9
Hindu + Buddhist	not an option	9.2	5.0	15.5
Buddhist	9.0	29.3	24.6	16.7
Kirati	3.0	10.1	8.7	8.6
Kirati + Hindu	not an option	4.9	4.1	9.1
Kirati + Buddhist	not an option	2.3	0.3	2.0
Muslim	4.4	0.01	n/a	n/a
Christian	1.4	2.2	6.0	6.0

Sources: CNSUK figures: Snowball survey of the whole of the UK carried out by volunteers overseen by trained social scientists; VR figures: administered questionnaire carried out by CNSUK and VR of 300 households chosen from the CNSUK original sample.

Ex- Gurkha identity is particularly important in Britain. The salient caste and ethnic groups, and how their balance changes between different contexts, are shown in Table 35.1. The most striking differences between Nepal and Britain are that the Gurungs, who constitute only 2.4 per cent of the population of Nepal (according to the 2001 Census of Nepal), make up more than 20 per cent of the Nepali population in Britain, and the Limbus, who constitute just 1.6 per cent in Nepal, make up between 13 and 18 per cent in Britain (Adhikari, 2012: 44). These differences are due to the fact that the British Army's Gurkha brigade historically recruited young men mainly from hill Janajati backgrounds, especially Magars, Gurungs, Rais, and Limbus. Other groups (e.g. Tamangs) often managed to get themselves recruited by passing as Gurungs.

The figures for religion in Nepal are shown in Table 35.3. They show that Hindus constitute the vast majority in Nepal, but the number of people reporting themselves as Hindus has decreased since 1990, following the fall of the Panchayat regime. Some Magar and Tharu activists have campaigned for 'their' people to return their religion as Buddhist—another major religion that is, significantly, not Hindu. Many Limbus and some Rais have been increasingly inclined to adopt the label 'Kirat' (or 'Kirata'), an indigenous category that was first introduced in 1991.⁷ The ways in which the various categories have shifted with the move to Britain are shown in Table 35.4.

Table 35.4 has two different columns with figures from the VR survey. One shows the breakdown of religious identification when people were simply asked their religion ('before prompt'). The second column shows the response after they were read out a list of possibilities ('after prompt'), which included multiple responses (e.g. 'Hindu and Buddhist'). A comparison of the two columns shows that about 15 per cent of people, once made aware that they are allowed to have multiple religious affiliations, opted for two or more religions. Many people (especially Gurungs) shift from being simply 'Buddhist' to the 'Hindu and Buddhist' category.

Multiple religious belonging is much more common among some Nepali groups than among others (Table 35.3. To the far right of the table are the Sherpas, the most strongly and unequivocally Buddhist group: they remain 100 per cent Buddhist, even when made

aware that a dual religious identity was possible and allowed in the survey. At the other end of the spectrum are the Bahuns (Brahmans) who are 91.6 per cent reported themselves as Hindu. In between, there are many different options, with the Gurungs and the various Kirat groups (Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar) particularly divided between the various options.

Which shrines for which religions?

Religious identification for Nepalis is clearly not a straightforward issue. Both in Nepal and Britain, religion rather seems a fluid and, for some, an explicitly political category. But do these various categorical distinctions, which are of so much interest to activists and religious specialists seeking to firm up their support base, matter to 'ordinary' lay people? In their daily practice do they observe any of the boundaries that census-takers and surveyors seek to describe? Can shrines help us to answer the question about affiliation as far as people's daily practice is concerned?

Fifteen per cent of the 300 households surveyed had no shrine. This total figure obscures the fact that, for most of the categories, the figures were lower (under 10 per cent)—meaning that more than 90 per cent of Nepalis in Britain had household shrines—with three notable categorical exceptions: of those who classified themselves as Kirat, 32.1 per cent had no shrine; of Christians, 65 per cent had no shrine; and, of those who identified as 'non-religious', 50 per cent (three out of six respondents) had no shrine. That Nepali Christians would put more emphasis on the Bible than on a visible altar and that 'non-religious' Nepalis would lack a shrine is hardly surprising. More interesting are the three cases of 'non-religious' household heads who nonetheless reported a shrine in their house. This seeming paradox may be the result of frequently gendered distinction—globally—between public affiliation (which in this case would be the domain of the male household head), and actual daily practice in the home (which would here fall into the sphere of the woman of the house).

That significant number of Rais, Limbus, and Sunuwars (the Kirat groups) did not have a shrine at home reflects the fact that they have a distinctly different attitude to shrines and icons. As the traditional Kirat tribal religion is based on oral scriptures, self-

conscious adherents are aware that historically the Kirat tradition is aniconic. As one informant put it:

Kirat people just need three water pots and some Titepati leaves to worship [the deities] Him Mang, Yuma, Theba, and Tagera Ningwaphumang. Once worship is over, these will be cleaned [and put away]... We Kirat do not have photos of our gods and goddesses. No one has seen the true likeness of God. Statues and pictures of God and Goddess are all imaginary. (Limbu, Kirati religion, Plate 35.10)

Thus, those who chose the 'Kirat' identity were much more likely not to have statues in their shrines. Only 40 per cent of Kirati-identified households had statues, whereas the figure for all other categories (Christians excepted) was 68 per cent or more.

It may be that what we are seeing here is the fluidity of the 'Kirat' religious label and a clear demonstration that one cannot read off any particular practice from a given census category. It could also be that the 40 per cent of those who identified as Kirat who did possess statues were making a political point by claiming their religion as Kirati, when in fact their practice was a mixture of Hindu and Kirat (often Hinduism for daily worship, Kirat tradition at birth and death). A Gurung, active in the Gurung cultural organisation, Tamu Dhee, admitted a parallel kind of self-conscious slippage: "In fact I am both Buddhist and Hindu. I practise both religions in the real situation. But I tell people that I am Buddhist because we perform birth and death rites in the Buddhist way" (Gurung, 2019). Indeed, this informant had a main silver shrine containing images of Hindu holy men and statues and images of Hindu divinities, with Buddhist images (clearly actively worshipped) placed right next to it (see Plates 35.15–35.17).

The simplest shrines are made on a shelf in the sitting room or bedroom, or a cupboard shelf in the kitchen or storeroom.⁸ Sometimes even a small corner shelf on the staircase or landing may serve the purpose of creating an altar. A few posters or small framed pictures with a space to put offerings in front of them are all that is necessary; a bell and vessels for water and coloured powder may also be added. Sometimes a box with a door (such a bread bin) may be used to provide a complete enclosure.

Much more elaborate shrines are of course possible, when a whole room, or, as in one case, an entire garden shed, is devoted to creating a sacred space. These more elaborate (and relatively rare) cases tend to be found where the person concerned is wholly committed to one or other religion, usually Hinduism or Buddhism. Some committed Nepali Christians turn the whole home into a sacred space in the same way. Whether or not one does this depends partly on religious inclination, but it also determined by constraints such as how long they have been settled in the UK and whether or not they own their own house.

Divine images were by far the most predominant icons on household shrines: 79 per cent of the 300 households surveyed had photos or posters of gods, 78 per cent holy objects (excluding photos, statues, and texts), 64 per cent had statues, and 33 per cent had holy texts.⁹ Of total posters in the shrines of all responding households, 81 per cent were Hindu, 14 per cent Buddhist, and 5 per cent 'other'. That Nepal was historically a Hindu kingdom—meaning that Hindu-inflected practices run deep even among ethnic groups promoting alternative religious identities—is apparent through an analysis of these images. In Bahun household shrines, 99 per cent of posters were Hindu and only 1 per cent were Buddhist. Among households who identified as Buddhist, however, 42 per cent of the posters in their shrines were Hindu. Likewise, in the shrines of those who identified as both Hindu and Buddhist, 82 per cent of the posters were of Hindu gods. The equivalent figures for those identifying as Kirat, Kirat and Hindu, and Kirat and Buddhist were 84 per cent, 88 per cent, and 67 per cent respectively. By contrast, the position of Sherpas as strictly Tibetan Buddhist was clear: not a single Sherpa household had a Hindu poster, whereas 96.4 per cent had Buddhist posters.

A similar pattern is found with statues: Hindus are much less likely to have Buddhist statues than Buddhists are to have Hindu ones. Thus, only 10 per cent of statues in all Hindus households were related to Buddhism, but 36 per cent of the statues in Buddhist households and 71 per cent of the statues in 'Hindu and Buddhist' households were Hindu. A similar pattern was also found among Kirat dharma followers: 77 per cent of statues in the shrines of Kirat followers were related to Hinduism, as were 78 per cent of those who were both Kirat and Hindu, and 64 per cent of those who were both Kirat and Buddhist.



Plate 35.1: The elaborate Tibetan Buddhist shrine of Tirtha Ghale, Lamaist priest.



Plate 35.2: Shrine of Sabdi Guru (Satyahang priest), Ram Kumar Thebe, which is elaborate by the standards of Kirati religion.



Plate 35.3: Simple Hindu shrine owned by Khon Bahadur and Chet Kumari Rana Magar and family (Hindu), shown in Plate 35.4



Plate 35.4: Khon Bahadur and Chet Kumari Rana Magar and family

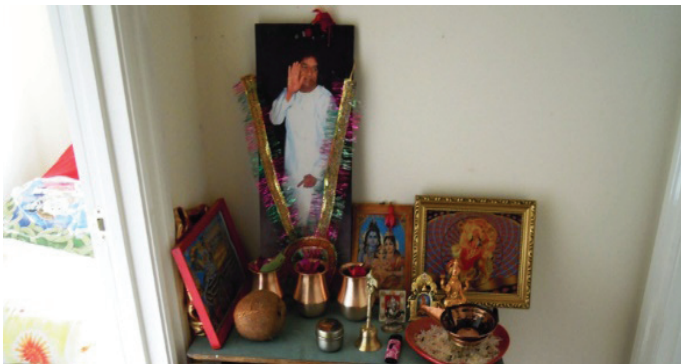


Plate 35.5: Simple Hindu shrine in the house of Dinesh Khadka (a Chhetri).



Plate 35.6: A simple Sherpa Buddhist shrine belonging to Phurlamu and Nim Tenzing Sherpa (Plate 35.7).



Plate 35.7: Phurlamu and Nim Tenzing Sherpa and family.



Plate 35.8: A Bon 'shrine' belonging Amar Tamu (Gurung).



Plate 35.9: A simple Satyahang shrine with photographs of Guru Phalgunanda and the parents of the owner, Jamin Limbu.



Plate 35.10: A Limbu couple, Subarna and Nanda Shobha Limbu, with no shrine: he is a traditionalist Kirati religion adherent (quoted above, p. 204)



Plate 35.11: The home shrine of Karna Bahadur and Krishna Kumari Rai (shown in Plate 35.12).



Plate 35.12: Karna Bahadur and Krishna Kumari Rai, who claim Kirati religion but evidently practise in a Hindu mode.



Plate 35.13: Home shrine of Mrs Kedar Sunuwar.



Plate 35.14: Mrs Kedar Sunuwar, who claimed a triple religious identity: Kirat-Buddhist-Hindu.



**Plate 35.15: Home shrine of Dharma Raj and Savitri Sunuwar.
(Note the more minimalist style of the shrine.)**



Plate 35.16: Dharma Raj and Savitri Sunuwar, who also claimed a triple identity as Kirat-Buddhist-Hindu.



Plates 35.17 and 35.18 show the shrine and Buddhist images next to it of Surje and Pavitra Gurung.



Plate 35.19: Surje and Pavitra Gurung; Surje claims Buddhism as his census category, but accepts that his practice is Hindu-Buddhist.



Plates 35.20 : The shrine and pictures of Nepaldhan Rai (a Roman Catholic), whose wife Bhagawati is a Hindu devotee of Sai Baba.



Plates 35.21 : The shrine and pictures of Nepaldhan Rai (a Roman Catholic), whose wife Bhagawati is a Hindu devotee of Sai Baba.

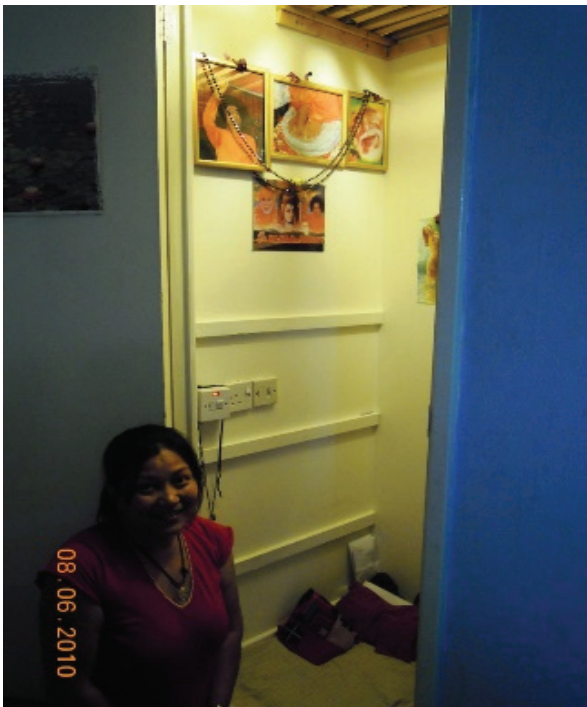


Plate 35.22: Bhagawati Rai, a devotee of Sai Baba.

Taking all this variation into account, we propose a model as shown in Table 35.6. We borrow the term 'congruence' from Mark Chaves (2010), who argued, quite rightly, that “attitudes and behaviour correlate only weakly, and collections of apparently related ideas and practices rarely cohere into logically unified, mutually reinforcing, seamless webs ... This is true of culture in general, and it is true of religious culture in particular” (Chaves, 2010: 2).¹⁰ It is naïve of scholars to expect that people will always hold consistent beliefs, that their actions and their beliefs will always be consistent with one another, or that what they do across different contexts will always be entirely consistent. Consistency in beliefs and between beliefs and practices may occur, but inconsistency is far more predominant. In particular, the idea that everyone should have one and only religious identity is relatively new in the South Asian context and its arrival there has to do with the introduction of modernity, however mediated (Hausner and Gellner, 2012). Many Nepalis are starting to assume that each individual should have one and only one religious identity, and this modernist position has translated into the widely held stance that ethnic groups should share a singular religious identity that is authentically and originally theirs.¹¹

Table 35.5: Religious affiliation by ethnicity (VR survey, 2010, percentages: religion as given after reading out a list of prompts),

	Bahun (N=154)	Chhetri (N=72)	Dalit (N=29)	Magar (N=205)	Newar (N=53)	Sunuwar (N=48)	Rai (N=135)	Limbu (N=146)	Gurung (N=205)	Tamang (N=37)	Thakali (N=29)	Sherpa (N=33)
Hindu	91.6	93.1	86.2	52.2	47.2	18.8	26.7	8.2	7.4	2.7		
Buddhist				16.6	13.2	2.1	0.7		37.4	70.3	55.2	100
Hindu + Buddhist	1.9	2.8		20.5	24.5	8.3	2.2		47.3	13.5	31	
Kirati							23.7	48.6				
Kirati + Hindu						43.8	26.7	29.5				
Kirati + Buddhist							9.6	6.8	0.5			
Kirat + Hindu+ Buddhist						10.4						
Bon									3			
Bon Buddhist											13.8	
Christian	4.5		13.8	10.7		16.7	6.7	6.2	3.9	13.5		
Non - religious	1.9				15.1			0.7	0.5			
Other		4.2					3.7					

A major shift between Nepal and Britain is evident in the much lower proportion of Hindus in the latter. Nonetheless, if one adds up the various dual identities (allowed in our surveys, but not in national censuses), Hindus still account for 55 per cent of the UK's Nepali population. Buddhists certainly make up a much larger proportion in Britain (more like 40 per cent as opposed to around 10 per cent in Nepal). The reason for this is the changed ethnic balance, with a much higher proportion of Gurungs, Thakalis, and Sherpas than in Nepal. Only Tamangs seem to be present in Britain in smaller numbers than in Nepal, which can be understood as the result of both the historical ban on their being recruited into the Gurkha forces and, relatedly their relative poverty and disadvantage compared to the Janajati groups that were regularly recruited, which very likely makes it harder for them to migrate to desirable destinations.

Table 35. 6: Kinds of relationship between religious identification and shrine practice

Congruence (either specialist or lay)	Incongruence (usually laypeople)
Specialists: with elaborate shrines by the standards of their co-religionists	Claims to unitary identity combined with multiple practice (the identity claim can be to Hinduism, Buddhism, Kirati religion, or Bon)
	Claims to multiple identity combined with multiple practice (can be combined with a claim to ecumenical congruence)
Laypeople: simple Hindu, Buddhist, Satyahang, Kirati, or Bon shrines or places of worship	Claims to multiple identity, but where the practice would appear to be fairly uniform (rare)
	Multiple practice with claims to be unsure of 'true' religious identity

Thus, there are many Nepalis in the UK who do try and sometimes succeed in being 'congruent'. On the whole, religious specialists tend to be purists who try hard to be consistent in their practice, and it is no surprise to find them being so (Plates 35.1–2). Some examples of lay people who are also congruent in this manner are shown in Plates 5.3–10. We have already noted that there are many Nepalis who claim a unitary identity, usually for reasons of ethnic, cultural, and/or religious politics, while their practice remains multiple (e.g. Plates 35.11–12, 35.15–16).

There are also those diaspora Nepalis who accept a multiple identity and practise multiply (though the descriptor may be

contested: Hinduism is usually a happy label for such inclusivist attitudes, although some claimed a dual or triple identity category when given the option: see Plates 35.13–14). Others accept the dominant unitary identity expectation, and realise that their own practice contravenes it. One man, a Magar and a Hindu, with no shrine in his house, but a Hindu shrine in his shop, said:

Actually I am in 'confusion' as to which dharma I observe. In my opinion perhaps I follow two religions: Buddhism and Hinduism. Because I observe all the Hindu festivals like Dasain and Tihar. And I go for darshan [sacred vision of deities] to both [Hindu] temples and [Buddhist] gompas. But when we die, we have to make use of Lamas. I myself do not do any scripture recitation, nor do my wife or sons.

Here we have a self-conscious exploration of what it means to identify multiply, and to practise multiply, in the context of a modernity that assumes singularity and congruence. There are also those who solve the problem by giving each individual a free choice. Nepaldhan Rai, a Roman Catholic, whose wife is Hindu (see Plates 35.18–19), explained the situation as follows:

There are no restrictions on religion in my family. They can become Buddhist, Muslim, Kirat, and so on. I want to see their happiness just like me. I am a happier person since I became a Christian. I would not stop my son becoming Muslim if he believed that it was for him. In my opinion, we do religious practice to feel happy. My wife feels happy when she does Saibaba bhajan [hymn-singing to Sai Baba]. So, I do not stop her doing this and I do not like to take away her happiness. This is my philosophy (darshan) of life. I do believe in democracy and I want to see democracy in religion as well.

Conclusion: The display of religion

To what extent are individual lay shrines congruent with people's categorically asserted religious identities? As we have shown, sometimes they are and sometimes they are not. Geertz would appear to have been uncharacteristically naïve here: "Religious symbols formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific (if, most often, implicit) metaphysic, and in

so doing, sustain each with the borrowed authority of the other" (1973: 90). He had, perhaps, forgotten internally pluralist or highly diverse societies, where the politics of religious identification will likely mean that one cannot simply read identity from symbol. The presence of the goddess Sarasvati or Durga on someone's shrine does not necessarily mean that that person is Hindu: he or she could be Buddhist, Bon, Kirati, or some combination of all these categories.

Sometimes, it turns out, religious images are just that: symbols that evoke religiosity writ large. The content of what they convey—their standard identifying category (Sarasvati and Durga as 'Hindu' goddesses, for example)—is less important than that they symbolise devotion and divinity in general. Having a shrine is more important in these instances than the specific objects or images that are displayed on that shrine. A religious category may be asserted, but equally, multiplicity may be the underlying semantic message of these collage-like altars. Still others may be 'cabinets' or collections of religiosity. Simply being a holy symbol—from any so-called world religion—is sufficient to constitute an object's worth in an altar. Conversely, in some cases, as we have seen, refusing to display or use icons may also be a statement of religious intent.

Shrines are a different way in to the problem of religious identity and practice: they may reflect a person's articulated religious identification, or they may demonstrate a different leaning. They are an articulation or assertion of religious practice, a means through which to express devotion to a particular deity or multiple deities. What we have stressed here is that they are private religious spaces in one's own home as compared to a public showing or attendance at a collective event, and as such speak to personal or soteriological religion rather than to collective religion, or religious affiliation as demonstrated through group identification.

When an individual or a family is publicly associated with a given religious organisation or an activist movement that depends on religious identity, shrines at home may go further to confirm that identity. But this congruence is not always found: some activist members of religious organisations who might be thought to position themselves in opposition to mainstream religiosity have personal shrines that actually reflect a dominant soteriology. Shrines may reflect a spoken category or resist it. They may be consonant with

a category, or they may constitute a practice—whatever worship, prayer, or thought that emerges from its owner's encounter with the icon or holy object—that is at odds with the articulation of the owner's category. That incongruity may remain unresolved, or a new more encompassing category may emerge. What had seemed incongruent is no longer so, from the new more encompassing point of view. Multiplicity is not aberrant in South Asian religions: a new form, a new adaptation, a new divergence works just as well as attempts to consolidate or unify in the name of purity and reform. It is a different mode of religious change, one where proliferation is not anathema to the very tenets of religiosity.

The point here is that personal religion is capable of evading the sharp lines and clear articulations of public or collective religion, since there is no one questioning the category. Shrines are a way—or better, a place—to be religious without being obliged to narrate religiosity. There is thus a striking contrast between the ecumenism of many personal shrines, on the hand, and the public campaigns to establish new temples in the name of particular religions in Britain, on the other. Although some Nepalis had thought that it might be possible to have a Hindu temple with a Buddhist *caitya* (small stupa or monument) attached, as is frequently found in Nepal, in practice this goal has so far proved impossible, and separate religious sites are now planned for Hindu and Buddhist organisations.¹² Likewise, plans for a temple in Ashford, Kent (the largest of Limbu settlement in the UK), which was originally envisaged as a shared space for both the reformist Satyahangma movement and the traditionalist Kirat religion, had to be abandoned.

A final remark is in order about the possible pitfalls of a focus on diaspora: as far as personal shrines are concerned, no clear differences between what people do in diaspora and what they do in Nepal are apparent (with the sole difference that some people in the UK are constrained by the premises in which they live to have smaller, less elaborate shrines). Nothing we have found stands in opposition to religious trends in Nepal. 'Diaspora' in this instance is a red herring, except to indicate that people's religious views and practices inside the home remain remarkably consistent across space.¹³

Where a diasporic lens may become useful, however, is in assessing the distinction between public and private in different parts of the world: arguably there is a sharper distinction between public and private for Nepalis in Britain than for Nepalis in Nepal. In Britain, the tensions we see in building public religious spaces appear to reflect a more consistent—or congruent—unitary religious positioning, while multiplicity remains a frequent symbolic discourse within people's homes.¹⁴ This possibility, if borne out by further research, would confirm what South Asianists have long suspected: the analytical distinction between the public and the private domains that is seen as natural in the West does not have the same weight in South Asia. But that distinction clearly emerges in the diaspora: for Nepalis in Britain, personal shrines may remain a place of multiple and sometimes incongruent religious practice, while public spaces have started to become places of unitary categorical assertions, in keeping with modernist views of religion and the position of the national census that one may have one and only one religious affiliation.

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Notes

This chapter appeared originally in the journal *Diaspora* in 2016 (though with a cover date of 2010). In this paper all quotations from research

participants are taken from interviews with Chandra Laksamba and all photographs (except Plates 35.1 and 35.2 by Bal Gopal Shrestha) are also by him. We thank all those who so graciously agreed to be interviewed and photographed. They have all given permission for the photographs of them and their shrines to be used.

- 2 We are aware that many diaspora scholars would question whether Nepalis constitute a diaspora given how young the community is (Tölölyan, 2012). However, Nepalis in the UK and elsewhere frequently refer to themselves as a diaspora and there is even a Nepali magazine based in London called *Diaspora*.
- 3 This tension is examined in Gellner (2013) and Hausner and Gellner (2012) above. On the themes of this paper, see also Gellner and Hausner, 2013 and Gellner, et al., 2014.
- 4 For an introduction to the political history of Nepal in this period, see Hachhethu & Gellner (2010). For more detailed treatments, see Joshi & Rose (1966), Hoftun, Raeper, & Whelpton (1999), and Whelpton (2005). For introductions to the tumultuous events of the Maoist insurgency/civil war (1996-2006), see Hutt (2004), Thapa (2004), Pettigrew (2013), and Adhikari (2014). As well as describing the Maoist insurgency, Jha (2014) is a key introduction to the Madhesi issue.
- 5 Nepali/Gorkhali migration history is summarised in Gellner (2013). On labour migrants to Delhi, see Thieme (2006), and to Qatar, Bruslé (2010b, 2014). On Nepalis in the UK, see Adhikari (2012) including Laksamba (2012).
- 6 Five days later the government reversed this decision under pressure from the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN). On the whole history of this Bahun-Chhetri mobilisation, debate over the category 'indigenous', and the collapse of the first Constituent Assembly, see Adhikari & Gellner (2016a).
- 7 See Gaenszle (2000) for detailed discussion of the term 'Kirati/Kiranti'. We prefer the form 'Kirata/Kirati' because Kirat groups themselves argue that the nasal sound is absent in their own languages.
- 8 One young couple in Scotland dispensed with the need for any material object or space: they had a picture of the god Ganesh saved on their laptop and called it up to worship whenever they want to; which they justified as more environmentally friendly, as well as politic, since their

landlord might not like them burning incense. Sometimes they also participated via Skype in rituals back home.

- 9 The average number per household of all holy items kept in the shrine was 11; that of posters was 3.34; of statues, 2.14; of religious texts, 1.03; and of other holy objects (such as flasks, bells, or oil lamps), 4.98.
- 10 The ideas here—the distinction between (census) category and (everyday) practice; and the difference between being multiple vs. being unitary in one's religious identity—are examined in Gellner (2013) and Housner and Gellner (2012).
- 11 For a brief description of the ideas and writings of one Newar intellectual, Baldev Jaju, who has tried to argue for a single 'Newar religion' underlying the apparent division into Hinduism and Buddhism, see Gellner (2011).
- 12 The planned Non-Resident Nepali house in London is intended to have a Swayambhu and a Pashupati shrine side by side. In this more political and less religious context, this may prove acceptable.
- 13 More than half of those surveyed did, however, say that they did less religious practice than in Nepal (one third said they did the same amount as in Nepal).
- 14 This difference, at least, would be consistent with the trends for greater compartmentalisation and more self-conscious alignment with global or world-religious models in the diaspora, as summarised by Vertovec (2000b).

**

दोहोरो नागरिकताको व्यवस्था

डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा

नेपाली नागरिकताको प्रमाणपत्र लिइसकेका पहिलो पुस्ताका गैरआवासीय नेपालीलाई दोहोरो नागरिकता दिँदा मुलुकलाई कुनै हानी हुँदैन तर उनीहरूको मातृभूमिप्रतिको आवद्धता कायमै रहन्छ ।

गैरआवासीय नेपालीले उठाउँदै आएका दोहोरो नागरिकताको माग अहिले थप चासो र चर्चाको विषय बनेको छ । नेपाल सरकारले दोहोरो नागरिकताको माग साम्य पार्न अपनाएको परिचयपत्रको व्यवस्थाले यसमा चासो बढाएको हो । यस प्रणालीको कार्यान्वयन परराष्ट्र तथा उपप्रधानमन्त्री सुजाता कोइरालाले गैरआवासीय अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय संघका अध्यक्ष देवमान हिराचनलाई परिचयपत्र प्रदान गरेर सुरु गरिसकेकी छिन् । यो परिचय पत्र सन् १९५० को नेपाल-भारत सन्धिले भारतीय नागरिकलाई व्यापार धन्दा, बसोवास र नेपाल आवातजावतका लागि दिइएको सुविधाभन्दा खासै फरक देखिँदैन । के गैरआवासीय नेपालीले उठाउने गरेको दोहोरो नागरिकता पद्धति यही हो त ? अवश्य होइन ।

गैरआवासीय नेपालीको माग दोहोरो नागरिकता हो । यो माग गैरआवासीय नेपालीले संघको स्थापना कालदेखि नै गर्दै आएका छन् । नेपालका प्रमुख राजनीतिक दलका नेताहरू गिरिजाप्रसाद कोइराला, पुष्पकमल दाहाल, भलनाथ खनाललगायतले दोहोरो नागरिकता दिने प्रतिवद्धता पटकपटक व्यक्त गरेकै हुन् । तर, लाखौं गैरआवासीय नेपालीको मागविपरित अब लेखिने संविधानमा 'दोहोरो नागरिकता' भन्ने शब्द नै नहुने सार्वजनिक भइसकेको छ । संविधानसभाको मौलिक हक तथा निर्देशक सिद्धान्त समितिद्वारा प्रस्तुत नागरिकतासम्बन्धी मस्यौदामा

गैरआवासीय नेपालीका लागि न्यूनतम अधिकार मात्र भएको परिचयपत्रको व्यवस्था गर्ने प्रस्ताव गरिएको छ । त्यसकारण संविधानले गैरआवासीय नेपालीलाई आफ्नो मातृभूमिसँगको सांस्कृतिक, सामाजिक, भाषिक, धार्मिक र भावनात्मक सम्बन्धबाट पूर्णतः विच्छेद गरी देशको आर्थिक विकासमा सहभागी बन्ने अवसरबाट पनि वञ्चित गराउने छ । समितिका सदस्य सभासद गगन थापामात्र दोहोरो नागरिकताको पक्षमा भए पनि बाँकी सबै विपक्षमा रहेर यस्तो मस्यौदा प्रस्तुत गरियो । यो सबै नेपालीका लागि दुःखलाग्दो विषय हो । सभासदहरूको यो संकीर्ण सोचले गैरआवासीय नेपालीको नेपाललाई विकसित बनाउँ, नेपाललाई विश्व सामु प्रतिष्ठित राष्ट्रका रूपमा खडा गराउँ भन्ने भावना कुण्ठित हुनुका साथै देशका बारेमा चिन्तित गैरआवासीय नेपालीको नेपालप्रतिको माया र ममतामा ठुलो चोट लगाएको छ ।

संविधानमा दोहोरो नागरिकता व्यवस्था नभएमा गैरआवासीय नेपालीको मातृभूमिसँगको सम्बन्ध अविच्छिन्न राख्नुका साथै राष्ट्रको सर्वाङ्गीण विकासमा सहभागी बन्ने अवसर पनि गुम्नेछ । विद्यमान नागरिकता ऐनको दफा १०.१ को 'विदेशी नागरिकता प्राप्त गरेमा नेपाली नागरिकता कायम नरहने' प्रावधान प्रस्तावित मस्यौदामा पनि कायम रहेकाले सँधैको नेपाली भएर बाँच्न पाउने अधिकारसमेत कुण्ठित भएको छ । वास्तवमा विदेशी नागरिकता लिनेबित्तिकै नेपाली नागरिकता स्वतः खारेज हुने पुरानो संविधानमा भएको व्यवस्थाको सट्टा विदेशी नागरिकता लिँदा आफ्नो नेपाली नागरिकता त्याग्नु नपरोस् भन्ने वाक्यांश राखियोस् भन्ने गैरआवासीय नेपालीको माग हो ।

दोहोरो नागरिकताको प्रसङ्ग नसकिँदै सरकारले परिचयपत्र कार्यान्वयन गरेको छ । यसले गैरआवासीय नेपालीलाई के कति फाइदा या बेफाइदा छ बुझ्न सान्दर्भिक हुनेछ । गैरआवासीय नेपाली पहिचान गरी तिनको सीप, लगानी र प्रविधि भित्र्याउन २०६४ सालमा गैरआवासीय नेपालीसम्बन्धी ऐन र यसै वर्ष नियमावली जारी गरिएको छ । ऐनबमोजिम गैरआवासीय परिचयपत्रबाहक दुई किसिमका नेपाली हुनेछन् - पहिलो विदेशमा बसोबास गर्दै आएका नेपाली मूलका विदेशी नागरिक र दोस्रो विदेशमा बसोबास गर्दै आएका नेपाली नागरिक । नेपाली मूलको विदेशी नागरिक भए बढीमा १० वर्ष र विदेशमा बस्ने नेपाली नागरिक भए दुई वर्षसम्म यस्तो परिचय पत्र मान्य रहनेछ । ऐनले नेपाली मूलका विदेशी नागरिकलाई नेपालमा कम्पनी खोली प्रत्यक्ष लगानी गर्दा सहुलियत दिनुका साथै आवास प्रयोजनका लागि सीमित घरजग्गा खरिद र एकपटकमा १० वर्षसम्म

निःशुल्क भिसालगायत सुबिधा उपलब्ध गराएको छ । यसअनुसार उनीहरूले काठमाडौं उपत्यकाभित्र बढीमा दुई रोपनी, तराईका नगरपालिका क्षेत्रभित्र बढीमा आठ कठ्ठा र अन्यत्र चार रोपनीसम्म घरजग्गा किन्न पाउँछन् । तराईका गाविसमा एक बिघा र अन्यत्र १० रोपनीसम्म जग्गा किन्न पाउँछन् ।

सरसर्ती बुझ्दा दोहोरो नागरिकता प्रावधान नभएका जापान, जर्मनी, दक्षिण कोरियालगायतका देशको नागरिकता लिएका नेपालीका लागि यो परिचय पत्रको व्यवस्थाले केही सहूलियत दिएको छ । भारतका मारवाडीले नेपालको उद्योगधन्दा, व्यापार आदिमा लगानी गरेजस्तै माथि उल्लेखित र अन्य दोहोरो नागरिकताको व्यवस्था नभएका मुलुकका गैरआवासीय नेपालीले नेपालमा लगानी गर्न सक्नेछन् । तर, राजनीतिक अधिकार भने परिचय पत्रले दिँदैन ।

बेलायत, अमेरिकालगायतका दोहोरो नागरिकताको प्रावधान भएका देशका भने गैरआवासीय नेपालीलाई यस परिचयपत्रले फाइदा भन्दा बेफाइदा गर्नेछ । उदाहरणका लागि बेलायतको नागरिकता लिँदा नेपालको नागरिकता बेलायत सरकारले त्याग्न लगाउँदैन तर यो परिचय पत्र भने नेपालको नागरिकता सरकारलाई बुझाएपछि मात्र पाइन्छ । यस प्रक्रियाले दुई कुरा प्रष्ट्याउँछ । पहिलो, नेपाली नागरिकलाई विदेशी बनाउने नीति स्पष्ट देखिन्छ भने दोस्रो, नेपालमा हाल दोहोरो नागरिकताको नीति छैन र भविष्यमा पनि हुने छैन भन्ने संकेत गर्छ ।

समग्रमा गैरआवासीय नेपाली सरकारले दोहोरो नागरिकताको नीति अपनाओस् भन्ने चाहन्छन् । यो सबै देशमा नभए पनि दोहोरो नागरिकताको व्यवस्था भएका देशमा यो सम्भव छ । नेपालीको बसाइँसराइ भारत, म्यानमार, भुटान, थाइल्यान्ड, फिजीलगायत देशहरूबाहेकका मुलुकमा २० औं शताब्दीको अन्त्यतिरमात्र सुरु भएको देखिन्छ । विशेष गरेर बेलायत सरकारले सन् २००४ सेप्टेम्बरदेखि गोर्खालाई आवासीय अधिकार दिएपछि बेलायतमा नेपालीको जनसंख्या हवातै बढेको देखिन्छ । सन् २००१ को इङ्ल्यान्ड, वेल्स, स्कटल्यान्ड र उत्तरी आयरल्यान्डको जनगणनामा नेपालीको सङ्ख्या ६ हजारको हाराहारीमा थियो भने सन् २००८ मा सेन्टर फर नेपाल स्टडिज, युकेले लिएको नेपालीको जनगणनामा ७२ हजार एकसय ७३ नेपाली बेलायतमा बसोवास गरेको पाइएको छ । हाल यो संख्या १ लाख बढी भएको अनुमान गर्न सकिन्छ । यो बसाइँसराइको इतिहास र प्रकृति हेर्दा भारत, म्यानमार, भुटान, थाइल्यान्ड, फिजी र अन्य दक्षिण एसियाली मुलुकबाहेक विशेष गरेर बेलायत, अमेरिका र अस्ट्रेलियामा बसोवास गर्ने नेपाली पहिलो पुस्ताकै अनि नेपाली नागरिकता भएकै देखिन्छन् । त्यस कारण बेलायतका

गैरआवासीय नेपालीले बेलायती नागरिकता लिँदा नेपाली नागरिकता कायम राख्ने व्यवस्था नयाँ संविधानमै होस् भनेर माग गरेका हुन् । यसो गर्दा भारत, म्यानमार, भुटान, थाइल्याण्ड, फिजीलगायतका देशका गैरआवासीय नेपालीसम्बन्धमा कस्तो व्यवस्था गर्ने भन्ने प्रश्न उठाइएको छ । तिनले दोहोरो नागरिकता मागेमा के गर्ने भन्ने समस्याको समाधान यही व्यवस्थाबाट हुनेछ । यी देशमा बसोवास गर्ने नेपाली प्रायः चौथोपाँचौँ पुस्ताका नेपाली नागरिकता नभएका गैरआवासीय नेपाली हुन् । ती पहिलो पुस्ताका नागरिकतावाहक गैरआवासीय नेपालीको कोटीमा पर्दैनन् । हालै त्यहाँ गएका नेपाली नागरिक मलेसिया वा खाडी मुलुकमा जस्तै छोटो अवधिका लागि कामको खोजीमा गएका हुन् र तीमध्ये लगभग सबै नेपालै फकिन्छन् । भारतमै पनि हाल बसाइ सरेर जाने क्रम एकदम न्यून छ । नोकरीका लागि भारत पस्नेको संख्या पनि खाडी राष्ट्रका कारणले घटेको छ । भारतीय सेनामा भएका नेपाली पनि दुई प्रकारका छन् । भारतमै तीन चार पुस्ता बसोवास गरेका भारतीय नेपाली र नेपाल घर भएका नेपाली । नोकरीपछि यहाँ घर हुनेमात्र नेपाल फकिन्छन् । नेपालसँग बढी सम्बन्ध भएका भारतीय नेपाली दार्जिलिङ र कालेम्पोङका हुन् । जो विशेष गरेर पूर्वी नेपाल र काठमाडौँमा नोकरीको सिलसिलामा आउने गर्छन् तर अन्त्यमा सबैजसो दार्जिलिङ, कालेम्पोङ नै फर्केर जाने गर्छन् । अर्को उदाहरणमा नेपाली मूलका भुटानीलाई लिन सकिन्छ । भुटानबाट धपाइए पनि, नेपालको सीमाना नजिक ल्याएर छोडिदिए पनि तिनले कहिल्यै नेपाली नागरिकता मागेनन् । हामी नेपाली मूलका भए पनि भुटानी नागरिक हौं भनेर लडिरहेका छन् । बरु अन्य मुलुक विशेष गरेर अमेरिकामा गएर बसोवास गरेका छन् । यस्तै नेपाली मूलका भारतीय, बर्मेली, थाई र फिजियनले पनि यहाँको नागरिकता माग्दैनन् भन्ने उदाहरण हो ।

अर्कोतिर नेपाली नागरिकता कहिल्यै नलिएको हुँदा पनि उनीहरू नेपाली मूलका भारतीय, बर्मेली, थाई भएरै बस्नुपर्ने हुन्छ । उनीहरूको नेपालसँगको सम्बन्ध भावनामै सीमित रहनेछ ।

नेपाली नागरिकता भएका तर विदेशमा बसोवास गरिरहेकाहरूको नागरिकता कायम हुन दिएर नेपाल र नेपालीलाई केही पनि हानि हुने देखिन्न । बरु फाइदै धेरै हुन्छ । नेपालका छिमेकी राष्ट्रहरू चीन र भारतको विकासक्रम अति दुत गतिले बढिरहेका बेला नेपालले विभिन्न कोणबाट आफूलाई हेर्न, सोच्न र मजबुत पार्नु आवश्यक हुन्छ । यी दुई छिमेकी राष्ट्रको आर्थिक विकासको प्रभाव (स्पील ओभर इफेक्ट) नेपालमा अवश्यै पर्नेछ । यी राष्ट्रको उचाइमा नेपाल पुग्न नसके पनि

आधा उचाइमा पुग्न त करै लाग्छ । त्यसो गर्न नसके दुई सम्पन्न राष्ट्रले दुवैतिरबाट ब्लिटिङ पेपरले मसी सोसेजस्तो हुन सक्नेछ । त्यसबाट जोगिन नेपाललाई ज्ञान, सीप, लगानी र विकास जरूरी छ । नेपालले विदेश गएका नेपालीलाई नागरिककै रूपमा राख्न सक्थ्यो भने नेपाललाई चाहिने ज्ञान, सीप र विकासको आवश्यकता पूरा गर्न केही अंशमात्र भए पनि यो जनशक्तिले मद्दत पुऱ्याउने देखिन्छ ।

पञ्चायतकालीनभन्दा पनि संकीर्ण नागरिकतासम्बन्धी ऐनकै प्रावधान नयाँ संविधानमा पनि लेखिनबाट रोक्नु जरूरी छ । अग्रगामी परिवर्तनका लागि निर्वाचित संविधान सभासदहरू पञ्चायतकालीनभन्दा कठोर, संकीर्ण ऐन र बन्द नीति संविधानमा लेख्न लाग्नुभन्दा ठुलो दुर्भाग्य के होला ? खुला नीति नअपनाउँदा चीन र भारत कस्ता थिए र खुला नीति अपनाएपछि कहाँ पुगे भन्ने सबैका सामु प्रश्न छ । यी देशले खुला नीति लिएपछि विदेशमा बस्ने चिनिया र भारतीयले बाहिर सिकेको सीप र ज्ञानको प्रयोग गर्दैछन् । यस्तै नीति नेपालले पनि अपनाउनु आवश्यक छ । नेपालीले विदेशमा सिकेको ज्ञान र सीप प्रयोगमा ल्याउन सुहाउँदो वातावरणको सिर्जना अहिलेदेखि नै गर्नुपर्छ । त्यसका लागि नागरिकता पाएका नेपाली जहाँ गए पनि जहाँ रहे पनि सधैंका लागि नेपाली रहने व्यवस्था नयाँ संविधानमा हुनुपर्छ ।

यो लेख लेख्दाको बखत डा. चन्द्र कुमार लक्सम्बा अक्सफोर्ड विश्वविद्यालयका रिसर्च एसोसिएट हुनुहुन्थ्यो ।

नोट :

यो लेख २०६६ चैत्र ४ मा नागरिक दैनिकमा प्रकाशित भएको हो ।

The Limbus in the UK

Dr Chandra K. Laksamba

The main aim of the article is to provide information about the Limbus in the UK, as well as about the Kirat Yakthung Chumlung UK (KYCUK) and its role in the welfare, education, and preservation of religion, culture, and language.¹ It is aimed particularly at the second generation Limbus in the UK whose main language is English and who are literate primarily in English.

Historical Background

The Limbu people, who are called Yakthung in Limbu language, are a branch of the Kirat people. According to the Limbu myth passed over generations through an oral tradition (Mundhum), they are the descendants of Susuwa Lilim Yakthunghang who are indigenous people of the land to the east of Arun River, Nepal, and in the Southern and Western districts of Sikkim, India. This land was historically occupied and ruled by Yakthunghangs until 1774 (242 years ago [in 2016]). They are believed to have originally migrated from Mongolia (Munaphen Tembe/Mangjiriden).

Before they came to the east of Arun River and moved up to Sikkim, they first migrated to what is today known as China, and then to Tibet (Muden/Mudenbaden) and Sichuan/Yunan (Sinyukden). According to Mangena Mundhum, those who migrated from Tibet travelled by following rivers passes – those of the Arun, the Barun, the Likhu, the Indrawati, the Sunkosi, the Dudhkosi, the Tambakosi, and the Tamor – to cross the Himalayan region.

On their descent, at one point their route was completely blocked by a big lake, named Walleso Pulleso (Sodho warak/arak) and the lake was surrounded (Pakwaphangma) by the mountain Tangwara. The journey was very demanding and they used various means to overcome it. Maden Phenduwa and Labung travelled riding on buffalos' back, by which means they found easy to cross the rivers and the lake. It is believed that for this reason, their descendants do not eat buffalo meat until today. They are Mudenbaden nu keyubasi as migrated from Tibet. In Sikkim, Limbu people are called Tsong as they migrated from U-Tsang province of Tibet. Those who migrated all the way from Sichuan and Yunnan to the east through Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Bhutan, and Meghalaya are known as Sinyukden lam kebhemvasi. Some from Sichuan and Yunnan travelled to the southwest and spent up to 10 or 12 generations in the periphery of Kashi (Yetchiri Yetchwakhu Tembe) and then migrated towards the north to Morang and Sunsari (Murong) and Dhankuta. They are known as Kashi nu kedhangvasi. During the early period there were extraordinary and powerful people such as Sawa Yukphung Kemba, Sawa Yethangs, Pegi Phanghangs, Sutchuru Suhangpheba, Tetlera Lahadongna, Sodung Lempumuhang and Khambongba Lungbongba existed in the community. They played an important role in the process of migration and settlement at the formative stage.

In an altogether different theory, the Mundhum also says that the Limbu people were created by the god Sigera Yabhundin Mang, Porokmi Wamphami/Yangbhami/Yambhami Mang as instructed and guided by the God Tageraningwaphuma at the base of the Kumbhakarna Himal (Phaktanglung Pembelung) through the synthesis of living organisms and non-living substances. However, this segment of the Mundhum would appear to be in contradiction with the Mangena Mudhum mentioned earlier. It also contradicts with the standard scientific account of human evolution according to which the ancestors of the Limbus, like everyone else, evolved in East Africa. They migrated around 50,000 years ago towards the North-eastern Eurasia during the Ice Age and further moved to Mongolia over a period of time.

The migration of Kirat people spread further westward to the present Kathmandu valley. Under the leadership of Yalambar Susuwa Lilim Yakthunghang, Kiratis attacked and defeated Gopalvamshi

Ahir (Yadav)'s Kingdom in Kathmandu. Altogether 33 Kirat Kings ruled the Kathmandu valley for about 1,250 years. The 33rd King, Yokneyhang Susuwa Lilim Yakthunghang, was the last Kirat king who was defeated by the Licchavi king Bhumi Varma. Yokneyhang fled to Banepa and continued to rule there. Lillimhang Susuwa Lilim Yakthunghang, the eldest son of Yokneyhang, became king after his father's death. He did not feel safe from the Licchavis, so he decided to move further east. However, his brother, Khambokhang Susuwa Lilim Yakthunghang, disagreed and remained behind taking over the kingship of Banepa. Later he was made Mukhiya of Banepa by a Licchavi king. Khambokhang's descendants are believed to be Sunuwars and Hayus. The Newar caste of Vyanjankar/Tepe in Patan/Lalitpur is also believed to be descendants of Kirats (Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar and Yakkha). Some Newar intellectuals believe that the Jyapus, among the Newars, are essentially Kirats.

Sunuwars are the indigenous people of the Molung, Likhu, and Khimti rivers, the area which rulers in Kathmandu used to call Wallo Kirat. The Limbu, Rai, and Dewan (Yakkha) separated at later stages in the course of migration and in the process of evolution. However, the words Limbu, Rai and Dewan are not mentioned in the Mundhum as they only started to be used around 300 years ago, if not later. The Rai people live in the area of Solukhumbu, Okhaldhunga, Khotang, Bhojpur and Udaipur, which lie west of the Arun River known as Majh Kirat. The Dewan or Yakkha people are inhabitants of the southern part of Sankhuwasabha. The Limbu (Yakthunghangs) have been mainly living in the areas between the east of Arun River, Nepal and Sikkim, which is also known as Pallo Kirat. At the time of Gorkhali – Limbu war, the Limbu land (Yakthung Laje) was divided into 10 principalities and ruled by 10 Kings (Thibong Yakthung Hangs).

Gorkhali – Limbu (Yakthung) war and conversion of Limbu land (Yakthung Laje) into kipat

On Monday 8 August 1774 (Sombar 22 Srawan 1831 B.S.), the Bhardars of Prithivi Narayan Shah, King of Gorkha, and the ministers of the ten Limbu Principalities under Limbu Kings (Yakthung Hangs) agreed a 'Nun-pani' (salt water) treaty and to end the Gorkhali–Limbu war. The land (Yakthung Laje) was

converted into Kipat, a collective self-governing land system of the Limbu people under the reign of Gorkha Kingdom. Ministers from nine Limbu Principalities attended the Nun-pani treaty but the tenth, the King of Yangwarak, rejected the treaty and decided to continue to fight against the Gorkhalis. He joined the King of Sikkim who agreed to fight back together. Nevertheless, the Limbus who attended the Nun-pani treaty fought along the side of Gorkhali Army. After two years of continuous war, in 1776 (1833 B.S.) the Yangwarak Laje also came under the Gorkha Kingdom accepting the Nun-pani treaty. Even after the settlement of the war, more than 30,000 Yangwarake Limbus refused to accept the Nun-pani treaty as they believed that the Kipat system had destroyed the Thibong Yakthung Laje or the Kingdoms of Limbus. Finally, they gathered at a place called Aambepojoma, Panchthar Phidim, and decided to leave Yangwarak as well as Yakthung Laje forever. They migrated to Sikkim, Assam, and Bhutan. The majority of them migrated to Sikkim as the land was familiar to them.

Citizen of Yakthung Laje to praja of Gorkha Kingdom

As per the Nun-pani treaty, the Yakthung Laje came under the Gorkha Kingdom and the Limbu people became the subject (praja) of King Prithivi Narayan Shah. Courtiers of the Gorkha Kingdom and ministers of Yakthung Laje took oath drinking Nun-pani and promising that the Gorkha Kingdom and its rulers would protect the Limbu people and their native land Kipat. The Gorkhali side vowed that the Kipat land would never be seized and that the Limbu people would never be betrayed. It was a widely held belief among the Limbu people that if the Shah dynasty (King of Gorkha) betrayed them, the God Tageraningwaphuma would destroy the Shah Dynasty and its supremacy in return.

The betrayal of the Limbus and the extinction of the Shah monarchy

In 1964 (2021 B.S.) King Mahendra [Veer Vikram] Shah introduced the Land Reform Act 2021 (1964), which slowly but gradually converted the Limbus' Kipat into Raikar (standard land tenure on which tax is due). The conversion process was completed in the mid-1990s by mapping and recording the last bit of Limbu Kipat

in Taplejung District. Finally, the Raikar system replaced the Kipat. Coincidentally, just a few years' later, the Narayanhiti massacre took place in 2001 followed by the abolition of the 250-year-old Shah monarchical dynasty in 2008. Limbu people believed that the implementation of the Land Reform Act 2021 in Limbu's Kipat land was wrong and amounted to a betrayal of the Limbu people. Consequently, some believed, the God Tageraningwaphuma destroyed the Shah dynasty as an act of revenge.

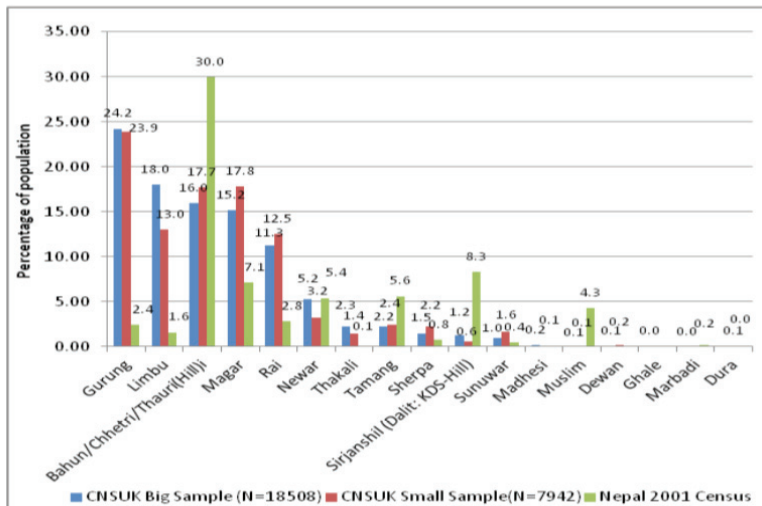
Limbu population

The Census 2011 of Nepal recorded 387,300 Limbus in Nepal, which is 1.5 per cent of the total population. In addition, there are 173,000 Limbus in India and 1,700 in Bhutan. Limbus have also migrated to Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Hong Kong, USA, Australia, and the United Kingdom (UK). In the context of the UK, the CNSUK counted the Nepali population, including Limbus, in 2008. Based on this count, it is estimated that at the end of 2015 there were about 14,000 Limbus in the UK.

Limbus in the UK

Migration of Limbus to the UK mainly started after the changes in the immigration rules in 2004 which allowed British Gurkhas to come and settle in the UK. Limbus, as one of the main tribes recruited in the British Gurkhas, benefited from this policy. Gurkhas came to the UK for training, duties, and study courses from 1948 but before 2004 they never settled permanently. About two dozen Gurkha babies, including one Limbu baby girl was born in the UK around 1961–62 while 1/6 GR (Gurung and Magar Battalion) were stationed in Andover, England. However, the Limbu baby girl did not claim her British citizenship as she married and settled in Dummrise, Taplejung. In 1985, Rajkumar Limbu (Idhingo) an Ex-Gurkha soldier from 10 GR, migrated permanently in Aldershot, Hampshire, after marrying a British citizen. The second and third persons from the Limbu community who settled in the UK are Dr Phaudha Raj Thebe (in 1986) and Dr Bina Subba Thebe (in 1991) respectively. Currently, there are about 14,000 Limbus in the UK. In the 2008 survey of CNSUK, Limbus were found to be the second-largest population within the UK Nepali community (see Figure 37.1).

The composition of the Nepali population in the UK is based on the recruitment system of the Brigade of Gurkhas. From 1948 until recently, the Brigade of Gurkhas used to recruit mainly the Limbu, Rai, Gurung and Magar in the Gurkha Regiments. Hence, the Nepal's Centre Bureau of Statistics (CBS)'s ethnicity population data does not correlate with the Nepali ethnicity population in the UK. For instance, the Bahun and Chhetri whose population is 12.2% and 16.6% (CBS, 2011) respectively in Nepal are found in smaller numbers in the UK (Adhikari, 2012). Similarly, the Limbu population in Nepal is only 1.5% in comparison to the Magars' 7.1%, the Rais' 2.3%, and the Gurungs' 2.0%; but the Limbu population is the second-largest in the UK. The British government used to recruit roughly an equal number from the Magar, Gurung, Limbu and Rai in order to maintain ethnicity-based regiments such as: 2 GR (Magar-Gurung); 6 GR (Gurung-Magar); 7 GR (Limbu-Rai), and 10 GR (Rai-Limbu) regiment. However, over time the Magars gradually became a minority even in the 2 GR, a Magar-led regiment. The additional factor is that the population of Magar in east Nepal is very small in comparison to Gurung. As a result, compared to Gurungs only a small number of Magars used to be selected for the British Army from the eastern Nepal. These are the factors why Magar population size of Nepal does not correlate with their population in the UK. The Gurungs' recruitment figures in the east Nepal are only slightly less than those for the Rais and Limbus. This is the main reason why the population of the Gurung is larger than the Limbus, Magars, and Rais in the UK. In the case of the Rais, Bhojpur and Khotang Districts, where the majority of Rai comes from, have faced a discontinuation of recruitment for more than three years. In the case of the Limbu, their recruiting process was never disrupted since the very beginning and their equal proportion in the Brigade of Gurkhas was continuously maintained until the end of the Limbu led regiment 7 GR (1 July 1994). Therefore, the Limbu population in the UK is larger than the Magars and Rais, despite their bigger population size of Nepal.



Source: K. Adhikari, G. Dahal, R. Shrestha, A. Bhandari (2012), 'Demography', in K. Adhikari (ed) *Nepalis in the United Kingdom: An Overview*, 24 – 53, Reading: CNSUK.

Figure 37.1. Nepali population in the UK and Nepal by ethnicity

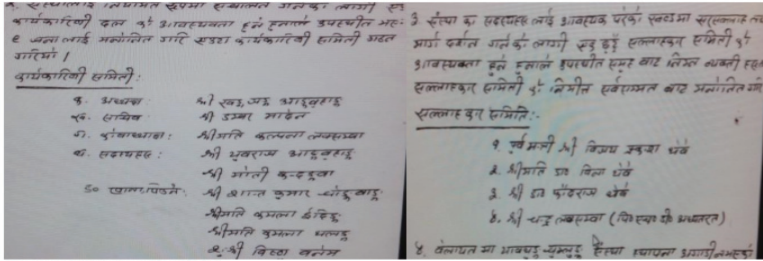
The Kirat Yakthung Chumlung UK (KYCUK) manages and coordinates Limbu religion, culture, tradition, and welfare related activities in the UK. This is discussed below.

The Kirat Yakthung Chumlung UK (KYCUK)

In 2003, less than five Limbu families were settled permanently in the UK. The majority of the Limbu population, especially ex-Gurkhas and their families, were on temporary and dependent visas. The social state and welfare matters of the Nepali communities in the UK at that time were very fragile. With this in mind, Chandra Laksamba, Dhundiraj Khapung and Dambar Maden coordinated a meeting on 2nd August 2003 at Chicken Ken's farmhouse in Salisbury (the venue was recommended by Maj (Retd) Bhuwani Pandhak) in order to establish the KYCUK.

As planned, the KYCUK successfully established and formed an ad-hoc executive committee under the chairmanship of Mr Khadgajang Aangbuhang (Limbu) and an advisory committee on the date and place mentioned above (Plates 37.1 and 37.2). At that time, the KYCUK's immediate aim was to look after the

welfare of the Limbu people in the UK, especially the management of dead bodies, which involved either burial/cremation in the UK or repatriation to homeland with full dignity as per the wish of the deceased's families.



Source: C Laksamba 2003

Plate 37.1: Scan of the minutes of the KYCUK's meeting in Salisbury on 2 Aug 2003.



Photo Source: C. Laksamba 2003

Plate 37.2: KYCUK gathering at Chicken Ken's farmhouse in Salisbury, 2 Aug. 2003.

Over the next 14 years, the KYCUK grew religiously, culturally, socially, educationally, economically and institutionally under the chairmanship of Mr Khadkajang Angbuhang (founding chairman), former Minister of Nepal Bijaya Prakash Thebe, Lt (Retd) Siriprasad Limbu (two terms, and the first elected chairman), Capt. (Retd) Bombahadur Limbu, Mr Dambar Singhak, Mr Subash Jabegu and Mr Kajiman Yakso (present chairperson). The organisation has 16 local branches across the country. The KYCUK has carried out a lot of community activities in the past 14 years. Among them, during the

time of Mr Dambar Singhak's Chairmanship, the KYCUK launched a very ambitious but important 'Community Property Project' (to buy land and build a Chumlung Him in the UK) in 2011.



Photo Source: KYCUK 2016

Plate 37.3: KYCUK in 2016 (The third from the left is Subin Limbu, Miss Nepal 2014)

The Property Project is moving ahead as planned under the umbrella of KYCUK. The project was led from the beginning of 2011 till the end of 2012 by Maj (Retd) Padam Bahadur Limbu, MVO and assisted by Maj (Retd) Dil Limbu and Bhuwani Pandhak. The assistant coordinator for the project was Mr Dev Angbuhang. Maj (Retd) Chitraj Hukpa Chongbang MVO, MBE, has been leading the project from 2014. There is no doubt that the Chumlung Him UK will play a vital role in the continuation and preservation of Limbu religion and culture in the UK.

Religion, culture, festivals, and language in the UK

As stated earlier, the religion of Limbu people is Kirat, which is based on the Mundhum. The Mundhum is an oral scripture which to the Limbu people is equivalent to the Veda and Bible. Limbu priests of various types – Phedangma, Yeba/Yema, and Samba – who are believed to be chosen by God, can recite the Mundhum automatically with minimum guidance by those who are already performing their duties in the community. In the recent past Limbu scholars such as Til Bikram Nembang (Birangi Kainla) and others, have recorded oral Mundhum from Phedangma, Yeba/Yema and

Samba and transcribed it. But many segments of the Mundhum are still only available in oral performance and are very likely to become extinct if not recorded soon. It is hoped that the KYCUK will take the initiative to help save such historic information.

In the Limbu community the Kirat religion is practised in two ways: in one side it is practised as prescribed and overseen by the Phedangma, Yeba/Yema and Samba shamanic priests and on the other side, there is a tradition called Satyehangma. Phalgunanda Lingden, an ex-Gurkha Sergeant of the 7th Gurkha Rifles (7 GR), initiated the practice of the Kirat religion under the name of Satyehangma in 1931. To avoid arrest and imprisonment and to protect the Satyehangma sect, he used all means and tactics throughout his life. The Satyehangma religious centre is in Larumba, Ilam. The Government declared Mahaguru Phalgunanda Lingden as one of the National Heroes (Rastriya Vibhooti) of Nepal in 2009. Aatmananda Lingden is the present Supreme Guru of the Satyehangma. Both groups use Mundhum as a guiding philosophy. But in the Satyehangma, anyone can take training and become a guru. It is not necessary to get special power from the God Tageraningwaphuma. Mr Birdhoj Angbuhang is a Phedangma based in Farnborough and carries out birth, death and other rituals throughout the UK. (Other Phedangmas in the UK are: Mr Raiprasad Hukpa Chongbang, Mr Lilabahadur Phombo, Mr Padambahadur Angbong and Yambahadur Thebe). Mr Ramkumar Thebe, a trained Sabdi Guru of Satyehangma sect based in Swindon does the same thing throughout the country. The first group, following shamanic practices, sacrifice animals as part of their worship. The second group (following Satyehangma) do not sacrifice animals and prefer vegetarianism. Nonetheless, both groups are working towards preserving and practising the Kirat religion in the UK. Limbus in the UK practise their religion more or less to a similar ways as they do in their native land, Yakthung Laje.

In Limbu religion and culture, a woman inherits deities from her mother when she marries. The birth and death rituals vary by gender. Following a birth, the naming ceremony (Yangdangphogma in Limbu and Nwaran in Nepali) takes place after 3 days for a baby girl and after 4 days for a baby boy. Limbu people bury their dead. A death rite for female is 3 days after the death and after 4 days for the male. The death rites process takes place in a chronological order as

follows: handover of death soul to ancestors (Samsama), mourning (Netma), purifying (Khauma) and segregation between dead and living (Mikwa Sangma).



Photo source: KYCUK 2011

Plate 37.4: Hakpare Samlo competition: 2011 Sisekpa Tangnam, Ashford

The Limbus in the UK celebrate Chasok Tangnam, Kakphekwa Tangnam, Yakwa-phongma and Balihang Tangnam at local level and Sisekpa Tangnam at national level. The national festival takes place in the month of July because it is the summer season with longer and warmer days, which is suitable for the large scale gathering. The KYCUK coordinates and manages the Sisekpa Tangnam celebration centrally in London. Every year, around 5,000 Yakthungbas, Yakthungmas and samenchha-ha (Limbu, Limbunis, children and grandchildren) gather in their traditional dress and ornaments to celebrate Sisekpa Tangnam. The Limbu people often express that the programme gets full of Limbu flavour. It helps them to restore happiness after meeting families and friends. They sense a kind of satisfaction and relief from loneliness and stress.

Dances such as Kelang (Chyabrungr nach), Yarang (Dhan nach) and Hakpare samlo (Hakpare git) (Plate 37.4) are shown in the branch-wise competition which takes place every year. Mainly the younger generation is found to be keen in taking part in the competitions, which have played a vital role in making them understand the values of their native culture.

In the context of the language, the Limbu people have their own script called 'Sirijonga' which was believed to be created by the King Sirijonga in the 9th century. Teongsi Singthebe of Khoyang, Tellok (Yangwarak), Taplejung is believed to have taken written scripts away to Sikkim to hide safely from Gorkhali invaders. Some of the original writings of Teongsi Singthebe are available for photocopying at the British Library, London. Limbus of Sikkim played a vital role in preserving and further developing the Limbu language in the aftermath of the Gorkhali-Limbu war. Currently, the Limbu language is taught up to Master's degree level in Sikkim. Unfortunately, Limbus of Nepal have given up reading and writing the Sirijonga script. Instead they started learning Nepali and adopted the Hindu religion to avoid arrests and imprisonments. Despite persecutions, ex-Gurkha Sergeant Phalgunanda Lingden started reading and writing Sirijonga scripts in the areas of Ilam and Panchthar. He even opened a couple of schools, but the Rana Government banned them. He was summoned by the Rana regime but was later released. After the restoration of democracy in Nepal in 1990, the Government of Nepal permitted the official use of the Sirijonga script in the country. The Constitution of Nepal 2015 has endorsed Limbu language as one of the national languages. Currently, Curriculum Development Centre of Nepal is developing curriculum for grades 6–8. However, no Limbu language teachers have been employed by the Government until today.

In the UK, under the coordination of the Limbuwan Study Centre, a Limbu dictionary is being edited and published by Harkajang Limbu and Gambhirdhoj Tambahangphe. The majority of the first-generation Limbus in the UK can speak their language. However, only a few of them can read and write Srijonga script. A brief Limbu language teaching course was conducted in 2014 in Ashford under the teaching and supervision of Mr Ganesh Ijam. The course was funded by the KYCUK Ashford Branch. This kind of practice needs to be continued with the involvement of KYCUK local branches, otherwise the Limbu language will soon be history in the UK.

Education

Concept of Limbuwan University

Immediately after the inception of the KYCUK in the 2003, members of the KYCUK carried out two brainstorming sessions in 2004 for the possibility of establishing a Limbuwan University in

Nepal. One of the sessions was also attended by Bairangi Kainla while he was in London. In 2005 KYCUK came to the conclusion that they should seek to establish a Limbuwan Study Centre in order to preserve culture, religion, language and develop capacity of the Limbu people in general and the Limbus living in the Limbuwan area in particular. In this process, the KYCUK came up with a model of Limbuwan Academy in 2006. Further meetings and discussions under the chairmanship of Mr Siriprasad Limbu (2004–2008), the KYCUK came up with a concept of the Limbuwan University in 2007. To share and discuss the concept, Mr Arjun Nugo, who was a Lecturer of Trichandra College and the Central Chairman of KYC, was invited to the UK. It was decided to open Limbuwan Study Centre in Kathmandu. One of its envisaged roles was to act as a steering body for the establishment of the Limbuwan University. Two locations were earmarked for the 'Proposed Limbuwan University'. The first choice is Menchhyandhap, Guppha Pokhari (Plate 37.5), a Limbu historical place, which is naturally beautiful, surrounded by the world renowned rhododendron forest of the Tinjure Milke range at an altitude of 3,000m (9480 ft.). This is also a junction of Tehrathum, Sankhuwashabha, and Taplejung districts, with a motor road to access the site. Thus the location is suitable from all points of view. The second choice is Nagi of Panchthar District, which is also accessible by motor, but it is located towards Sikkim and could cater the Limbus of Sikkim as well.



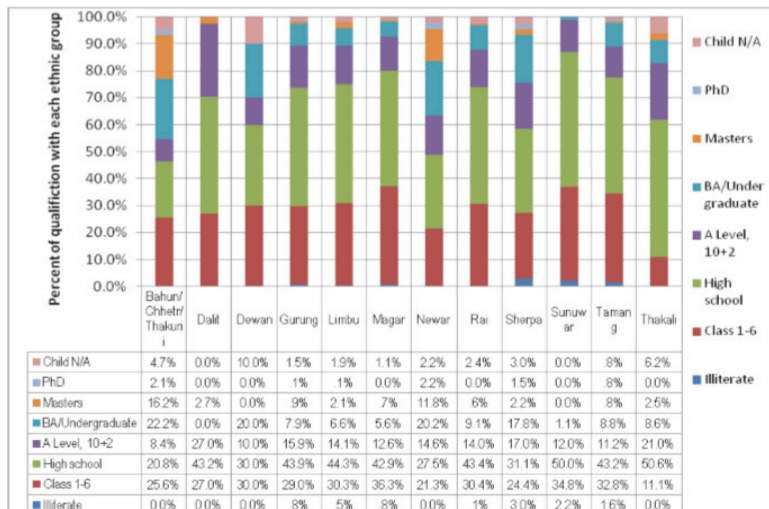
Photo source: www.rapnepal.com

Plate 37.5: Land earmarked for the proposed Limbuwan University, Menchhyandhap, Guppha Pokhari.

In 2007 KYCUK sent Dr Chandra Laksamba to Kathmandu to hold a meeting with Limbu public figures and to discuss about the concept of the Limbuwan University. A meeting was organised at Chumlung Lalitpur and the meeting was attended by the KYC Central Chairman Mr Arjun Nugo, Secretary Mr Ekraj Limbu, Dr Chaitanya Subba, Mr Manjul Yakthungba, Maj. (Retd.) late Deoman Limbu and Mr Uttam Sing Thangden. The meeting accepted the concept of the 'Proposed Limbuwan University' and agreed to open Limbuwan Study Centre at Chumlung Lalitpur. At the meeting, Dr Laksamba handed over Rs 396,000, provided by the KYCUK, to the KYC Central Chairman Arjun Nugo, for the 'Civic Awareness (Janjagaran)' programme. The aim of the programme was to make the Limbu community aware about the identity, language, religion, culture, citizens' rights, capacity building, and the role of the proposed Limbuwan University.

Educational achievements in the UK

Limbu people are doing well in terms of education in the UK. For instance, the following first generation Limbus in the UK achieved PhDs, Master's, and Graduate Degrees namely: Dr Chandra Laksamba (PhD 2005, University of Surrey, he was with the University of Oxford from 2009 to 2012 as a researcher, most probably the first researcher affiliated to Oxford from the Limbu community and the first PhD of Laksamba, Laksam, and Laktam family); Dr Ramnarayan Kandangwa (PhD 2009, Tribhuvan University); Mr Dev Angbohang (BA Hons, MSc Criminology 2015, London Metropolitan University); Mr Rakam Limbu (BSc Hons Sociology 2013, University of Surrey); Capt (Retd) Bhakta Limbu (BSc Nursing, University of Southampton); Mr Mijas Tembe (BA Hons 2015, Open University); Maj. (Retd.) Padam Limbu MVO (MCGI City & Guilds Professional Award Level 7 equivalent to MA); Maj. (Retd.) Dil Limbu (MCGI City & Guilds); Maj. (Retd.) Bhuwani Limbu (GCGI City & Guilds Professional Award Level 6 equivalent to BA Hons); Capt. (Retd.); Purnaprasad Limbu (GCGI City & Guilds), Lt. (Retd.); Siriprasad Limbu (GCGI City & Guilds); Mrs Prem Kumari Maden (MSc in Finance); Mrs Kamala Limbu (BSc Hons Nursing); Mrs Ashis Tambahangphe (BSc Nursing); and Mrs Ambika Sambahangphe Maden (BSc Hons Bio-Science). All are ex-Gurkhas or their spouses, with the exception of Mijas Tembe, who is still in the army.



Source: C. Laksamba, L. Dhakal, J. Holford (2012), 'Education and Employment', in K. Adhikari (ed) *Nepalis in the United Kingdom: An Overview*, 69 - 90, Reading: CNSUK

Figure 37.2: Educational qualifications of Nepalis in the UK by sub-ethnicity

The Limbus who have migrated from Hong Kong have also successfully pursued higher degrees in the UK. For example, Mr Purna Loksam MSc, now pursuing a PhD in Economics from the University of Cambridge and Mr Khusi Limbu, who achieved BSc Hons and MSc in Criminology from the University of Surrey. Mr Uttar Tigela is a solicitor, Mr Prem Suhang and Mr Tek Suhang achieved ACCA degrees and both are accountants in London.

In the field of medicine, Dr Phauda Raj Thebe is a Senior Consultant Pathologist at Kent Hospital. He is also a former chairperson of the Nepalese Doctors Association UK (NDA UK). Dr Beena Subba Thebe is a Senior Consultant Gynaecologist at the Middlesex University Hospital and the current president of the NDA UK. Dr Gurans Lawati is a Consultant Psychiatrist.

Performance of the Limbu second generation in higher education in the UK seems promising. Figure 37.2 reflects the education progress of Limbus second generation in the UK. For instance, Angshumonik Angbohang, has BSc Hons, and MSc (now a PhD final year student in Retinal Stem Cell, University College London); Saurav Limbu (a PhD student in Electronic Physics,

Imperial College London); Yojana Laksamba (MSc Finance and Accounting – Distinction, ACCA); Sabit Thebe (MSc London School of Economics – LSE, UK, MBA Columbia University, USA); Yugal Angbo (BEng Hons Civil Engineering, MSc Structural Engineering); Roshan Yongya (BSc Hons, MSc Operational Research and Applied Statistics); Shamsar Chemjong (BSc Hons, MEng Civil); Sheila Limbu (BSc Hons, MA); Bhuwan Bokhim (BEng, MEng); Sabina Limbu (BSc Hons, MSc); Sangita Thebe (BSc Hons, MSc LSE); Sushma Limbu (BSc Hons, ACCA); Chinari Libang (BBA, BSc Hons Applied Accounting, ACCA); Khagendra Bhega (BSc Hons, MSc Renewable Energy and Resource Management); Binaya Limbu (BSc Hons, MEng Aeronautics and Astronautics); Narendra Limbu Jabegu (MEng); Sanjog Limbu (MEng); Astha Laksamba (MPharm); Selvia Limbu (MPharm); and Prabin Limbu (MEng). I have sought to list all those who have Master's degrees or above, but there could still be a few missing. The majority of them have also secured employment in their areas of their expertise. There are about 30 Limbu students currently pursuing their postgraduate degrees.

Approximately 70 per cent of the second-generation Limbus have completed a Bachelor's degree in different disciplines, including medicine and engineering. The majority of them are employed in their areas of studies. There are currently 21 persons working in the NHS as doctors, including 14 female junior medical doctors. They are qualified in the UK or in other Asian countries. However, none of them has reached the position of consultant yet.

In addition to the above, Jinita Pandhak Limbu is the first Limbu solicitor in the UK and is currently practicing in London. Samana Chemjong is the first Limbu secondary-level mathematics teacher in London. Basanta Laksamba is a police officer in Hampshire Constabulary (the first Limbu police officer in the UK). Yugal Angbo, who is a second generation Limbu, is an Officer in the British Army, commissioned from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, and currently serves in the Royal Electronic and Mechanical Engineers (REME). Saujan Pandhak Limbu is a freelance blogger, who writes news, features, and blogs under the name of 'Lex Limbu' and is currently doing his Master's degree in Tourism, Environment and Development at King's College, London.

Sports

In 2008 KYCUK started a football cup in the name of the first Kirat King Yalambar Susuwa Lilim Yakthunghang which is known as

'Yalambar Cup'. Capt. (Retd.) Bombahadur Limbu, who was the chairman of KYCUK (2008–2010), is the founder of the Yalambar Cup. Now the Yalambar Cup has been established as one of the major events within the Nepali community in the UK. The KYCUK coordinates and runs the event every year in April in London.



Plate 37.6: Yalambar Cup 2016

In 2016 a total of 27 teams took part in the event. The event has definitely created a positive environment for social integration within the diverse Nepali ethnic communities in the UK. The event has also introduced the first Kirat King Yalambar to the second-generation Nepalis who grew up in the UK and may have limited knowledge about Nepali history.

In addition, the KYCUK also established the Yalambar Badminton Cup in 2013. Its founding coordinator is Mr Dilsing Menyangbo (Limbu) who is also the current senior Vice Chairman of the KYCUK. KYCUK runs the Yalambar Badminton Cup tournament every year. It is open to all Nepali communities in the UK, and has played a pivotal role in creating a conducive environment for social cohesion and integration within the Nepali community. The event also generates revenue, which KYCUK spends on the social welfare of Limbu people globally.

Conclusion

The facts and figures presented above clearly show that the cultural, social, and economic capitals accumulated by the Limbu people in the UK look promising. It seems that the Limbu community's progress in the UK is positive and moving upward. In this sense, we

can say that knowledge is not caste, class, or community-based. It is achievable by all. It requires interest and determination as well as equal access to opportunities.

Contributor:

Dr Laksamba is a founder of the CNSUK, where he worked as its Executive Director and senior researcher. He was also founding advisor to the KYCUK. He was an Adjunct Professor at the Nepal Open University.

Notes:

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Section G: Gurkha Rights Campaigns in the UK

बेलायतमा चलेका गोर्खा अधिकारका
अभियानहरू

38

Battlefields to Civvy Street: Gurkhas' Struggles in Britain

Dr Chandra K. Laksamba

Introduction

"Bravest of the brave, most generous of the generous, never had a country more faithful friends than you" - Sir Ralph Turner MC.¹

Engraved in the memorial statue for the Gurkhas in London, the above remark, delivered by Professor Sir Ralph Turner, Military Cross (MC), in 1931, clearly articulates Gurkhas' skill in combat and their loyalty to the British crown, country and people. Gurkhas have served in the British and Indian Armies since 1815. A Nepali citizen may only become a Gurkha soldier after passing a tough selection process and facing fierce competition, followed by successfully achieving a soldiering education and qualification. As the saying goes, 'Better to die than be a coward' (*kantar hunu bhanda marnu niko*) is the motto of Gurkhas, which, has been demonstrated by the achievement of the 13 Victoria Crosses (VCs, the highest military decoration of the United Kingdom), won by Gurkha soldiers in the two World Wars and the Borneo confrontation. In a more recent example, Sergeant Dip Prasad Pun won the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross (CGC) in 2011 during the ongoing Afghanistan conflict.

Many Gurkha soldiers have been awarded the Military Cross (MC), second to the VC and CGC, in two great wars and conflicts such as the Malaysian emergency, the Borneo confrontation and the contemporary Afghanistan conflict. Around half a dozen MCs have been awarded to

Gurkha soldiers during the course of the ongoing Afghanistan conflict alone. British Gurkhas have fought in the aforementioned battles as well as in the Falklands, Iraq, Kosovo, Bosnia, East Timor and Sierra Leone; they are considered an integral part of the British Army. An estimated 43,000 Nepalis lost their lives in the two World Wars while serving in the Gurkha Regiments (Cawthorne, 2009, HQBGN, 2009); many more have died in other battles.

In the last decade, there have been many changes in the British Government's policies relating to the Gurkhas. Because of the (partial) success of campaigns for fair treatment to Gurkhas, that is, on a par with their British counterparts, retired Gurkhas have started to migrate and settle in the UK. This great transformation in Gurkhas' position in British society has challenged the conventional wisdom that held them akin (in *de facto* terms) to 'mercenary', and instated them, for the first time, as 'citizenry'. The scope of this Chapter is not to explain why Nepalis fought so loyally for a country that they were not originally citizens of, but to discuss the changing identities of Gurkhas themselves. Much literature exists on the military history of Gurkhas (for example, Caplan, 1995; Gould, 2000) but very little is written about their recent struggles and changing positions. Therefore, the aim here is to explore the simple account of Gurkhas in relation to their recent struggles for justice in their newly founded home, Britain, and to contribute to an understanding about them in this changed context.

This chapter draws on the data of 2008 large-scale survey of Nepali diaspora in the United Kingdom conducted by the Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNSUK) as well as on secondary and media sources about Gurkhas in Great Britain. In addition, the chapter draws on ethnographic data collected through interviews, observation and participation in discussions about the current problems and prospects of former British Gurkhas in the UK. The chapter is presented in three sections: historical background; recent Gurkha campaigns and achievements; and discussions of current policy issues.

Historical background

In order to understand the situation of retired Gurkhas in the UK at present, it is important to have a perspective on the historical background of Gurkha recruitment in Nepal. The history of the British

Gurkhas starts towards the end of Anglo-Nepali war (1814 – 1816), when Major General David Ochterlony, one of the commanders of the British East India Company's Army, proposed forming a Gurkha Regiment.² General Ochterlony noticed good soldiering qualities in Nepali people: they seemed to have exceptionally high endurance, determination, will power and natural fighting capabilities, even with minimal resources and logistical support (Caplan, 1995). In consideration of these vital warfare abilities and qualities, General Ochterlony formed a regiment from Nepali Prisoners of War (PoW) in early April 1815, which later became the 1st King George's Own Gurkha Rifles/Nasiri Regiment (Gould, 2000). For a long time, the Nepal Government had adopted a policy forbidding the recruitment of Nepalis by British India, at least inside Nepal. This was partly due to suspicions about the intentions of the English, who had entered India for trade but later ended up raising a local army and usurping state as well as financial powers. However, later the government of Nepal was convinced to allow the recruitment of soldiers from Nepal.

The recruitment of Gurkhas continued unabated, forming Gurkha Battalions, which reached twenty battalions on the eve of the First World War, a century after the first regiment was formed (Caplan, 1995). Gurkhas went on to fight the First and Second World Wars; internal conflicts in British India, including the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58; and external conflicts that reflected British interests in multiple places around the world, proving their loyalty beyond all doubt. Even the Prime Minister of Nepal Shree Teen Maharajah Jang Bahadur Rana agreed that Gurkhas should fight in certain cases: Nepal took part in the relief of Lucknow when he personally commanded 12 Nepal Army regiments to intervene (HQBGN, 2009).

During the First World War, about 120,000 Gurkha soldiers fought for the British Empire in Europe and in the Middle East and were awarded more than 2,000 bravery medals, commendation letters and certificates (Parker, 1999). Eight out of the twenty battalions of Gurkha soldiers were deployed in Flanders, Belgium and Neuve Chapelle (Northwest France) in 1914–15; the Gurkhas were the first British units to break the German Line at Neuve Chapelle (Fleethants.com, 2000). Additionally, 16,000 Nepali army

soldiers served in Indian Territories during the First World War. The whole Nepal Army was placed at the disposal of the British Crown (HQBGN, 2009).

In the Second World War, forty-five Gurkha Battalions of about 131,000 Gurkha soldiers took part in front line battle. Again the entire Nepal Army was placed at the disposal of the British Crown. Further, eight Nepal Army Regiments served in India. The Nepal Army Brigade deployed in Burma fought the battle of Imphal with distinction. Furthermore, the Nepal Government donated money to Britain for the purchase of arms and equipment and relief for the war sufferers (*ibid*). In two World Wars, in addition to the approximately 43,000 Nepalis killed in action, thousands disappeared without any trace and thousands suffered casualties and disabilities. And, yet Gurkhas were noted for their efforts: "During the Second World War alone Gurkhas won over 2,700 decorations for bravery, Mentions In Despatches (MID), or gallantry certificates" (House of Commons, 1989: x cited in Caplan, 1995: 135).

In 1947, two years after the end of the World War II, India gained independence from the British Raj. In the process of handing over power to India, the British Government decided to take four Gurkha infantry regiments to Malaysia, namely: 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles, 6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles, 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles and 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles (Gould, 2000; Sinha, 2008). Over time, other support units were formed by the British Army in the course of military operations in Malaysia, Borneo and Hong Kong. The four infantry regiments were amalgamated and formed as 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions, The Royal Gurkha Rifles, in 1994. The 3rd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles was disbanded in 1996 in Church Crookham, UK and amalgamated with the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles, based in Brunei.

In current service are two infantry battalions; three support units, namely, The Queen's Gurkha Engineers (QGE), The Queen's Gurkha Signals (QGS) and The Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment (QOGLR); three independent companies and the Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas. All units are based in the UK except for one infantry battalion, which is based in Brunei. A total of 3,570 Gurkhas are currently serving in the British Army.³

In order to continue the recruitment process of Nepali citizens into the Indian and British Armies, a Memorandum of Understanding known as the Tripartite Agreement (TPA) was signed on 11 November 1947 by Britain, India and Nepal. The TPA endorsed the recruitment policy, terms and conditions for Nepali citizens who wished to join the Indian and British Armies, as the *Sugauli Treaty* of 1816 had covered neither the recruitment of Nepali citizens into the East India Company's Army nor the terms of their pay, pension or welfare (Caplan, 1995). Before 1947, the pay and pension of Gurkhas was worked out locally by the British Indian Army; it was only the TPA that clearly stated that equal treatment should be given to Nepali citizens who joined the British and Indian Armed Forces. India has treated the Indian Gurkhas in accordance with the TPA and they receive pay, pension and welfare facilities equal to Indian citizens.

In the case of British Gurkhas, the TPA has always been interpreted and applied by the Headquarters Brigade of Gurkhas (HQBG), a branch of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) UK, as per its convenience. In order to elucidate its position, the HQBG published a number of policy documents: 'Gurkha Pay and Pension Manual' and 'Hong Kong Command Pay Office Instruction' worked out a different rate of pay and pension and 'Brigade of Gurkhas Standing Instruction (BGSi) and Brigade of Gurkhas Manning and Records Office Instruction (BGMROI)' devised separate rules and regulations for British Gurkhas. These policies put into place an inferior standard of treatment to Gurkhas in terms of pay and benefits. When the British handed over Hong Kong to China, the British Government implemented another policy that discriminated between Gurkhas and other British soldiers without the knowledge of the Nepal Government and ignoring the norms and value of the TPA.

The recent British Government policy on Gurkhas divides them into two groups: Gurkhas who joined the British Army on and before 30 June 1997, and those who joined after. This division was again engineered to indirectly prevent Gurkhas from equal pay and pension. The Gurkhas who joined the British Army on and before 30 June 1997 have been further divided into two groups, based on year of retirement: those who retired before 30 June 1997 (known as

pre 1997) and those who retired after that date (post 1997). Those who retired before 1997 receive pensions under the Gurkha Pay and Pension Scheme (GPS), which is far less than the amount their British comrades and Commonwealth Citizens counterparts receive. Pre-1997 Gurkhas are not allowed to transfer their pension from GPS to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS). Under the Gurkha Offer to Transfer (GOTT), Gurkhas who retired after 1997 are allowed to join the AFPS, but only fraction of their service period is counted by ranks for pension purposes: 36% of Riflemen and Lance Corporals; 30% of Corporals; 29% of Sergeants; 28% of Captains; 27% of Staff Sergeants, Warrant Officers 2 and Lieutenants; 26% of Warrant Officers 1; and 23% of Majors (percentages are of total Hong Kong based services.)

Overall, the British Government's frequent unilateral changes to the TPA for its convenience combined with its failure to amend the archaic instrument in line with changed realities have weakened its relevance as a trilateral agreement. However, recent court rulings and subsequent UK Government policies on Gurkha benefits have made some fundamental changes to the original terms of the TPA. The long standing inferior pay, pension and benefits to Gurkhas as compared to their fellow servicemen spread a wide discontentment among Gurkhas and their British supporters. Retired Gurkhas started an organised struggle demanding a change in the situation: over the last two decades, various Gurkha organisations have emerged and the Gurkha campaign for justice started to grow, managing to make some gains. In the next section, an account of this campaign and a review of the present situation are presented.

Recent Gurkhas' campaigns and achievements

Before 1990, all Nepalis retired from military services in different countries (including Gurkhas) were part of a state-sponsored occupational organisation (*bargiya sangathan*) called Nepal Bhutpurbak Sainik Sangh that was designed to build and extend support to the Panchayat political system, headed by the monarch. The movement for democracy of 1990 played a vital role in inspiring ex-British Gurkhas to begin an organised struggle for their own cause as they had participated actively in the movement. As part of the larger movement, they were inspired by the instrumental

role that organisations could play in the fight against injustice. This inspiration coupled with the conducive environment created by the new democratic dispensation in Nepal paved the way for ex-Gurkhas' fight for justice.

As a result, in 1990, Gurkha Ex-Servicemen's Organisation (GAESO) emerged. Political parties attempted to exert influence and politicise trade union groups and civil society institutions. Around the same time, Nepal Ex-Servicemen's Association (NESA), and later in the 1990s Nepal Ex-Servicemen Organisation (NESO) emerged. While GAESO continued with its campaign for Gurkha rights, the other two groups did not evolve equally and had limited roles. Initially, NESA opted to pursue diplomatic means to solve the Gurkhas' pay and pension issues, and mainly concentrated its activities in Kathmandu. Similarly, another organisation, NESO, initially carried out small scale activities in Kathmandu. These two organisations have remained relatively quiet since then.

In the early 1990s, GAESO started building organisational support across the country mainly in Sunsari, Damak, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Pokhara and Chitwan, as these areas are densely populated by Gurkhas. GAESO opened several branch offices, and adopted a multi-pronged strategy by launching mass protests, legal actions and diplomatic pressures to create an effective 'Gurkha Justice' movement. In 1997, GAESO presented a petition to the British Government through the British Embassy in Kathmandu. A delegation team comprised of Members of Parliament, Intellectuals, Lawyers and GAESO members came to London to meet and discuss Gurkha issues with the British Government. In addition, GAESO championed the issues by protesting at local, national and international levels. GAESO also tried to file the case with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Geneva in 2001.

At the same time, in 2001, GAESO started to liaise with ex-Gurkhas as well as with solicitors in the UK to explore the possibility of litigation. Eventually, on 8 May 2002, GAESO filed two cases, one for pay and pension, and the other for compensation to Japanese Prisoners of War (PoW), at the High Court in London. The court hearing of the PoW case took place first as a matter of urgency. The PoW case was an argument for compensation to the Second World War Gurkha veterans who were subjected to the inhuman

treatment of the Japanese while they were captives. The MoD denied any claims for compensation by classifying Gurkhas before 1947 as part of the Indian Army, not the British. The High Court ruled in favour of the Gurkhas' claims, nullifying MoD's stance as illogical and contradictory to the principle of equality. As a result of this ruling, the surviving PoWs were given a compensation of £10,000 per person (The Telegraph, 2002; Macdonald *et al.*, 2005). A total of 1,550 Second World War Gurkha veterans claimed the compensation.⁴

GAESO had to wait until 2003 for the High Court hearing on equal pay and pension. Former Gurkha Hari Thapa had filed a case in 1998 against racial discrimination on pay and pension. Thapa was born in 1961 while his parents were stationed in the UK but he grew up in Nepal. He later joined the British Gurkhas himself, married a British Nurse and settled in Wales. His hearing took place in 2002. At the time of the hearing, he received a pension of £58 a month, while an ex-soldier with a British or Commonwealth background and a similar service history would have received £500 a month (BBC, 2002). The MoD's lawyer, Mr Rabindra Singh QC, argued that 80 percent of Thapa's total service had been outside Great Britain; as a result, he could not qualify for the pension equal to other British soldiers. The tribunal decided that they did not have jurisdiction over his complaint, as he had been stationed for most of his service in Hong Kong and in the jungles of Brunei and Belize. But the Gurkhas refused to buy this argument as they had served 'in Hong Kong and in the jungles of Brunei and Belize' in the command and interest of the British Government. On the contrary, Sandhurst commissioned Gurkha Officers, who joined the British Army under the same terms and conditions, regardless 80 percent of their service outside Great Britain would still qualify for full pay and pension.

The GAESO's pay and pension case hearing finally took place from 18 to 21 February 2003 at the UK High Court in London. The case qualified for legal aid, but lost at both the High Court and in the Appellate Court of the UK. After the failure of legal action in the UK, GAESO concentrated its activities in Nepal and Hong Kong until 2006.

Around 2002, the Gurkha Study and Research Centre was formed. In 2005, it became United British Gurkhas Nepal (UBGN) in

Nepal and in 2007 it became United British Gurkha Ex-servicemen's Association (UBGEA) in the UK. The UBGN filed a case for equal pension and compensation at the Supreme Court of Nepal in 2006, but again, the outcome was not positive. Nevertheless, the UBGN never gave up its campaign, maintaining its activities in Nepal and later in the UK.

In 2004, the British Gurkha Welfare Society (BGWS) was founded by Gurkhas in the UK. Its highest priority was establishing the rights of Gurkhas to settle in the UK, followed by the pay, pension and welfare of both serving and Ex-Gurkhas. BGWS has adopted both diplomatic (and political) means and legal action for their fight for Gurkhas rights. In order to accelerate the campaign for settlement rights, in 2004 BGWS organised meetings, gatherings and workshops. Members lobbied politicians, media and British people to make the case clear and to try and build support. On 1 September 2004, it called for a demonstration in front of the Home Office in Liverpool, and about three thousand British supporters and well wishers from England, Wales and Scotland came, holding placards and banners to welcome and support the Gurkhas' campaign. Seeing such respect and support of British people, the Director of the Home Office of the time remarked, *'British people in general oppose foreigners' requests of migration in the UK. But in the case of Gurkhas, people from Scotland, Wales and England have come all the way in Liverpool to show their support and solidarity for Gurkhas' settlement campaign which is very interesting and different.'*¹⁵

In addition, the Daily Express (newspaper) launched a support campaign. In September 2004, it published a 'voting chit' requesting British people to sign and send it to BGWS to show their support for the settlement campaign. BGWS handed over 10 full Royal Mail sacs of 'voting chits' to the Prime Minister Tony Blair at 10 Downing street. The same month, the Liberal Democrats Party (Lib Dems) gave a forum to BGWS during their conference in Bournemouth. The Chairman of BGWS delivered a very effective and emotional speech, which was broadcasted and published by a number of media companies, including BBC World. It had had an enormous impact in making the case known and in building support from the public.

Soon after, Prime Minister Tony Blair announced a change of immigration policy for the Gurkhas. On 30 September 2004, new legislation stated that "Gurkhas discharged from the British Army in Nepal on or after 1 July 1997 and with at least 4 years' service with the British Army would be able to apply for settlement in the UK" (Home Office 2010). In Nepal, His Majesty's Government sent a letter of approval to the British Government, noting the change in British immigration policy for Gurkhas. In addition, the Home Office granted settlement visas to a small number of Gurkhas, their spouses and their dependents (under the age of 18), who had come to the UK and applied for visa through other channels.

But this victory was just the beginning. In the ongoing campaign for justice, members of UBGN including Capt. (Retired) Rambahadur Limbu VC (who won his VC in the Borneo Confrontation) travelled from Nepal to London to protest against unfair treatment of the Gurkhas. UBGN carried out a protest march in London on 20 May 2006. In 2006 and 2007, organisations for the rights of former Gurkhas (mainly GAESO, BGWS and UBGN) increased lobbying and pressure for Gurkha issues, such as pay and pension discrimination and lack of settlement rights, with government authorities and political leaders, both in Nepal and in the UK.

The 'campaign for justice' moved ahead but organizers realised that there was no synergy among these various efforts: former Gurkhas had divided into camps, in spite of having no substantial differences in their main demands. In order to unite and solidify the movement, the Gurkha Forum was created in 2007. The Gurkha Forum coordinated many meetings and workshops with the goal of creating a conducive environment in which to form a single united platform. As part of this process, the Forum coordinated a joint protest in front of Parliament, where 'hundreds of retired Gurkhas' from across the country gathered to show their discontent, followed by a protest march (BBC, 2008). Leaders of Gurkha organisations jointly handed a petition to Prime Minister Gordon Brown.⁶ Another remarkable action taken by the Gurkha Forum was returning Gurkhas' hard earned medals to the government as a way of protesting unequal treatment of Gurkhas with regard to pension and settlement rights. Within a year, the Gurkha Forum carried out a

number of historical actions in support of the Gurkha campaign for justice; the Forum was dissolved in 2008.

In 2008, three former Gurkha soldiers independently challenged the legality of the British Government's unequal (23 to 36%) pension policy. But they lost the case and their application for judicial review was rejected.

On 30 September 2008, however, ruling on the settlement case filed by the GAESO, the High Court in London finally directed the government to change its immigration policy by allowing settlement rights to Gurkhas who had retired before 1 July 1997. The settlement campaign was supported by all individual Gurkhas, and it was championed by UK celebrity Joana Lumley, a daughter of an Ex-Officer of 6th Gurkha Rifles. During the Second World War, Lumley's father had worked with Gurkhas in a battle in Burma (in which a Gurkha, late Tulbahadur Pun, had won a VC in 1944).

This time, the government had a double defeat: first in the court, and then in voting on a new Liberal Democrats opposition-led motion in the Houses of Parliament. Following the earlier direction of (and endorsement from) Parliament on 21 May 2009, the British Government announced that all Gurkhas who had served 4 years or more in the British Army since the partition of Britain and India (1947) were also allowed to settle in the UK. This decision benefitted all Gurkhas and their widows, especially those who had been made redundant without pension after the Malaysian Emergency and the Borneo Confrontation in the 1960s and early 70s. They are now entitled to full pension credit and housing benefits in the UK as they have all reached the UK pension age and were not previously granted pensions. There was much jubilation for the victory of Gurkhas on such a scale, but the issue of equal pensions still remains unresolved.

Despite having won the right to live in Britain, Gurkhas who joined the Army on or before 30 June 1997 received only a third of the pension received by their British comrades and Commonwealth counterparts. BGWS filed a case at the High Court in London. Neither the High Court nor the Supreme Court decisions came down in favour of the Gurkhas, and an appeal was not allowed. On 20 June 2011, BGWS moved to the European Court of Human Rights, Strasbourg, as a last legal battle for equal pensions for Nepali servicemen who

joined the British Gurkhas on or before 30 June 1997. In this case again, BGWS has opted to use both diplomatic/political means and legal action.⁷

In the ongoing equal pension and compensation campaign, UBGN became UBGEA in order to contextualise and carry out its activities more effectively in the UK. In July 2011, UBGEA launched a signature campaign since 1 July 2011 to put pressure on the Government by means of the public voice and support, and to initiate a fresh debate on pension discrimination.

BGAESO also is playing an active role both in Nepal and the UK. In Nepal, the BGAESO team is constantly pressing the Nepal Government to raise its voice on Gurkhas issues diplomatically. In the UK, BGAESO is working to bring individual and organisational Gurkha voices together in one place. To do so it publishes a paper called 'The Gurkha Voice and Aawaj', which is helping to inform, renew and revitalise the Gurkha debate.

The British Council of Gurkhas (BCG) is the youngest organisation of former Gurkhas, formed in the UK in 2011. The majority of its members are senior citizens, mainly Gurkha veterans made redundant without pensions after the Malayan Emergency and Borneo Confrontation. In September 2011, BCG had a meeting with Foreign Secretary William Hague to highlight the pension issue and request a political and diplomatic solution (The Gurkha Aawaj, 2011). The Council also briefed the Foreign Secretary about the Gurkha veterans who fought continuously for seven to eight years and were made redundant without pensions, and with a one-off payment of £300 per soldier only.

In light of the Gurkhas' ongoing activities and achievements, the next section discusses a number of social issues with implications for policies as well as for the ongoing Gurkha campaign.

Discussion of current policy issues

The historical background and the Gurkhas' movement for justice presented above highlights the achievements of the Gurkhas, with regard to both their historical capacity in combat and their current agenda to reverse long-held discrimination and exploitation. Ex-Gurkha organisations, namely GAESO, BGWS, UBGEA,

BGAESO, NESA, BCG, as well as individual Gurkha veterans have been campaigning for justice at varied levels since 1990.

Before discussing ongoing policy issues, let us reflect briefly on the Gurkha organisations themselves. Despite their divisions, Gurkha organisations are persistently working hard to different extents toward their collective mission. They seem to be standing on different grounds, often, depending on their political alignment. Thus, differences are vast in terms of organisational relationships, but very little in their stated objectives. Relationships between the groups often seem acrimonious: there are allegations and counter allegations involving: playing an agent of the establishment; politicising Gurkhas and their issues; extorting poor veterans; being corrupt; being regionalists; lacking professionalism and/or starting an organisation for the sake of name only. Some or all of these allegations could be real or assumed, but personality factors may equally be behind them. On occasion, they do raise a united voice and support each other's campaigns. For example, at individual levels, Gurkhas stood together in the run-up to the GAESO led successful campaign of 2009, and they are supporting the BGWS's legal action at the European Court and the UBGEA's signature campaign for equal pensions.

Despite the disunity, squabbling and self-centrism that emerges at times and that can be hurtful to members and supporters alike, the plurality of Gurkha organisations has not always been a harmful thing for the Gurkha campaign itself. The competition between groups has given rise to the desire to do something meaningful first to justify their very existence and relevance. Consequently, it may have had an incremental contribution to the Gurkha campaign. Whoever makes the effort, at the end of the day, the British Government's decisions and policies will affect all Gurkhas regardless of their organisational standing. Forging unity among them would be ideal, but if they cannot be united, the separate organisations are at least expected to govern themselves well and respect each other.

In the following sections, a brief reflection is made on: policy issues related to Gurkha migration and integration; the current economic crisis and its effects on Gurkhas; a number of alternative scenarios as far as solving contemporary issues for the Gurkhas; the

impact of recent changes on Gurkhas on Nepal; and the future of the Gurkha services.

As discussed above, in September 2004, the British Government introduced a new immigration rule that gave Gurkhas who retired on or after 1 July 1997 the right to settle in the UK. Gurkhas who had retired after this date started to settle in the UK in accordance with this change of policy, but a few Gurkhas who had retired before 1 July 1997 and their dependents also managed to get settlement visas, by coming to the UK and applying internally for the right to remain. Others were refused because they did not have 'enough ties' to the UK. The notion that they had a 'lack of ties' – despite serving the country and crown – was insulting. However, the issue was solved altogether when, on 21 May 2009, the British Government announced that all Gurkhas who had served 4 years or over in the British Army (since the partition of British Empire and India) were also allowed to settle in the UK. The recent grant of settlement visas and the resulting migration of Gurkhas to the UK has not only shifted the home of Gurkha organisations and individual Gurkhas from Nepal to the UK, but also added an extra strength to the ongoing struggle because it gave Gurkhas a close proximity with British people, such that Britons began to understand the issues surrounding Gurkha citizenships. Now it is believed that over half of the total number of ex-Gurkhas and their dependents have migrated in the UK.

As stated earlier, the CNSUK's large-scale survey of 2008 showed a total of 72,173 Nepalis in the UK, of whom over six in ten were Gurkhas and their dependants. Accounting for subsequent immigration, the number of Gurkhas and their families in the UK could be well over 55,000. After the 2009 ruling, the migration of Gurkhas includes many veterans and their spouses but very few dependent children. Gurkhas face a number of problems with bringing their sons and daughters to settle in the UK, as many are grown up and have already started independent lives. Additionally, dependent children over 18 years of age face age barriers to entering the UK.

The majority of newly arrived Gurkhas had mainly retired between 1950 and 1970, and they came straight to London, Hampshire, Berkshire, Surrey or Kent, where their relatives and

friends had already settled. Those who retired between 1971 and 1997 also came to the above-mentioned areas, as they had usually spent at least a few months (and sometimes a few years) in the UK during their service time. As a result, Gurkhas have mainly settled in these places but some have also spread in many other areas, including hundreds of towns in all four countries. The main counties in England in which Gurkhas have settled are: Hampshire, Kent, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Surrey, Essex, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Yorkshire and Greater London. In the case of Wales, Gurkhas and their dependents have mainly settled in Gwent. In Scotland, the majority of Gurkhas and their families have settled in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen.

Nonetheless, the process of migration and integration is not always straightforward: many differences are apparent in the social, cultural and religious backgrounds of migrants and the host communities. Ex-Gurkha organisations and local councils are trying their best to tackle these social issues, cultural differences and economic constraints, in order to make the integration process work. Gurkhas are generally welcomed anywhere in the UK, but their increasing concentration in the Rushmoor area, particularly in Aldershot, has raised alarm in some quarters of the community, where it has been argued that the social services have been overwhelmed by the Gurkha 'influx'. This view drew enormous attention after it was introduced and led by a local MP, Gerald Howarth, who is also a Government Minister. His recent view (publicised by several national and local media) is that Gurkhas should be 'dispersed' across the country like asylum seekers, in order to prevent or lessen the pressure generated by what he suggests is the Gurkhas' over-population in one area. His views have been unhelpful to the cause of Gurkhas: on the one hand, it has bred anti-Gurkha sentiments (such as the Facebook group called Lumley Legacy); on the other hand, it has angered many Gurkhas as they saw Howarth's remarks as a kind of plot against them led by an MP who was supposed to represent them. They are puzzled as to whether and how a 9,000-strong Nepali population, built over the course of many years, could be cast as unmanageable in a town that has a 100,000 population (Adhikari, 2011, Dewan, 2011,

Seddon, 2011). Furthermore, they are not clear about how and where the government resources on managing and integrating the Gurkha migrants have been mobilised. Nepali organisations

like the Greater Rushmoor Nepali Community, together with local councillors, are playing significant roles in managing the tensions and creating a cordial environment for Gurkhas to freely participate in building the local community. At a broader level of principle, this whole issue can be seen as an offshoot of the initial stage of migration, and it is hoped that these tensions will eventually subside and community relations will find an equilibrium.

To be sure, existing services such as health and housing face pressure when the rate of population rise is faster than normal, but the rise in the population due to Gurkhas' migration is not something that came as a surprise. It was anticipated and came with due deliberations. Measures were expected to be in place. However, the impact of the prolonged recession has had a negative impact in the whole range of government affairs, and the places where Gurkhas continued to settle were no exception. Rushmoor Borough faced an unprecedented level of budget shortfall as indicated by its Budget Book 2011/12 despite the rise in its resident population (Rushmoor Borough Council, 2011a).⁸

The current recession has hit hard the whole defence sector of the British Government. In the end, the future of the serving Gurkhas also partly depends on the economic situation of Britain. The cut of a large number of defence staff in 2011 can be taken as an example of the impact of recession. In 2011, the government brought in a 'Redundancy Scheme' to scale down the number of service personnel as a way of cutting costs. In comparison to other British Regiments, the Brigade of Gurkhas is bearing a brunt of the costs. There are four redundancy tranches: approximately 900 Gurkha soldiers, out of a total of 3,570, are being made redundant by 2015; some will be forced to retire without immediate pension.⁹ In addition, when the AFPS was introduced to the Gurkhas in 2007, the intakes in 1994, 1995 and 1996 were awarded year for year service, waiving off the 1997 dividing line.¹⁰ However, this deceptive amendment did not work as the redundancy scheme selected the intake in 1993 along with intakes in 1994, 1995 and 1996 at tranche 1 in 2011. As a result, of the careless policy introduced by MoD and HQBG, the 1993 intake receives far less pension and redundancy package than the 1994, 1995 and 1996 intakes, despite their added years of service.

The redundancy of Gurkhas sets a worrying trend as the annual intake also is dwindling. Even in the past, the number of Gurkha recruits fluctuated, swelling at the time of wars and thinning with redundancies at the time of peace, but it had never come to such a low point.

The ongoing Gurkha struggles for equity over two decades remain serious issues. From the perspective of Gurkhas, the prolonged one-army two-pay system seriously undermines the British Government's stated commitment to equal rights. Over the years, the government has tried to mask the issue of differential treatment under one pretext or another, embarrassing Gurkhas and British citizens alike who find that the policies sit uneasily with the idea of universal human rights. Getting equal pay is not only an issue of respect, but also recompense that makes Gurkhas feel themselves as dignified soldiers, not mercenaries. As discussed above, despite the fact that various wrongs have been already righted in recent years, Gurkha veterans still continue to fight for equal pensions and other terms; this issue may be considered a serious breach of human rights. For example, dividing Gurkhas into two categories is the HQBG, MoD and the British Government's latest and well-orchestrated move regarding Gurkha soldiers' pension. Because of this policy, Gurkha soldiers who were enlisted before 1997 will never get a pension equal to their British and Commonwealth counterparts. The government justification for lower pension in the past was that Gurkhas would settle in Nepal, where the cost of living is much less.

Two interviews with former Gurkhas (one retired before 1997 and one after 1997) presented below highlight the facts:

1. I am a retired Rifleman from 6th Gurkha Rifles. I get £215 pounds per month in pension as per the Gurkha Pay and Pension Scheme (GPS). I am not allowed to join the British Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS) as I retired before 1997. Even if they allow me to join the AFPS, I heard, my 15 years Hong Kong based service will be counted only 5.4 years for UK pensionable service. I think this is unfair for all Gurkhas. I do not understand why the British Government is not allowing us to join the AFPS? And why has the government decided to give only 36% of my total service for the UK pensionable service?

2. I served 19 years and retired from the Army in 2003 at the rank of Staff Sergeant. I get £285 monthly pension. When I reach 60 years of age, my pension will be transferred to the AFPS where my pre 1997 service will be converted to the proportion of 4 years being equal to 1 year. This means that I will get around 9 years Staff Sergeant's pension. I am supposed to get 19 years pension equal to my British counterparts.

As is well-known, Hong Kong was handed back to mainland China by Britain in 1997. The Far East British military base (including HQBG) was moved to the UK. However, it is not logical to discriminate based on location, as Gurkhas are an integral part of the British Army regardless of the base from which they are administered. The location of the Gurkha headquarters- Scotland, Wales, London, Belize or Hong Kong - and the places of Gurkha service should be of no importance, as long as they are an integral part of the British Armed Forces. Britain has obligations to treat Gurkhas equally to her citizens according to TPA. Why 23 – 36% of Hong Kong-based service is counted as pensionable while that of their British or Commonwealth counterparts is counted in full puzzles the Gurkhas. As a result, “26,000 pensioners, 10,000 redundant and 10,000 widows” of those who enlisted in the British Army on and before 30 June 1997 (House of Commons, 2009) have been excluded from the right to receive equal pensions.

With all legal avenues virtually closed in the UK, knocking on the door of the European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg is the only option for Gurkhas, costly though it might be. Gurkhas are still hopeful that their ongoing multi-pronged approach, including lobbying for a political resolution, would pave the way for a final solution to the problem. The Embassy of Nepal is attempting to organize the British Prime Minister's visit to Nepal. If that were to happen, many speculate that there will be some efforts to redress the problem, if not earlier.

However, solving the Gurkha issue immediately is paramount if the government wants to correct its legacy before the issues of injustice succumb with the death of an elderly generation of Gurkhas. History has witnessed thousands of Gurkhas dying

over two centuries on battlefields, and being injured and disabled without any pay or compensation. Gurkha veterans who retired between 1950 and 1980 are already old by Nepali standards of life expectancy, and every year, the natural death rate is increasing as more and more veterans are dying in the UK. In 2010/11, in a matter of six months, Gurkhas have lost two Second World War Victoria Cross winners, Lachhiman Gurung, VC and Tulbahadur Pun, VC. On average, about 200 Gurkha veterans and their widows die every year by natural death. The average age of Gurkha pensioners is about 50; they will be 80 in 30 years. There will be no discriminated Gurkha pensioners left in another 40-50 years, but if the issue is left unresolved, the injustice will live in the memory of the generations to come.

In a difficult economic climate, the establishment has additional budgetary constraints that may make it more difficult to solve the problems facing the Gurkhas. If the pensions of pre-1997 retired Gurkhas were to be paid at equal levels, it could present a huge additional financial burden to the government. However, Gurkha organisations find this argument fraught with miscalculation. BGWS argues that the cost of paying equal pensions would be far smaller than the cost of settling and integrating Gurkhas who are of pensionable age, for example (Dewan, 2011). One plausible argument is that if given equal pensions, many would choose rather to live with their children in Nepal, who provide them with care in their old age. Under the current immigration rules, there is no possibility of bringing grown-up children to the UK. In addition, elderly retired Gurkhas confront dietary and health problems when they stay in the UK (ibid).

Overall, the recent changes have a cumulative effect on Nepal as they have altered the structure of Gurkha affairs. In the past, Gurkhas not only promoted the name and fame of Nepal as being a country of brave soldiers -despite not being able to serve their motherland- but they also brought to Nepal much needed foreign money and skills. With these recent changes, Nepal has become a country that exports citizens permanently rather than as a temporary labour force. Gurkhas' migration means that they have settled and would like to integrate well in their newly founded home. Settling involves buying houses and making investments for

which they need huge capital. As a result, a hidden reverse trend of remittances has been set on course between Nepal and the UK. With these newfound opportunities, ironically, Nepal's capital flies to the UK. In this changed context, how to deal with Gurkha issues has become a serious policy question for Nepal.

These changing scenarios call into question: how long will Britain continue to recruit Gurkhas from Nepal? Nepal, too, has a moral question to answer: why should it allow its citizens to serve in a foreign army when there is not much to gain as far as the nation is concerned? Ethno-nationalist and leftist activists in Nepal seriously object to the issue of Gurkha recruitment, but they often change their stance when they face the resistance of the communities from whom Gurkhas have been recruited for generations. The Maoists, who were vocal critics of Gurkha recruitment, have also changed their position, at least for now. For the moment, neither the Nepal Government nor the British Government are in any mood to end Gurkha recruitment, as the Gurkhas are not only symbolic of Britain-Nepal relations but also continue to make distinct and reliable contributions as soldiers in modern wartime situations. Furthermore, given that a new generation of Gurkha families now reside in the UK, Gurkhas, with or without support from Nepal, will continue to be part of the British Forces.

Conclusion

Gurkhas have long earned a reputation for being brave and loyal, and they continue to do so. They have fought several wars on the battlefield, and lately they have shown that they can learn and apply civilian tactics for their own welfare. Applying strategies such as mass protest movements, legal action, political lobbying and diplomatic discussions, they have already achieved something for those lucky ones who have survived to benefit from their gains. However, the crux of the problem has shifted to the 1997 dividing line: to end the ongoing discrimination against Gurkhas' pension rights, this division has to be overcome sooner or later and equal pensions must be given to all British Gurkhas who separated from the British Indian Army in 1948. The British Government should honour and respect Sir Ralph Turner MC's words, cited at the beginning of the chapter, dedicated to Gurkha veterans' loyalty, bravery and

sacrifice. The French Government addressed similar issues when it decided to pay its 'debt of honour' to its African veterans who fought the Algerian War of Independence, agreeing to pay them on terms equal to French nationals (BBC, 2010a, Maskey, 2011). This strategy would be an appropriate solution for the Gurkhas, and it could even reduce the financial burden of the British Government. Assuring equity in pension payments may well inspire many former Gurkhas to return to Nepal, which would be financially and socially beneficial for both Nepal and the UK.

Contributor:

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Notes

- ¹ Professor Sir Ralph Turner MC, Professor of *Sanskrit* at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London (1922 - 54) served with the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles from 1915 – 19.
- ² Sinha (2008: 12) stated, "On May 15, 1815, months before the Sugauli Treaty was signed, British General David Ochterlony concluded an agreement with the Nepalese Durbar on inducting Gorkhas into the East India Company's forces."
- ³ According to HQLF's letter to CNSUK
- ⁴ Information based on interview given by the Japanese PoW

Compensation Payment Office, Kathmandu In charge Captain (Retired)
Dilip Gurung 7 GR.

- ⁵ This is based on conversation between the Director of the Home Office and the BGWS delegation team where author was present while conversation took place.
- ⁶ This was to support a joint public relations project originally organised by BGWS and the Film Director Rachid Bouchareb (*Days of Glory*) to prepare a signed petition to be presented to the Prime Minister under the coordination of the Gurkha Forum.
- ⁷ GAESO argues that BGWS's pension case is unnecessary as the issue was largely solved by the 29 May 2009 policy endorsed by Parliament that argued that Gurkha terms and condition of service would be equal to that of Commonwealth soldiers who served in the British army. Rather than filing the case that has been already won, Gurkha should apply pressure tactics to bind the government to implement the terms endorsed by the parliament; filing the pension case would set wrong precedent and reverse what has already been achieved. (Personal communication with Chandra Bahadur Gurung, Advisor, GAESO.)
- ⁸ The Council's net budget requirement has decreased by 12.3% for 2011/12 ... [...] Grant settlement from Central Government decreased by 23.1% (Budget Book 2011/12: 2)
- ⁹ Information based on interview with one of the Gurkha serving Officers.
- ¹⁰ However, the dividing date specifically '1 July 1997' stand as it is for those who enlisted on and before 30 June 1997 (except intakes in 1994, 1995 and 1996) as this cut-off point plays a vital role in reducing Gurkhas' Hong Kong based service.

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Why Gurkhas Deserve Compensation?

*Dr Chandra K. Laksamba
Dr Krishna P. Adhikari*

The UK government should acknowledge its unfair treatment of the Gurkhas and compensate for it.

In about 200 years of British Gurkha history, the last two decades saw unprecedented public debate on Gurkha services.¹ The issues of the Gurkhas that were once the subject of inter-governmental agreements have now become a matter of broader public scrutiny.

Many progressive changes have occurred within the Gurkha services in the last decade, of which two remarkable ones are the equalisation of terms of services for serving Gurkhas, and settlement rights to all with a minimum of four years in service. Retired Gurkhas, however, continue to face inequalities in their pension and other benefits. Gurkha organisations, which have now evolved as a formidable stakeholder, and the UK Ministry of Defence maintain conflicting positions in terms of their interpretation of many of these inequalities.

Against this backdrop, in 2013, Centre for Nepal Studies UK, a think-tank dedicated to advancing knowledge on Nepal, undertook a thorough review of British Gurkha pension policies and published a report.

The report is very timely as it came out just before the UK government formed the All Party Parliamentary Enquiry on Gurkha,

following the fast-unto-death of Gyan Raj Rai as part of the Gurkha Satyagraha Campaign. Until now, no serious academic work has been done on inequalities that the Gurkhas face. Individuals and policy makers have had to depend on an array of oxymoronic statements from the British Defence Ministry which tries to patronise the Gurkhas and justify the inequalities. This report has thus not only equipped the emotionally-charged Gurkha campaigners with a powerful ammunition, but has also put forth their case objectively to the open-minded but uninformed politicians. The report shows that Gurkhas are still subject to grave injustice and gross violation of human rights.

Currently, 22,935 ex-British Gurkha pensioners and widows are still treated unequally in comparison to their British counterparts. There are 6,534 ex-Gurkha soldiers who do not receive any pension. An additional 542 ex-Gurkha soldiers discharged after 1975 do not receive service pensions. Of those who do not receive any pension, 3,438 that are identified as poor receive £40 a month from the Gurkha Welfare Trust. Gurkhas are not entitled to Preserved Pension, which is provided to British soldiers who have served for two years or more. The report elaborates mainly five important findings, which we briefly discuss here.

Violation of rights

To begin with, Gurkha pension and benefit policies do not comply with the principles of fundamental human rights. Unequal pensions provided to ex-British Gurkhas by the UK Government directly contradict the "equal pay for equal work" provisions enshrined in the charters of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, European Convention on Human Rights and in the conventions of the International Labour Organisation. Currently, Gurkha pensioners receive 300 percent less pension than their British counterparts, even though this situation in itself is a huge improvement compared to the situation in 1989 when the difference was about 1,000 percent. Gurkha pensioners are separately governed by the Gurkha Pension Scheme (GPS) but 2,161 Gurkha pensioners, who were enlisted in the Army before 1 October 1993 and retired between 1 July 1997 and 6 April 2005 were given an opportunity to transfer from the GPS to the mainstream Armed Forces Pension Scheme 1975. Their

service prior to 1 July 1997, however, was actuarially valued at only 23 to 36 percent for pension purposes.

Irrelevant claims

Secondly, the changed context makes the British Defence Ministry's claim of 'fair' and 'legal' obsolete. The Defence Ministry constantly maintains that the retired Gurkhas have always been well looked after and that they are not unfairly treated. For ex-Gurkhas, most of whom have become lawful residents in the UK since 2004, the rationale of 'fair treatment', tailoring their benefits to Nepal's cost of living, no longer holds water, as recognised by the fact that the pay and the benefits of currently serving Gurkhas are equal to that of their British counterparts. What is necessary is equality based on moral principles and on the basic norms and values of human rights. Nothing can be deemed to be legal if that goes against these principles. Hence, Gurkha pension and welfare provisions need to be 'equal' and 'legal'.

Thirdly, the UK government's argument that making ex-Gurkhas' pensions equal to that of their British counterparts would be expensive is a myth. Ex-Gurkhas in the UK have to rely on means-tested pension credits and other social benefits. The money spent on these benefits can be used to equalise the pensions or to pay welfare entitlements. More importantly, it would certainly mean respecting dignity by having entitlements rather than living on means-tested benefits, which the Nepali community is not proud of.

Internationally, the UK lags behind in respecting its foreign recruits. India recruits Nepali citizens under the 1947 Tripartite Agreement (TPA) and treats its Gurkha soldiers equally in terms of pay, pensions and welfare. Even the French government that had frozen its overseas soldiers' pensions in 1959 is now providing equal pension since 2007. The US has also made a decision to provide equal benefits to its Filipino veterans under the same criteria applied to other US military veterans. It is only the UK government which still treats its Gurkha veterans who joined the British Army before 1 October 1993 unequally.

A new UK-Nepal agreement

Finally, the Tripartite Agreement is defunct and a bilateral agreement is needed. The UK government has made frequent changes to Gurkhas' service terms, pay, pensions and other benefits as it deemed suitable and required by its needs at the time, without any meaningful two-way dialogue and consultation. Besides, India has repeatedly made it clear that it has nothing to do with the British Gurkhas, and that the terms of service of British Gurkhas are a matter entirely for Nepal and Britain. Hence, it is necessary to abrogate the TPA and sign a bilateral UK-Nepal agreement to reflect the unique circumstances of the British Gurkhas and to make Gurkha recruitment relevant with the changed context and time.

The report presents various ways forward to equalise the pension and benefits of Gurkhas in line with that of the British soldiers. It also concludes that the UK government should acknowledge that the Gurkhas were not always treated equally in the past and demands for retrospective compensation might have a considerable degree of legitimacy.

Notes :

1. This paper was published in the Kathmandu Post on 2nd February 2014. The title of the paper has been changed as the editors of the newspaper then imposed their own title without consulting with the authors to which they did not agree.

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Defeating the Undefeated

*Dr Chandra K. Laksamba
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Gurkhas' campaign for equal pensions will likely continue regardless of whether Nepal can or will help their cause.

On 15 September 2016, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) delivered its verdict on Gurkha pensions, shattering the hopes of thousands of ex-Gurkhas for equal pensions. While Gurkhas have earned fame globally as an undefeatable force on the battlefield, they have been consistently defeated in court battles in which they have sought pension equality for those who retired before 1997. Here we examine these court battles and explore why discrimination between Gurkhas and native British people persists.

Britain and India signed a Bipartite Agreement in 1947 in Kathmandu dividing Gurkha Regiments into British Gurkhas and Indian Gorkhas and setting up a pay, pension and welfare system pegged to the Indian Pay Code (IPC). It became the Tripartite Agreement (TPA) when Nepal signed it with conditions insisting that in all matters of promotion, welfare and other facilities, the Gurkha troops be treated on the same footing as other units in the parent army so that the stigma of being mercenary troops may be wiped out. The British representative responded positively to Nepal's request but added a caveat: "Subject to the limitations of finance and supply". Since then, British Gurkhas have been subject to discrimination under one pretext or another.

A Gurkha Pension Scheme (GPS), in force since 1949, entitled Gurkhas with 15 years' service to an immediate pension.

This, however, did not cover thousands of Gurkhas, about 7,000 of whom are still surviving. They were deprived of preserved pensions and other welfare benefits to which their British counterparts were entitled. Our report from the Centre for Nepal Studies UK in 2013 showed that, in 1989, there was a 950 percent difference on average in pensions. While the difference has been narrowing in recent years, the pension gap in 2013 was still as much as 300 percent in some cases.

In March 2007, the UK Government equalised pay, pensions and terms of services of serving personnel and granted equal pensions to those enlisted from 1 October 1993 but about 15,000 pensioners, and 6,000 widow pensioners, did not benefit from this equalisation policy.

Human rights claims disallowed

On 10 June 2011, the British Gurkha Welfare Society (BGWS) lodged a case at the ECHR claiming that Gurkhas have been paid significantly lower pensions than their British counterparts, which was discrimination on the grounds of nationality and/or race, and compared to younger compatriots who joined the British Army after 1997, which was discrimination on age grounds. Their service prior to 1 July 1997 was unfairly valued—not granted year-for-year—when transferring from the GPS to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS). The BGWS argued that this discrimination breached Article 14, along with Article 1 of the protocol, of the European Human Rights Charter.

Initially in 2008, the BGWS had fought the case in the British courts on nationality and age grounds, but had eventually lost it. So the ECHR only looked into these issues and refused to take the race argument into consideration because it had not been raised and exhausted in British courts.

In its verdict, the ECHR clarified Article 14 stating, “In order for an issue to arise under Article 14 there had to be a difference in the treatment of persons in analogous, or relevantly similar, situations. Such a difference in treatment was discriminatory if it had no objective and reasonable justification.” While the court agreed that Gurkhas had been treated differently and inferiorly in their entitlement to

pensions, it concluded “that any difference in treatment on grounds of nationality had been objectively and reasonably justified.” The age argument was also refused.

The ECHR concurred with the UK government that the cut-off point was ruled not arbitrary because Gurkha service prior 1 July 1997 was different (in being based outside the UK) and that the small pension of ex-Gurkhas is principally designed for Gurkhas to retire in Nepal where the cost of living is relatively low. The UK Government has consistently argued that this constitutes 'fair treatment'.

Previous legal battles

Ex-Gurkhas had tried to address pension inequalities before. In 1998, Hari Bahadur Thapa lost a case for a full pension at the Tribunal Court in the UK on the grounds that 80 per cent of his service was outside the UK. In 2000, Gyan Raj Rai filed a case at the Supreme Court of Nepal asking for the removal of the discriminatory clause related to the IPC. But it was dismissed as being beyond their constitutional and legal remit. In 2002, the Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organisation (GAESO) filed a case for equal pay, pension and welfare at the British High Court. The court acknowledged the existence of unequal treatment, but dismissed the case due to the expectation that Gurkhas would retire in Nepal.

Similarly, a case filed in 2008 by K Shrestha, K Purja and S Gurung in the UK High Court was disallowed. Nonetheless, Gurkhas successfully won other non-pensions cases. GAESO, through P Gurung, G Thapa and H Pun, filed and won a compensation case in 2002 for Japanese Prisoners of War. Likewise, GAESO's case for Gurkha settlement rights filed in September 2008 was successful. This, along with a high-profile campaign led by celebrity Joanna Lumley, resulted in UK settlement rights for Gurkhas with service of four years or more.

A vital question

What baffles the Gurkhas and other rights-based campaigners is that non-affirmative discrimination can be objectively justified and that the universal right to equality (equal pay for equal work) does

not hold true for them. With the ultimate legal avenues having been pursued and apparently exhausted, the puzzled campaigners find themselves back to square one.

The BGWS recently held a meeting in Farnborough with representatives of the CPN Maoist (Centre), the leading party in the current ruling coalition in Nepal, asking for help to put the Gurkhas' case to the Nepal government for a diplomatic solution. Another group, Gurkha Satyagraha, has been lobbying the Nepal government for the same cause for several months. As 7 November—the date that Gurkha Satyagraha has fixed for a fast-unto-death—approaches, the group desperately wants a favourable diplomatic solution.

However, the Nepal government lacks the necessary institutional mechanisms and knowledge base necessary to deal with and resolve the issue. A vital question remains: can and will the Nepal government, which for the past 60 years has closed its eyes to the Gurkhas' plight, do anything meaningful now? Whatever the outcome, the Gurkhas' campaign for equal pensions is likely to continue.

Note:

This essay was published in the *Kathmandu Post* on 24 October 2016.

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Forwarding equal footing

Dr Chandra K. Laksamba

All British Gurkhas must be treated on an equal basis to their British counterparts Gurkhas, soldiers of Nepali origin, have been serving in the British Army since 1815. They fought in several wars, including the First and Second World Wars, which resulted in over 43,000 deaths, and thousands of casualties. In recognition, 13 Victoria Crosses were awarded to Gurkhas to honour their bravery.

According to the Tripartite Agreement signed between the UK, India and Nepal in 1947, Gurkhas are an integral part of the British Army, so they should receive bravery awards, pay and benefits equal to their British counterparts. However, contrary to the Tripartite Agreement, the British government fixed the Gurkhas' pay, pensions and welfare as per the Indian Pay Code. As a result, the pension differences between British and Gurkha soldiers reached 958 percent in 1989. British Gurkhas have been fighting for equal pay, pensions and welfare since 1990.

Gurkha technical team

In 2017, all Gurkha organisations united and opted for diplomatic means to solve outstanding issues at the initiation of the Nepal Embassy in London. Gurkha organisations jointly submitted their 36 demands to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces John Mark Lancaster in the presence of Nepali Ambassador Dr Durga Bahadur Subedi on March 28, 2017. In response, Minister Lancaster formed a Gurkha Technical Team (GTT) to investigate the demands submitted by the Gurkha organisations and produce a report and agenda for Britain-Nepal bilateral talks.

After a series of meetings, the GTT submitted its report with a 13-point agenda on March 24, 2018 to the British and Nepal governments with the recommendation of forming negotiation teams from both countries to address outstanding Gurkha issues at the earliest opportunity. The main demand of the British Gurkhas is that all Gurkhas must be treated on an equal footing to their British counterparts as set out in the Tripartite Agreement. This was applied to Gurkha Sandhurst-Commissioned Officers and other Gurkhas enlisted after October 1, 1993, but it is still outstanding for those enlisted before that date.

According to the UK Ministry of Defence, there are 22,000 ex-Gurkhas and widows in this group. The majority retired at the 15-year pensionable point. For British soldiers, their pensionable point is 22 years. British and Gurkha pensionable points are different, and their pensions are calculated on their average life expectancy and longevity. Hence, for Gurkhas who have done 15 years, their service and pension should be in proportion to British soldiers' 22 years. In addition, Gurkhas enlisted before 1993 have not been paid liberal and disability pensions equal to their British counterparts, so these also need to be equalised as per the Tripartite Agreement.

Gurkhas who were made redundant before 1975 only received redundancy packages of £320, £360 and £420 respectively based on their length of service. As per the Armed Forces Pensions Act 1975, they are also not entitled to preserved pension, so their redundancy packages should be reviewed, and compensation given to bring them into line with their British counterparts. Those discharged after 1975 should be entitled to preserved pension. There are approximately 6,500 and 145 Gurkhas discharged before and after 1975 respectively without service pensions. Due to the meagre redundancy packages and poor welfare facilities provided in Nepal, Gurkhas have decided to migrate to the UK for better lives; the reality, however, is that they are living in poverty on paltry incomes. If compensated suitably, in the long run, it will reduce the financial burden on the National Health Service, housing and other welfare services.

Gurkhas should qualify for state pension if they have served for more than 10 years, and this should be paid when they reach the qualifying age. Those who were made redundant with less than 10

years' service should also be considered for state pension, as they would have paid National Insurance when based in the UK, despite not having received the same pay as their British counterparts. Further consideration needs to be given in relation to National Insurance contributions and generated benefits. Thus, the British Government should provide medical cover in Nepal in the same manner as the National Health Service provides in the UK.

Goodwill payments

On the grounds of historical injustice, goodwill payments should be made to the children of Gurkha soldiers made redundant, or who died on pension. Also, all children above the age of 30 should be given a UK settlement visa instead of on a case-by-case basis. Finally, veterans on Pension Credit should be allowed to go to Nepal for 90 days (old policy) with loss of benefits, as it is not possible to reach their villages in the hills and back to the UK under the current 28-day policy.

In summary, in the changed context, all ex-Gurkha organisations now believe in political and diplomatic means to solve the remaining issues. Hence, both British and Nepal governments should seriously consider the issues put forward for bilateral talks, as old, frail veterans are rapidly dying off.

Contributor:

Dr Chandra K. Laksamba was a British Gurkha pension expert. He was a member of the Gurkha Technical Team at the time of the publication.

Note

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उत्कर्षमा गोर्खा आन्दोलन

डा. कृष्ण प्र. अधिकारी

डा. चन्द्र कुमार लक्सम्बा

एकै मिसनमा लडेका समान दर्जाका सिपाहीलाई भेदभाव गर्नु भनेको बेलायतको प्रजातान्त्रिक अभ्यासमा सङ्कट आउनु हो ।

काठमाडौं – बेलायती सेनाबाट सेवानिवृत्त गोर्खाहरू तीन दशकदेखि समान अधिकारका लागि आन्दोलित छन् । आन्दोलनबाट केही उपलब्धि हासिल भए पनि समान पेन्सन, क्षतिपूर्ति लगायतका थुपै मुद्दा अभै थाँती छन् ।

अहिले आन्दोलन नयाँ उत्कर्षमा पुगेको छ र समस्या समाधानका लागि पहिलोपटक नेपाल र बेलायत सरकार तथा भूतपूर्व गोर्खा वार्तामा जुटेका छन् । यो लेख गोर्खा आन्दोलन, प्राप्त उपलब्धि र पछिल्ला प्रयासको सेरोफेरोमा छ ।

नेपाली नागरिकले बेलायती सेनामा सन् १८१५ मै सेवा गर्न थालेका हुन् । तर लिपिबद्धरूपमा उनीहरूको तलबभत्ता, पेन्सन र अन्य सुविधाको व्यवस्था भने सन् १९४७ मा बेलायत, भारत र नेपालबिच भएको त्रिपक्षीय सन्धिले गरेको थियो । त्यही सन्धिअनुसार गोर्खालाई बेलायती र भारतीय सेनामा बाँडिए पनि बेलायत सरकारले ब्रिटिश गोर्खाहरूलाई भारतीय सेनाको तलबमानअनुसार, केही महङ्गी भत्ता थपेर सेवासुविधा दिने विवादास्पद प्रावधानलाई निरन्तरता दिँदै ल्यायो । परिणामस्वरूप एउटै सेनाभित्रका दुई इकाइमा दिइने सेवासुविधामा यति ठुलो खाडल बन्यो कि सन् १९८९ सम्म आइपुग्दा बेलायतीको भन्दा गोर्खाको पेन्सन ९५८ प्रतिशत कमी हुन गयो ।

सन् १९९० पछि भूतपूर्व गोर्खाहरूले गेसो र नेसाजस्ता संस्था खोलेर बेलायतले गरेको विभेदविरुद्ध आन्दोलन सुरु गरे। सन् १९९७ मा बेलायतले हडकड चीनलाई बुझाएका कारण गोर्खा फौज बेलायत सान्यो। गोर्खाहरूको समस्याबारे गेसोले उठाएको मुद्दालाई सन् १९९८ (वि.सं. २०५५) मा नेपाल सरकारले राष्ट्रिय मुद्दाको मान्यता दिँदै संसदीय छानबिन समिति गठन गर्‍यो र प्रतिवेदन बेलायत सरकारलाई पठाइयो। त्यही वर्ष बेलायत सरकारले गोर्खाहरूको तलब, पेन्सन र अन्य सुविधाको विषयमा शोधखोज गरी प्रतिवेदन तयार गर्‍यो। फलतः सन् १९९९ मा पेन्सन बढ्यो। यो पेन्सनलाई हरेक वर्ष नेपाल राष्ट्र बैंकले तोकेको मुस्फितिसँग समायोजन गरिँदै आएको छ। बेलायती पक्षले गोर्खाहरूलाई दिने पेन्सन ठाउँ परिवेशअनुसार उचित रहेको भन्दै आफ्नो असमान नीतिको बचाउ गर्दै आइरहेको छ। तर भूतपूर्व गोर्खाहरूको चित्त बुझेको छैन।

गेसोले सन् २००२ मा बेलायतको उच्च अदालतमा दोस्रो विश्वयुद्धका गोर्खा युद्धबन्दीलाई जापानले तिरेको क्षतिपूर्ति बेलायत सरकारले नभरेको भनी लगाएको मुद्दा जित्यो। त्यही वर्ष गेसोले उच्च अदालतमा समान पेन्सनको मुद्दा लगायो। सन् २००३ मा गोर्खालाई दिइएको पेन्सन नेपालका लागि उचित छ भन्ने फैसला आयो। त्यही वर्षदेखि गोर्खा आन्दोलन असमानता र अन्याय विरुद्धमात्र सीमित नरहेर आवासीय अधिकारतिर पनि मोडियो। बेलायतमा रहेका गोर्खाहरूको एक समूहले बीजीडब्लुएस स्थापना गरी उक्त मुद्दालाई अगाडि बढाए। १ सेप्टेम्बर २००४ मा अध्यागमन कार्यालय लिभरपुलमा एक सम्झौता भयो। परिणामस्वरूप जुलाई १९९७ पछि पेन्सन भएका गोर्खाले बेलायतमा बस्न पाउने भए, तर बास दिएपछि गाँस दिनुपर्ने सवाल उठ्यो।

बेलायत सरकारले विशेषज्ञको टोलीले अध्ययनपछि गरेको सिफारिसअनुसार १ अक्टोबर १९९३ पछि भर्ती भएका गोर्खाहरूको १ अप्रिल २००७ बाट तलब, पेन्सन र अन्य सुविधा बेलायती नागरिक समान बनायो। १९९३ अधिका भर्ती र १ जुलाई १९९७ अधि सेवानिवृत्तलाई भने सम्बोधन गरिएन। अक्टोबर १९९३ अधि भर्ती भई १ जुलाई १९९७ पछि सेवानिवृत्तलाई जुलाई १९९७ पछिको नोकरीको मात्र बेलायती बराबर पेन्सन दिने नीति बन्यो। त्यस अधिका नोकरीलाई पैसा नबढ्ने गरी मिलान गरियो। नेसनल इन्स्युरेन्स र स्टेट पेन्सन पनि १ जुलाई १९९७ पछिको मात्र दिने भयो। यो निर्णयविरुद्ध बीजीडब्लुएसले उच्च अदालतमा मुद्दा लगायो, तर फैसला पक्षमा आएन।

जुलाई १९९७ अगाडि पेन्सन भएका सबैले बेलायती आवासीय भिसा पाउनुपर्छ भनेर सन् २००८ मा गेसोले बेलायतको उच्च अदालतमा मुद्दा दर्ता

गन्थो । मुद्दाको समर्थनमा बेलायती अभिनेत्री जोवना लुम्लेले चलाएको सशक्त अभियानमा ठुलो जनसमर्थन जुट्यो । ३० सेप्टेम्बर २००८ मा उच्च अदालतले ४ वर्षभन्दा बढी नोकरी गरेका गोर्खा, उनीहरूका परिवार र १८ वर्षभन्दा कम उमेरका आश्रित छोराछोरी सबैले बेलायतको आवासीय भिसा पाउने फैसला गर्‍यो । तदनुरूप बेलायती सदनमा २९ अप्रिल २००९ मा बहस भई गोर्खाहरूको पक्षमा मतदान भयो । कानुनी तवरले गोर्खाहरूलाई बेलायती भूमिमा बास त मिल्‍यो, तर गाँस अर्थात् समानको पेन्सनको कुरा बाँकी रह्यो । बेलायतमा आवासीय सुविधा लिएकाहरूमध्ये ६६ वर्ष पुगेकालाई बेलायतमा रहँदा समान पेन्सनको सट्टा निवृत्त सहायता कोष (पेन्सन क्रेडिट) दिएर रनभुल्लमा पारियो । अरूको पनि पेन्सन भने नेपालमा जति थियो, त्यति नै रह्यो ।

बीजीडब्लुएसले युरोपियन मानव अधिकार अदालतमा मुद्दा लगायो । सन् २०१३ मा केही संस्था मिलेर बेलायती प्रधानमन्त्रीको निवास अगाडि रिले र आमरण अनशन भयो । बेलायत सरकारले ज्याकी डोयल प्राइसको नेतृत्वमा सर्वदलीय गोर्खा छानबिन समिति (एपीपीजी) गठन गरी मुद्दा सम्बोधन गर्ने भनेपछि अनशन स्थगन भयो । आमरण अनशनलाई सबै गोर्खा संस्थाले समर्थन गरेका थिए । एपीपीजीको रिपोर्ट र सदनको बहसबाट पेन्सन लगायतका मूल मागमा खासै उपलब्धि भएन । सन् २०१६ मा युरोपियन अदालतले बेलायत सरकारले गरेको विभेद जायज छ भनेर गरेको हास्यास्पद फैसलापछि गोर्खाहरू सशक्त आन्दोलन अघि बढाउन जुर्मुँराउन थाले । त्यसपछि बेलायत र नेपालले कूटनीतिक वार्ताबाट गोर्खाको मागलाई टुक्नो लगाउने एक स्तरको मनस्थिति बनाएको देखिन्छ । दोस्रो चोटी अनशन बस्ने कार्यक्रमलाई नेपाल दूतावास लन्डनको विशेष पहलमा रोकियो । त्यसपछि नेपाल दूतावास, बेलायती रक्षा मन्त्रालय र गोर्खाहरूको बिचमा कुरा गर्ने वातावरणको सिर्जना भयो । त्यसपछि ३६ वटा माग राजदूत डा. दुर्गाबहादुर सुवेदीको रोहबरमा २९ मार्च २०१७ का दिन गोर्खाहरूले बेलायत सरकारलाई बुझाए ।

मागहरूमाथि छलफल गरी प्रतिवेदन तयार गर्न २९ मार्च २०१७ मा नेपाल सरकार, बेलायत सरकार र गोर्खाहरूको प्रतिनिधिसाथै गोर्खा पेन्सन विज्ञसहितको प्राविधिक टोली गठन भयो । टोलीले तयार पारेको प्रतिवेदन २२ मार्च २०१८ को दिन बेलायत सरकार र नेपाल सरकारलाई बुझाइसकेको छ । त्यस प्रतिवेदनमा समान पेन्सन, क्षतिपूर्ति र अध्यागमन मागहरूलाई प्राथमिकताका साथ समेटिएको छ । समान पेन्सन नपाएका भूतपूर्व गोर्खाको संख्या १५ हजार

९ सय ५० र विधवाको संख्या लगभग ६ हजार छ। सिफारिसअनुसार समान पेन्सन दिइए गोर्खाहरूका लगभग धेरै माग पूरा हुनेछन्। उनीहरूले दर्जा र नोकरी अवधिअनुसारको समान पेन्सन पाउनेछन्। पण्डितहरूले पनि लेफ्टेन दर्जाको पेन्सन पाउनेछन्। त्यस्तै गोर्खाहरूले स्टेटस, लिबरल, अपाङ्गता (डिसेबिलिटी), प्रिजभड पेन्सन आदि पाउनेछन्। साथै सन् १९९७ अघिको भेदभावपूर्ण नीति पनि खारेज हुनेछ। सबै पेन्सन नेपाल, बेलायत या संसारको जुनै भागमा रहेर पनि लिन मिल्छ। अर्को महत्त्वपूर्ण कुरा समान पेन्सनले क्षतिपूर्तिका लागि लड्न ढोका पनि खोलीदिनेछ।

गोर्खाहरूलाई अन्याय भए पनि क्षतिपूर्ति तिर्दा ठुलो धनराशी चाहिने भएकाले बेलायतले तिर्न सक्दैन भनेर न्यायमूर्ति सुलिभानले २००३ मा उच्च अदालतको फैसलामा लेखेका छन्। यद्यपि यो गोर्खाको टाउको दुखाइको विषय होइन। बेलायतले जसरी भए पनि क्षतिपूर्ति भर्नेपर्छ, चाहे त्यो हाल भन्दै गरेको 'गुडविल' पेमेन्ट होस् या 'कम्पन्सेसन'को रूपमा। बेलायत र नेपालले जतिसक्दो छिटो वार्ताको टेबलमा बसेर उपयुक्त निकासको खोजी गर्नुपर्छ। छिटो गर्नुपर्ने मुख्य कारण के छ भने भेदभावमा परेका ७० प्रतिशत गोर्खा ६७-७८ वर्षको हाराहारीमा छन्। ११५ जना भूतपूर्व गोर्खाले ४ वर्षभन्दा कम नोकरी भएका कारण बेलायती आवासीय भिसा पाउन बाँकी रहेकामा अहिले पाउने आशा पलाएको छ। वयस्क छोराछोरीका सन्दर्भमा वार्ताबाट निकास निकाल्नुपर्छ।

सारांशमा भन्ने हो भने गोर्खाहरूलाई बेलायतको आवासीय भिसा दिएपछि बेलायत सरकारले आफ्नो नीतिको बचाउमा प्रयोग गर्दैआएको उचित पेन्सन भन्ने तर्कको औचित्य सकिएको छ। अब एकै मिसनमा लडेका समान दर्जाका सिपाहीलाई भेदभाव गर्नु भनेको प्रजातन्त्रको जननी बेलायतको प्रजातान्त्रिक अभ्यासमा सड्कट आउनु हो। आशा छ, वार्ताबाट यो सङ्कट टर्नेछ, गोर्खाहरूले समान अधिकारका लागि फेरि लड्नुपर्ने छैन।

नोट

यो लेख २०७५ असार ८ गतेको कान्तिपुरमा प्रकाशित भएको हो।

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Section H: Education and Politics in Nepal

नेपालमा शिक्षा र राजनीति

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Hybridity in Nepalese English

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Dr Chandra Kumar Laksamba

Abstract

With its unprecedented spread globally, English has been diversified, nativised, and hybridised in different countries. In Nepal, English is code-mixed or hybridised as a result of its contact with the local languages, the bilinguals' creativity, and the nativisation by Nepalese English speakers. This qualitative content analysis paper attempts to describe hybridity in Nepalese English by bringing the linguistic examples from two anthologies of stories, two novels, five essays and two articles written in English by Nepalese writers, one news story published in the English newspaper, advertisements/banners, and diary entries, which were sampled purposively. The present study showed that hybridity is found in affixation, reduplication, compounding, blending, neologisms, and calques. Pedagogically, speakers of Nepalese English can utilise linguistic hybridisation as a powerful tool to nativise English in the local contexts, exhibit hybrid identities and linguistic co-existence, exercise their bilingual linguistic creativity, reduce their linguistic anxiety, and maximize the linguistic economy.

KEYWORDS: Nepalese English, language contact, hybridity, bilinguals' creativity, nativisation

Introduction

Nepal is a plurilingual country, a homeland to a total number of 123 languages spoken as mother tongues (Central Bureau of Statistics

[CBS], 2014), which has reached in 129 after the addition of six languages (Awasthi, 2020), and where 0.01 per cent people of the total population speak English as a mother tongue and 0.30% speak it as the second language (CBS, 2014). This census record dramatically varies from Crystal's (2003) estimate of 27.6 per cent people in Nepal, who speak English as a second language. Current estimates indicate that 30 per cent people speak English as a second language which counts to 8.7 million (Bolton & Bacon-Shone, 2020). Anecdotally, some linguists have estimated that around 40-50% of urban Nepalese are functionally literate in English (p. 56). In terms of popularity, education, and use, English, after Nepali, is the second most widespread language in Nepal, which is spoken by both literate and non-literate people at all socio-economic levels (Eagle, 1999). Because of the widespread use of English, it has become everybody's language or one of the local languages in Nepal (Giri, 2020b). It has become the chief lingua franca in the Nepalese society, overtaking Nepali, in crucial sectors like tourism, trade and business, education, science and technology, and most other economic sectors (Giri, 2020a). The contributing factors for the spread of English in Nepal from past to present include; the entry and the settlement of European missionaries in Nepal, colonisation of India by British Empire and its direct and indirect influence in Nepal, the recruitment of the Nepalese in the British Army and their retirement, the establishment of the Darbar School and Tri-Chandra College (their names themselves are hybrid) which adopted English as the language of education, British Council, American Embassy, Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA), business, research, tourism, technology, education (particularly private schools), mass media, and global cyber culture. Phyak (2012) mentioned that globalisation and neoliberalism are the two key forces for accelerating the use of English in Nepal. With its rapid and systematic spread in Nepal, English is used not only as a medium of instruction in schools and universities but also as a subject to be taught and learnt. The provisions made by the Ministry of Education in its 2005 National Curriculum Framework for School Education to use Nepali, English, or both as the medium for school-level education and 2009 School Sector Reform Plan to teach English as a subject from grade one onwards provided the grounds for increasing the use of English in Nepal (Phyak, 2016). This policy was uncritically adopted without evaluating its darkside.

Interestingly, the Ministry of Education “focuses on the English-as-the-medium-of-instruction policy to compete with private schools” (p. 211). With its increased use in speech and writing inside and outside the formal classrooms by the bilingual speakers, English has become more plural and hybrid. Because of its contact with the local languages, English has become a hybrid language today (Karn, 2006) as the globalisation and the global spread of English proceed on. The hybridity which is a cross-category process (Pieterse, 1995) or double voiced discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) is produced by the tension between global discourses and local practices (Lee, 2006). The influence of the global English to the local languages, and vice versa gives rise to new hybrid language varieties (Graddol, 2000).

Despite its emergence as a postcolonial theoretical concept, hybridity is a colonial concept that “served certain interests, which were central to the colonial enterprise” (Prabhu, 2007, p. xii). With the British and American colonisation over other countries and migration of English native speakers over other countries, the English language and culture came into contact with the local languages and cultures, which produced hybridity in languages and cultures. Hybridity, in this sense, implies “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonisation” (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 108). Such contact zones are “circumscribed in time and space, but with elastic boundaries” (Bizzell, 1994, p. 166). In response to Rutherford's question, Homi Bhabha described that hybridity is not to trace two original moments from which the third emerges; rather hybridity itself is the “Third Space” which enables other positions to emerge (Rutherford, 1994). The notion of this third space created by the cultural exchange is what Kramsch (1993, p. 9) called “third culture in its own way.” It means, the process of hybridity, whether linguistic or cultural, produces “something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (p. 211). The new and different hybrid forms of Nepalese English, which exhibit the hybrid bicultural identity and bilinguals' creativity and provide local epistemologies, are the less focused area of research in Nepal. In this paper, our focus is particularly on the analysis of the lexical items and expressions of Nepalese English from the lens of hybridity. In the following section, we review both the theoretical and empirical literatures that provide basic grounds to this study.

Literature review

The present paper hinges on three different but related theoretical ideas that inform this study: the notions of languages in contact popularised by Weinreich (1968), the bilinguals' creativity (B. Kachru, 1985) and the nativisation first introduced by B. Kachru (1982, 1986) and further explained in Schneider's (2003, 2007) Dynamic Model. When two or more languages come into contact, they mutually influence each other and borrow lexical words (Weinreich, 1968). The result of language contact is what he referred to as "interference phenomena," which involves "those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language" (p. 1). Hybridity in English is caused by its contact with multiple languages and bilinguals' creativity. In the contact situations, the hybridity and deviations may be manifested in different levels of languages. Both Moag's (1992) Life Cycle of Non-native Englishes (cited in Kirkpatrick, 2007) and Schneider's (2003, 2007) Dynamic Model suggest that the emergence of new, hybrid varieties of English is deeply grounded in language contact situations. As long as the languages and cultures are in contact, they become more diversified and hybridised. Schneider (2016) explained that the intense presence and utility of English in the contact zones produce new types of hybrid linguistic usage, which Canagarajah (2013) referred to "code meshing." B. Kachru (2011) further elaborated that the concept of hybridity in contact situations can be better understood by studying contact linguistics and contact literature.

Hybridity is not only the outcome of language contact but also the bilinguals' creativity, which refers to "those linguistic processes which are the result of competence in two or more languages" (B. Kachru, 1985, p. 20) and reflects "the blend of two or more linguistic textures and literary traditions that provides the English language with extended contexts of situation within which they are interpreted and understood" (B. Kachru, 1987, p. 127). In South Asian context, bilinguals' creativity refers to "creative uses of English in South Asia by those who are bilingual or multilingual, and who use English as one of the languages in their linguistic repertoire" (B. Kachru, 2011, p. 57). As the bilinguals have the

competence in two or more languages, they can create “new meanings and innovations appropriate to the new cultural contexts” (Bolton, 2010, p. 458). The hybrid expressions are innovations that may convey the new meanings. B. Kachru (1985) described three essential approaches to the study of the bilingual's creativity: linguistic, literary, and pedagogical. In this article, we only discuss linguistic creativity which underpins linguistic hybridity.

Linguistic creativity refers to “a marked breaking or bending of rules and norms of language, including a deliberate play with its forms and its potential for meaning” (Carter, 2004, p. 9), “the breaking, re-forming, and transforming of established patterns” (Maynard, 2007, p. 3), “localised linguistic innovations” (B. Kachru, 2011, p. 123), “inventiveness in form,” “innovations of meaning and of word creation in the Lexicon,” “deviation and foregrounding,” and “the departure from what is expected in language” (Wales, 2011, p. 95). Functionally, Rivlina (2020) claimed that linguistic creativity implies the “focus on the message for its own sake,” (Jakobson, 1960, p. 365) which is the crux of Jakobson's poetic function, also known as “creative, imaginative, or aesthetic function” (Rivlina, 2020, p. 410). These ideas imply that linguistic creativity is the language user's ability to invent or innovate new words and expressions that may have new meanings and to deconstruct the previous rules, norms, and patterns. Different scholars see bilingual linguistic creativity either in a broad or a narrow way (Rivlina, 2020). In the broad sense, bilingual linguistic creativity is often applied to “all types of linguistic innovations and deviations induced by language contact, including various new and unconventional linguistic forms, sometimes the very practice of code-switching, code-mixing, and borrowing” (p. 410) and in the narrow sense, it implies “dominated or determined by creative (poetic, aesthetic) function, focusing on the innovatively mixed linguistic form itself” (p. 410). In the case of linguistic creativity, B. Kachru (1985) focused on language mixing, contrastive discourse, interactional approaches, and contrastive linguistics.

In the multilingual contexts, English has the Janus-like two faces: nativisation, the effect of English in a localised context, and Englishisation, the effect on local languages in the same context (B. Kachru, 1996, 2011; Bolton, 2006). In the context of the Outer and

Expanding Circles, contact between English and local languages has resulted in nativisation of English and Englishisation of indigenous languages (Y. Kachru, 2020). Besides these two Circles, even in the Inner Circle, English has undergone the process of nativisation and resulted in localised forms of English (Matsuda, 2020). One of the strategies to nativise English is lexical borrowing. The borrowed forms are often combined with local ones to produce hybrid forms. Linguistic hybridisation is a common nativisation strategy advocated by B. Kachru (1986). The users of English deliberately nativise English according to the local contexts, which results in some kind of hybridity in English. Schneider (2003, 2007) elaborated the notion of nativisation in his Dynamic Model as the most important, the most vibrant, the central phase of both cultural and linguistic transformation which is marked by heavy lexical borrowing for further cultural terms, phonological, phraseological and grammatical innovations, and is typified by new word-formation products, like derivations or compounds (hybrid), localised collocations and set phrases, varying prepositional usage, innovative assignments of verb complementation patterns to individual verbs, and alternative morphosyntactic behaviour of certain, semantically defined word groups.

The history of English studies tended to emphasize the purity and homogeneity of English (Schneider, 2016) rather than its heterogeneity and hybridity in contact situations. Currently hybridity which can only exist in opposition to purity (Stockhammer, 2012) has become an increasingly fashionable term, most notably in the field of postcolonial literary studies (Ackermann, 2012). Postcolonial scholars, most prominently Edward W. Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha attempted to problematize the representation of "the other" in literature as well as academia and thus developed a renewed interest in the hybrid (p. 11). In his novel *Kanthapura*, Rao (1938) expressed the idea of hybridity as "We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as the Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us" (p. vii). This perspective relates to hybridity in terms of convergence of visions when English is used in the pluralistic contexts and a linguistic consequence of this convergence results in formally distinct Indian variety of English (B. Kachru, 2011).

In his first Journal article "The Indianness in the Indian English" (1965), B. Kachru defined hybrid (or mixed) formations as "those Indianisms which comprise two or more elements, and in which at least one element is from an Indian language and one from English" (p. 407). He described open set hybrid formations such as hybrid collocations, hybrid lexical sets, hybrid ordered series of words and hybrid reduplications, and closed set hybrid formations like suffixation. Tom McArthur was one of few scholars to name and describe the hybrid forms of English. In 1987, he represented different mixed or hybrid varieties of Englishes in his *Circle of World Standard English* (McArthur, 1987). He originally labelled such hybrid terms as "Anglo-hybrids" and described worldwide Anglo-hybridisation as "a subject that scholars have yet to address in any detail" and professed that "the scale of such hybridisation worldwide is staggering, and is likely to be a key geolinguistic issue in the early 21st century" (McArthur, 1995, p. 2). His claim sounds true in that hybrid language, literature, and culture are one of the dominant areas of study worldwide today.

Lambert (2018) studied the nomenclature of hybrid Englishes and found Amerenglish to have coined in 1923, followed by Spanglish in 1933, Chinglish in 1936, Germenglish in 1936, Frenenglish in 1937, and Swenglish in 1938. Other 5 new hybrid terms were added in the 1940s and 1950s; 15 terms in the 1960s; 41 terms in the 1970s; 48 terms in the 1980s; 125 terms in the 1990s; 152 terms in the 2000s; and 88 terms from 2001 to 2016 (Lambert, 2018). He mentioned that the two-word compound term preceded the creation of the hybrid term, usually by many decades, for example, the term Chinese English dates back to 1840, while Chinglish only to 1936, Australian English dates from 1851, but Auslish only from 1991, Hungarian English from 1897, but Hunglish from 1978, Global English from 1962, but Globish from 1995. This is true in the case of the Nepali variety of English. The term Nepali English was used by Ramesh Shrestha in his article "Diglossomania in Nepali English" published in 1978 (Shrestha, 1983). Similarly, Tom McArthur used the term Nepalese English in 1987 as a South Asian Standard(izing) English (McArthur, 1987). Although Vishnu Singh Rai championed the term "Nenglish" in 2006 through his paper presentation in the International Conference of Nepal English Language Teachers'

Association (NELTA) and article (Rai, 2006), Nenglish, Nepanglish, and Neplish were first recorded in 1999, 2000, and 2002, respectively (Lambert, 2018).

The hybridised Englishes are blended in a number of different levels based on whether there is an overlap of letters or phonemes, and whether either or both of the words are truncated (Lambert, 2018). The word "Nenglish," which blends Ne(pali) and (E)nglish, involves overlapping of "e," but truncation of only one of the terms. In the words like "Neplish," the blend between Nep(al) and (Eng)lish, and "Nepanglish," the blend between Nepa(li) and (E)nglish, there is no overlap, but both etymons are truncated. The word "Nepenglish" blends Nep(al) and English, in which there is no overlap, but only one etymon is truncated. In the colloquial term, this variety is also called "Nepangrezi," the blend between Nepa(li) and Angrezi (the Nepali term to refer to English), which share the letter "a" but truncation of only one of the terms. The word "Ninglish" blends N(epali) and (E)nglish, in which both etymons do not have the vowel letter "i" in the spelling, as in Binglish (Bengali English) and Dinglish (Dutch English). Lambert (2018) claimed that such peculiar forms result from a respelling of English to "Inglish" because spelling them with the original "e" of English does not give the correct pronunciation. The etymologies of all these terms are based on the country's name or the languages, for instance, Nenglish can be the blend between Nepal/Nepali and English and so is the case for other terms. In this sense, etymologically, Nenglish, Nepanglish, Nepenglish, Neplish, and Ninglish are not the slang words as Hinglish and do not suggest the influence of only the Nepali language on English because these terms can be interpreted in both ways: the blend between the country (Nepal) and the language (English), and between languages (Nepali and English). They simply denote the variety of English spoken in Nepal, that is, Nepal's English, whatever the mother tongue of the speakers is. Shrestha (1978, cited in Shrestha 1983) analysed some samples of Nepali English and showed that the Nepalese writer of English tends to use a marked style, that is, use of a great deal of adjectives, longer sentences, uncommon words with the effect of learnedness and bombast, synonyms, and euphemisms. Brett (1999) first compiled a miniature glossary of Nepalese English lexical words and described how they are different from the Standard

English. Similarly, Rai (2006) described some spoken and written forms of some Nepalese English lexical items and concluded that Nepali words are making entries in English and English suffixes are being attached to Nepalese words and vice versa. In his study on the nativisation strategies adopted by creative writers in English literature in Nepal, Karn (2012) found that they produced hybrid words to exhibit cultural identities. Although these studies have focused on lexical items of Nepalese English, they have not been studied specifically from the lens of hybridity. However, their studies present some examples of hybridity in Nepalese English. In the following section, we describe what methodology we adopted to study the hybridity in Nepalese English.

Methodology

In order to study the hybrid lexical items and expressions of Nepalese English, we purposively selected two anthologies of stories, namely, *Martyr and Other Stories* written by Vishnu Singh Rai (2016a) and *Arresting God in Kathmandu* by Samrat Upadhyay (2018); two novels, namely, *The Other Queen* by Sheeba Shah (2018) and *Palpasa Caf * (translated into English) by Narayan Wagle (2016); a travel essay *A Day in the Kalaksetra Guwahaty, Assam* (2016) and a memoir-like essay *Reminiscing my Childhood Days* (Ignorance of Bliss) (2012) by Govinda Raj Bhattarai; one essay *Is Nepal Small?* (2017) by Laxmi Prasad Devkota; another essay *A Letter from Gautam Buddha to Ashoka* (2017) by Krishnachandra Singh Pradhan; a travel essay *Three Months in Austria* (2016b) by Vishnu Singh Rai; an autobiography *Atmabrittanta: Late Life Recollections* (2017) by B.P. Koirala; an article *I am the Nepali* (2017) by CK Lal; one article and one news report from the English newspapers; some advertisements/banners; and diary entries. We read the sample texts, picked up hybridised forms, and analysed them qualitatively. In what follows, we discuss the key results on hybridity.

Results and discussion

The analysis and interpretation of lexical items and expressions collected from the sources mentioned above provides the evidence to support the claim that English used in Nepal is a

hybrid language, which is discussed in the areas of affixation, reduplication, blending, compounding, neologisms, and calques in the following sections.

Hybrid affixation

Nepalese English lexical words are formed by adding Nepali affixes to English words and vice versa, which produce hybridised words. The Nepali suffix *-jiis* attached to the names and professions to show respect and closeness, for example, Michaelji, sirji, poetji (Rai, 2016a), and postman-ji (Upadhaya, 2018); *-wala* is attached to the nouns to denote the possessor, or the owner, for example, taxiwala, vanwala, and icecreamwala; and most interestingly, the Nepali plural suffix *-haru* is attached to the already plural English nouns, for example, childrenharu and furnitureharu, which is also reflected in Nepalese English words such as jewelries (Bhattarai, 2016; Rai, 2016a), evidences, offsprings (Shah, 2018), and luggages (Rai, 2016b). Such double pluralisation is common in Nepalese English.

The English affixes which are attached to Nepali words to produce hybrid lexical words involve “-s/es” in the words like *dokos* “wicker baskets” (Rai, 2016a; Wagle, 2016), *darbars* “Palaces,” *andolens* “movements” (Rai, 2016a), *rajas* “kings,” *pujas* “prayers,” *sipahis* “soldiers,” and *kalashes* “pitchers” (Shah, 2018); the English apostrophic ('s) in the words such as *guruji's* will “the driver's will” (Rai, 2016a), and *kaakaa's* house “uncle's house” (Upadhyay, 2018); “-ic” in Brahmanic (Bhattarai, 2012); “-ed” in *namasted* “the Nepali greetings by joining two palms” (Rai, 2016a); “-ist” in Buddhist (Upadhyaya, 2018); “-an” in Teraian “inhabitant of the plain or lowland” (Rai, 2016b), “anti-” in *anti-chhaupadi* “against a menstrual taboo” (Budha, 2020), and “non-” in non-*Nepali* “one other than Nepali” (Devkota, 2017) and non-*Gorkhali* “other than the inhabitants of Gorkha or the brave Nepalese people” (Lal, 2017). Some words formed through hybrid affixation include *andazification/ adkalisation* “guessing,” *Nepalisation* “influence of the Nepali language on other languages,” *Nepalised* “made something Nepali-like,” *Nepalese* “people having Nepali citizenship,” and *Nepaliness* “having the characteristics of Nepali.”

Hybrid reduplication

Hybrid reduplication is “a strategy used in cross-cultural texts, in order to provide an explanation to the non-English words, either in the form of word, clause, or a sentence to reflect the cultural baggage that the context has” (Jadoon, 2017, p. 12). Nepalese writers make unique way of reduplication by mixing words from two languages which have “an 'identical' lexical meaning...” (B. Kachru, 1975, p. 65). Some hybrid reduplicated words in Nepalese English include *bhola* (innocent); *buhari* 'daughter-in law;' the *guruji*, the bus driver; *Jana Yuddha* 'People's War;' *khainee* 'chewing tobacco;' *Shaheed* (Martyr) (Rai, 2016a); *mama* 'mother's brother;' and *sanima* “step mother” (Rai, 2016b); stupid ooloo (Wagle, 2016); *Jaa*, go; *Bhann*. Tell me. Speak; and *Bussa*, sit (Shah, 2018). In these hybrid expressions, either Nepali or English expressions are redundant. However, they become comprehensible to the Nepalese readers.

Hybrid blending

In Nepalese English, new hybrid words are formed by two words from Nepali or Nepal and English. As described above, the name given to the Nepali variety of English itself is the blended word, for instance, *Nenglish*, *Nepanglish*, *Nepenglish*, *Neplish* and *Ninglish*; all of which are formed by blending the two words “Nepali or Nepal” and “English.” Other hybrid blended words include *Ranarchy*, the blending from “Rana” (cruel ruler in Nepal in the past) and “anarchy,” and *kubility*, which blends “*khubi*” (skill) and “ability.” Such blending maximizes linguistic economy and exhibits bilinguals' creativity.

Hybrid compounding

Among the hybrid compounds, Weinreich (1968, p. 52) distinguished those in which “the stem is transferred and a derivative affix produced” and those in which “the stem is indigenous and an affix transferred.” In the similar way, B. Kachru (1975, p. 66) categorised hybrid compounds as hybrid with “South Asian item as 'head' and as 'modifier'.” Several compound words in Nepalese English are hybrids which consist of two types of structures: Noun-Noun type and Adjective-Noun type. In the hybrid compounds, either the Nepali word or the English word functions as the head.

- **Nepali or local word as head**

In this group, the Nepali or the local word is the head and the English word is the modifier. In terms of the position of the components, the head-modifier relationship is further divided into the three types: Noun-Noun type, Adjective-Noun type, and -ing Head type.

Noun-noun type

In this type, the Nepali noun functions as the head and the English noun functions as the modifier, e.g. neighbourhood *Bhatti* "a nearby place where local wine is made" (Upadhyay, 2018), tomato *achar* "pickle made from tomatoes," painter *babu* "a respect or affectionate address to the painter," mutton *sukuti* "dried meat of he-goat," cotton *batti* "cotton wick" (Wagle, 2018), gold *kalash* "water-vessel made of gold," gold *mohars* "Nepali coins made of gold," doctor *sahib* "a respect word to address the doctor," (Shah, 2018) and valley *bund* "strike in the valley" (Rai, 2016a).

Adjective-noun type

In this type of hybrid compounds, the Nepali or the local word is the noun which functions as the head and the English word is an adjective which functions as the modifier, for example, skinny *bahun* "a very thin person from the Brahmin caste," black *daal* "black pulse" (Wagle, 2018), mighty *angrez* "a powerful Englishman," royal *vaidyas* "personal Ayurvedic doctors of the Royal family," local *jaand* "local liquor made from the fermented rice or other grains," local *aila* "a kind of liquor from the Newari community," black-uniformed *sipahis* "the black dressed soldiers" (Shah, 2018), colourful *lungi* "a colourful garment wrapped around the waist, usually below the belly," real *gunda* "real hooligan," simple *dal-bhat* "general Nepali dish" (Rai, 2016a), architectural *smarak* "a memorial with the attractive designing" (Bhattarai, 2016), and half-*dhoti* "a small piece of cloth wrapped under the waist" (Koirala, 2017).

-ing head type

In this third category, some restricted number of hybrid compounds are found in Nepalese English in which the -ing form functions as the modifier, for example, wedding *doli* "a wooden palanquin to carry a bride during the wedding" (Upadhyay,

2018), and fumbling *bahuns* “people from the Brahmin caste who are awkward or hesitant to do something” (Shah, 2018).

- **Nepali or local word as modifier**

In this group, the Nepali or the local word functions as the modifier and the English word as the head. This group has been further subcategorised into Noun-Noun type and Adjective-Noun type.

Noun-noun type

This is the most productive and common compounds in Nepalese English. In this group, both words are nouns but they function differently. The English word functions as the head and the Nepali or local word functions as the modifier, for example, *kuirey* journalist “a British journalist,” *tandoori* chicken “chicken roasted in a traditional oven called tandoor,” *puja* room “a prayer room,” *rupee* notes “bills or banknotes of Nepali currency,” *puja* ceremony “a prayer ceremony,” *Tamang* girl “a girl from the Tamang ethnic group of Nepal” (Upadhyay, 2018); *khukuri* knife “a national knife of Nepal” (Bhattarai, 2016; Upadhyay, 2018); *patuka* belt “a long cloth tied around the waist as a belt,” *khukuri* pin “cufflinks to put with a cap,” *Bhai Tika* festival “a Hindu festival in which the brothers receive tika from their sisters,” *Samadhi* site “a place of cremation” (Bhattarai, 2016); *Dasain* holidays “holidays given in the *Dasain* festival,” *bahun* bird “a child from the Brahmin caste,” *firangee* soldiers “British soldiers,” *raksha* thread “sacred thread worn for protection,” *Indrajatra* tale “a story of celebrating the *Indrajatra* festival of Nepal,” *Gorkha* crown “the crown worn by the king or queen of the Gorkha kingdom” (Shah, 2018); *angrezi* book “English book,” *Brahmin* son “a son of the Brahmin caste” (Bhattarai, 2012); *chhau* sheds “cattle sheds where Hindu women and girls are put during the period of menstruation,” *sati* traditions “the ancient Hindu tradition in which a widow burns herself on her husband's pyre” (Budha, 2020); *Panchayat* curriculum “curriculum made during the direct rule of the king in Nepal,” *Khas-Arya* group “hill, Hindu high caste people” (Kunwar, 2020); and *Bahun* tradition “the tradition or ritual followed by the Brahmin caste,” *Kshatriya* obligations “obligations for people belonging to Khas Chhetri caste to follow, who were the military and ruling class of the ancient Hindu society” (Koirala, 2017). Similarly, the hybrid compounds formed by Devkota (2017) include *peepal* tree “a sacred tree in the

Hindu culture which is best for oxygen," *Nepali air, Nepali heart, Nepali soil and Nepali sky, and by Pradhan (2017) include Bodhi tree "wisdom bo tree."*

Adjective-noun type

In this type, the Nepali or local word is an adjective which functions as a modifier and the English word is a noun that functions as a head, for instance, *Gaijatre* cows "cows to be worshipped at Gaijatra festival" (Shah, 2018) and Buddhist temple "temple of *Buddhist* religion" (Upadhyay, 2018).

Hybrid neologisms

Neologisms are newly coined words which are not always novel but are sometimes based on existing words. They generally "express the need to identify a new concept or idea" (Anesa, 2019, p. 38) or are used to convey the different meaning. Creative Nepalese people have coined some new words on analogy with "Kathmandu," the capital city of Nepal as if -mandu is a suffix to those words, e.g. woodmandu, foodmandu, maskmandu and clickmandu. Similarly, Nepalese people have coined a new word Kaliwood /Kallywood/Kollywood on analogy of Hollywood and Bollywood to refer to the Nepali film industry in Kathmandu. All these coined words are hybrid in nature.

Hybrid calques

The loan translations are etymologically hybrid which borrow the meaning, structure, and one of their components from English and the other component from the local language (Christina, 2012). Nepalese English uses calques, or loan translations from the Nepali language. The proverb *husband-wife's quarrel is like hay-fire* (Rai, 2016a) "husband and wife's quarrel subsides in a short time" or "The quarrel between husband and wife is temporary" is hybrid in that the given proverb is in English but it is the direct word-for-word translation from Nepali. The other expressions from Shah (2018) such as *what has happened has happened* "let bygones be bygones," *even the walls have ears* "be careful what you say as people may be eavesdropping," once a thief always a thief "once you earn bad name, it will always be with you," and from Upadhyay (2018) such as *a bull without horns can't call himself sharp* "an empty vessel makes much noise" are all literal translations of the Nepali proverbs. They are the English expressions in the structure of

the Nepali language which conveys the Nepalese cultural meanings.

Conclusion and implications

In this article, we have analysed the hybrid expressions of Nepalese English which indicate that linguistic and cultural hybridity is “our identity and destiny” (B. Kachru, 2011, p. 28) or “a fact of life” (Kanno, 2007, p. 63) and a symbol of linguistic co-existence in the puricentric societies in Nepal. The hybrid language forms represent national identities, reflect the power of the writers to describe and correspond to a particular ecology from within sociolinguistics of the region, and describe their contact with sociocultural and psycholinguistic realities (Rajashanthan, 2016). They are the creative aspects of uses of English which are misinterpreted or neglected due to the undue emphasis given to interlanguage and fossilisation, which B. Kachru (1990) referred to as 'leaking' paradigms. They reflect the dynamics of cross-cultural and nativised or localised creativity in Nepalese English. In the linguistically and culturally heterogeneous classrooms, hybrid language practices serve as the central mediation tools which mediate students' learning (Gutiérrez et al., 1999b). In a Bakhtin (1981) sense, hybridity increases the possibility of dialogue, and, thus, the possibility of collaboration and learning (Gutiérrez et al., 1999a). In this sense, hybridity is “a resource for building collaboration and promoting literacy learning” (p. 88), serves as the building block of third space, or zone of proximal development (Gutiérrez et al., 1999b), and allows incidental learning and unfocused language acquisition (Rivlina, 2020). Hybrid language practices help the learners to move from actual developmental level to the potential developmental level by enhancing their mutual understanding and a joint collaborative activity. They serve as scaffolding for the learners' linguistic, social, and cognitive development since the use of hybrid English makes the learners easy to communicate with their teachers and solve different problems. Schools are the contact zones where different languages and cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other and the interaction in such zones gives birth to hybrid forms of knowledge, texts, and codes which may resist homogeneity and domination (Canagarajah, 1999). The hybrid language practices challenge current English-only policies that privilege one particular language and minimize learning, stimulate joint participation and learning for all learners (Gutiérrez et al., 1999a), foster language and literacy development (Gutiérrez et al., 1999a; Gutiérrez et

al., 1999b), and create a community of practice. The learners do not have to stick to the normative scripts, practices, and participation framework. They can utilise their bilingual or multilingual repertoires to produce hybrid forms that express typical meaning.

Hybrid language practices are the systematic, strategic, affiliative, and sense-making processes among those who share the code (Gutiérrez et al., 1999a). They strategically incorporate the local knowledge, cultures, and beliefs of the home and the school and serve as a bridge to connect both. At schools, the teacher and children consciously and strategically utilise their own linguistic repertoires and create new contexts of development (Gutiérrez et al., 1999b). Therefore, hybrid language practices are always present, although they are not always legitimised and utilised in formal learning contexts (Gutiérrez et al., 1999b). They have transformed the monolingual/monolithic classroom environments into the more inclusive, bilingual or multilingual ones. They may break the students' silence since they communicate with their teachers and peers using the hybrid English. They may increase the students' participation in the classroom. The students' increased participation, interaction and communication, and collaboration facilitate language learning. In addition, the hybridised texts, both linguistically and culturally, are easier for the students to comprehend because such texts activate their already established familiar schematic knowledge (Alptekin 2002, 2006) and facilitate language learning. Both the nativised or hybridised English and hybrid academic texts are the suitable alternative made by the periphery subjects for their communicative and ideological conflicts in using (Canagarajah, 1999). Students and teachers can also use linguistic hybridisation as a strategy to nativise English in the local contexts, exercise their bilingual linguistic creativity, reduce their linguistic anxiety, and to maximize the linguistic economy, allowing them to use one hybrid word to convey the same meaning, rather than using more words from the same language (Lee, 2013). Therefore, speakers of English in the periphery countries intentionally and strategically hybridize English and English texts in their own terms according to the local needs and interests.

If we slightly adapt Achebe's (1965) view in the Nepalese context, we can say that the English language to carry the weight of our Nepalese experience, the native variety in its unchanged form is incapable of serving that purpose. It should be a new

hybrid English which “now combines global and local so a blend of different tastes can only satisfy the English language needs of the time” (Bhattarai & Gautam, 2008, p. 14). In the pluralistic Nepalese societies, the hybridity is the unavoidable phenomenon which needs to be duly considered in policy formulation, production of materials, and pedagogy. This study limits to only the hybridity in lexical items and proverbs. Further research can be conducted on hybridity at the phonological, semantic, syntactic, and discourse levels.

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Effectiveness of Facebook-Integrated Instructional Method in Improving Learners' English Reading Proficiency

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Abstract

Facebook is a widely used social media and its integration in the context of English language teaching (ELT) might be fruitful in this virtual world. Therefore, this experimental study was carried out with the aim of investigating its effectiveness in improving learners' reading proficiency. The study consisted of sixty participants from a secondary level government school of Nepal. They were randomly assigned into experimental and control group based on their pre-test scores ensuring that they had similar reading proficiency level. The instrument of pre-test was administered to the sampled participants before intervention. Facebook-integrated instructional method was used for instructing experimental group whereas traditional instructional method for control group. Post-test was administered to both groups after intervention. Data obtained from pre-test and post-test were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The result revealed the positive impact of Facebook in improving reading proficiency because experimental group ($M = 2.433$, $SD = 2.38$) performed better than control group ($M = .233$, $SD = 2.19$) with significant difference $t(58) = -3.71$, $p < .001$. Therefore, pedagogical implication was made for its integration in ELT class to enhance reading proficiency.

Keywords: Facebook-integrated Class, Elements of Reading, Reading Proficiency

Introduction

After the world's entry into digital technology, teachers in language class are showing their interest in integrating technologies because researchers such as Abilasha and Ilankumaran (2016), Alkamel and Chouthaiwale (2018), Ammanni and Aparanjani (2016), Ntongieh (2016), Parvin and Salam (2015) have already shown the effectiveness of information, communication and technology (ICT) tools in improving language learning. When Web 2.0 was introduced in the field of ICT, its services such as social networking sites have been potential e-learning tool in the context of ELT (see, Allam & Elyas, 2016; Alnujaidi, 2017; Al-Shehri, 2011; McCarty, 2010; Trajtemberg & Yiakoumetti, 2011). In such scenario, the researcher has aimed at carrying out this study in order to find out the effectiveness of social media of Facebook in improving learners' English reading proficiency.

Statement of the problem

Aydin (2012) states that there is no substantial body of literature carried out on the use of Facebook in ELT context. However, researchers such as Budiardi and Anggraeni (2013), Dogoriti and Pange (2014), Faryadi (2017), Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014), Özdemir (2017), Ping and Maniam (2015), and Wichadee (2013) have investigated its potentiality in the context of ELT. But, no research has been carried out yet to investigate its effect on the improvement English reading proficiency. In this context, this research will fill the gap of existing literature.

Reading proficiency

Reading is one of the receptive skills of language. It is a process of constructing meaning from the written text (Sharma, 2010). Reading proficiency, therefore, refers to learners' ability to interpret meaning from the written text. According to Connors-Tadros (2014), meaning from the reading text can be interpreted through the interaction among existing knowledge of learner, information suggested by the text and context of reading situation. In this sense, the mechanisms of logical inferences and accessing background information are necessary in the process of interpreting meaning because combination of such mechanism supports a reader to have literal, interpretive and critical comprehension of the reading text (English, 2011). According to her, literal comprehension is the surface meaning of the text; interpretive comprehension suggests readers' ability to identify

the relationship between idea and drawing conclusion; and critical comprehension is the readers' ability to assess the accuracy of textual information differentiating opinions and facts. To enhance such ability, Harmer (2006) suggests to improve the reading skills such as scanning, skimming and reading for detail comprehension. Readers use scanning for particular information; skimming for general information; and detail comprehension for understanding main and supportive idea about the reading text.

Integration of Facebook in teaching reading

Facebook is a social media. It helps its users to be in a virtual community with the access of internet. An individual above 13 years old can be a registered member of this media reaching at its official site of www.facebook.com. After being a member, the individual can search for his or her friends or relatives and send them a request. After accepting the request, the individual can exchange message chatting in the chat box. They can also communicate through audio or video call. The individual can do a number of activities such as uploading and sharing photos or video, posting and commenting to the added texts.

It consists of different features and applications such as photos, page, groups, videos, chat, and wall. Because of these features and applications, an ELT teacher can integrate it for teaching language. In this particular context of teaching reading, it may be a useful e-learning tool. Before the practice of teaching, teacher needs to create a group and learners are to be invited to join it. The teacher needs to be the administrator of the group in order to avoid learners' unnecessary activities. Then, the teacher can upload reading texts followed by reading activities to be performed. Learners are to be encouraged to perform activities by posting their answer, reviewing and commenting to the answer posted by their peers. Teacher can facilitate by encouraging them for their active participation in performing activities.

Studies on the use of Facebook in ELT context

Facebook was officially launched by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. But, researchers seem to have contributed in search of its potentiality in ELT context from the early decade of 2020s. For example, Al-Smadi (2013) examined the effect of this social media on the improvement of vocabulary knowledge. The result showed the positive impact.

But, the quasi experimental study carried out by Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014) in context of Romania didn't support the finding of Al-Smadi (2013) because significant improvement was not noticed in the performance of experimental group.

The research carried out by Ping and Maniam (2015) in context of Malaysia revealed its positive impact on the improvement of learners' writing performance. This finding is supported by Montoneri (2015) because the study carried out in context of Taiwan showed the consistent result with the study of Ping and Maniam (2015). However, both studies consisted of small sample size.

Similarly, the research carried out by Faryadi (2017) in the same context presents the evidence of its positive effect on the enhancement of comprehension skill along with satisfaction and motivation level in learning in English. Although the study consisted of considerable sample size, the study lacked explicit explanation of research design.

The study carried in context of Turkey by Özdemir (2017) examined the effect of this social media on the improvement of intercultural communication skill of learners. The study revealed the positive impact. The researcher has used multiple tools and mixed method approach to make the research more valid. This study supports the previous studies carried out by Chen (2011), Dogoriti and Pange (2014), and Omar, Embi, and Yunus (2012).

Issues in the integration of Facebook in ELT context

Studies have shown the potentiality of this social media in ELT context. However, there are different issues regarding its application in teaching English. For example, it is an e-learning tool and therefore teachers and learners both should have sound knowledge of using it. There is another issue related to ethics that learners need to be above thirteen years old to be the members of this social media. In such case, it can't be applied in teaching language to the learners of below this age group. It requires devices such as mobile or computer. All learners may not have such devices for virtual learning. Further, electricity and internet access is must to use it. Learners from the poor socio-economic background face difficulties in affording expenses for such things. If all learners do not get the advantage of it, there might be a danger of creating class in the class.

Methodology

The objective of the study

The objective of the study was:

To find out the effectiveness of Facebook-integrated instructional method in improving learners' English reading proficiency.

Research question

The following research question was formulated in order to facilitate the objective:

To what extent does Facebook-integrated instructional method improve learners' English reading proficiency?

Hypothesis

The researcher formulated a hypothesis based on studies carried out by Budiardi and Anggraeni (2013), Dogoriti and Pange (2014), Faryadi (2017), Özdemir (2017), Ping and Maniam (2015), and Wichadee (2013). The null and alternative hypotheses have been mentioned below:

H₀: There is no significant difference between traditional and Facebook-integrated instructional method in improving learners' English reading proficiency.

H_a: There is significant difference between traditional and Facebook-integrated instructional method in improving learners' English reading proficiency.

Participants

The researcher used a rule of thumb suggested by Borg and Gall (1996) for the selection of research participants. 60 participants studying in grade eleven of a government school located in Bara district, Nepal were randomly selected.

Formation of equivalent groups

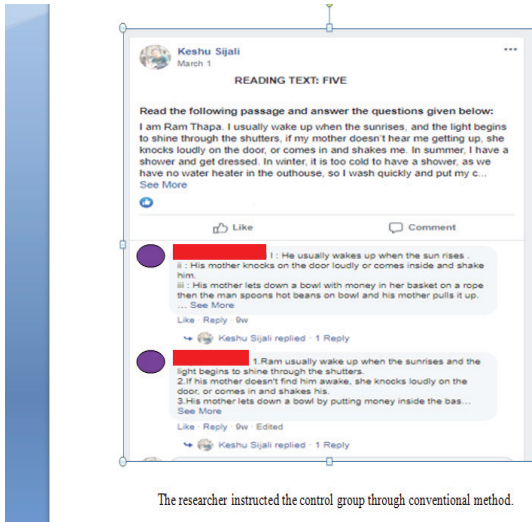
The researcher grouped the sampled participants randomly into experimental and control groups based on pre-test scores they had obtained. For this, the researcher listed the participants with their marks in an ascending order and made 30 pairs ensuring that each pair had similar marks. Then, the researcher selected a participant from each pairs for experimental group and other for control group with random assignment.

Ethical consideration

The researcher has entirely taken his moral responsibility in conducting this study. For example, authors have been credited for the idea cited in the text. The researcher also received informed consent from the authority of the institution and participants before conducting the study. Similarly, the researcher used appropriate statistics while analysing data.

Treatment

The researcher created a Facebook group and invited participants from experimental groups to join it. After making them the members of the group, the researcher played a role of an instructor to instruct them through Facebook. While instructing, the researcher uploaded content based reading materials followed by activities to be performed for enhancing reading proficiency. Activities were mainly based on vocabulary exercises, micro reading skills such as scanning, skimming, reading for main idea, and reading for supportive idea. The researcher encouraged participants to post their answer, review and comment to the answer posted by their peers. For example, the Figure 44.1 shows a sample of performing reading activities. The name and profile picture of the participant students have been made anonymous due to ethics.



The researcher instructed the control group through conventional method.

Figure 44.1: A Sample of reading activity performed in Facebook group.

The researcher instructed the control group through conventional method. A month period was allocated for conducting instructional activities.

Control of extraneous variables

The study comprises of two variables viz. independent and dependent variables. Instructional methods such teaching through Facebook and conventional method are independent variables while learners' reading proficiency is dependent variables. But, different variables such variations in the instructional materials, time frame and instructors could affect the magnitude of relationship between dependent and independent variables. Therefore, same instructional materials were introduced to both groups following the same time frame to control extraneous variables. Similarly, different instructors possess different linguistic competency and it could influence the magnitude of two variables. Therefore, the researcher himself instructed both groups as an instructor. However, an ELT teacher of secondary level was assigned a job of checking their answer sheet in order to minimize the bias.

Instrument

The researcher used following instruments to collect data:

- **Pre-Test**

The researcher administered pre-test to the participants before introducing intervention to understand their current level of reading proficiency.

- **Post-Test**

After introducing intervention programme for a month period, the researcher administered post-test to both groups for examining whether the implemented instructional method could improve learners' reading proficiency.

Validity and reliability

The researcher consulted a subject specialist to ensure the validity of the instrument which could cover the elements of reading skill. The instrument was used based on suggestions given by the specialist.

The researcher adopted a test-retest method for assessing the reliability of the instrument. For this, the researcher selected 15 students from the same level but they were not included in the main

study. A reading test was administered to them and the same test was used for the same group after two weeks. But, no feedback was given to them. The researcher used coefficient correlation to analyse the test scores obtained in test and retest. Significant correlation ($r = .731$) was found between these two test scores at .01 level ($p < .001$).

Approach of data analysis

Test scores obtained by experimental and control group were compared by using mean and standard deviation of descriptive statistics. But, hypothesis was tested by using inferential i.e. parametric test such as independent samples t-test and paired samples t-test at 95% confidence level. Before the implementation of this test, distribution of normality and homogeneity of sample variance were assessed. The z-values of skewness and kurtosis of both groups in their pre and post-test were found between ± 1.96 which shows that data are approximately normally distributed. Similarly, data were noticed homogeneous because Levene's test revealed that significant value of these groups in pre-test ($p = .282$) and post-test ($p = .429$) is above .05 ($p > .05$).

Results

Table 44.1 displays the comparison between experimental and control groups in terms of their pre-test scores of reading proficiency. The result of independent samples t-test shows that the level of reading proficiency of experimental group ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.91$) and control group ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.65$) is not significant difference $t(58) = .000$, $p = 1.00$ ($p > 0.05$). It shows that both groups were of possessing similar level of reading proficiency and the improvement they perform could be attributed to implemented instructional method.

Table 44.1: Two groups' pre-test scores related to reading skills.

	Groups						
	Experimental (n=30)		Control (n=30)				
Elements	M	SD	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Pre-test Score	4.26	1.91	4.26	1.65	.000	58	1.00

Table 44.2 displays the comparison between experimental and control group in terms of each micro skills of reading. The result shows that these two groups are not significantly different in terms of any of the elements of reading skill because p -value is above .05 in each elements of reading.

Table 44.2: Comparison of pre-test score in terms of different reading skills

	Groups						
	Experimental (n=30)		Control (n=30)				
Elements	M	SD	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Vocabulary Knowledge	1.96	.999	1.866	1.04	-.379	58	.706
Scanning	1.10	.803	1.166	.791	.324	58	.747
Skimming	.200	.484	.266	.691	.433	58	.667
Understanding Main Idea	.566	.626	.566	.773	.000	58	1.00
Understanding Supportive Idea	.433	.626	.400	.674	-.198	58	.843

Table 44.3 displays the comparison between pre and post-test performance of experimental and control group in terms of reading proficiency. The result of paired samples t -test shows that performance of experimental group in post-test ($M = 6.70$, $SD = 2.36$) is better than pre-test ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.91$) with significant different $t(29) = -5.581$, $p < .001$. But, such improvement was not seen in case of control group because their performance in post-test ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 2.04$) in comparison to pre-test ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.65$) is not significant difference $t(29) = -.583$, $p = .564$.

Table 44.3: Two groups' pre and post test scores related to reading skills

	Tests						
	Pre		Post				
Groups	M	SD	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Experimental	4.26	1.91	6.70	2.36	-5.581	29	.000
Control	4.26	1.65	4.50	2.04	-.583	29	.564

Table 44.4 displays the comparison of pre and post-test performance of experimental and control group in terms of each elements of reading skill. Range in the average scores of experimental group in post-test is .566 to 2.73 while in pre-test was .200 to 1.96. This group performed significantly better in post-test in relation to each reading elements ($p < .05$) except the element of understanding supportive idea ($p = .103$).

Similarly, range in the average scores of control group in post-test is .166 to 2.23 while in the pre-test was .266 to 1.86. But, this group couldn't perform significantly better in any of the elements of reading skill because p -value in each element is greater than .05.

Table 44.4: Comparison of the two groups' pre and post-test scores related to reading skills

		Tests						
		Pre		Post				
Elements	Groups	M	SD	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Vocabulary Knowledge	Experimental	1.96	.999	2.73	.907	-3.69	29	.001
	Control	1.86	1.04	2.23	.935	-1.88	29	.070
Scanning	Experimental	1.10	.803	1.70	.876	-3.39	29	.002
	Control	1.16	.791	.900	.711	1.54	29	.133
Skimming	Experimental	.200	.484	.566	.773	-2.62	29	.014
	Control	.266	.691	.166	.461	.619	29	.541
Understanding Main Idea	Experimental	.566	.626	1.00	.982	-2.14	29	.040
	Control	.566	.773	.600	.855	-.197	29	.845
Understanding Supportive Idea	Experimental	.433	.626	.700	.595	-1.68	29	.103
	Control	.400	.674	.600	.855	-1.29	29	.206

Table 44.5 displays the comparison between two groups in terms of their achievement scores. It was calculated subtracting their scores obtained in pre-test from that of post-test. The result shows that experimental group performed better than control group with significant difference in the reading elements of scanning and skimming ($p < .05$). But, such significant improvement was not seen in the rest of reading elements ($p > .05$).

Table 44.5: Comparison of achievement score of reading skills

	Groups						
	Experimental (n=30)		Control (n=30)				
Elements	M	SD	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Vocabulary Knowledge	.766	1.13	.366	1.06	-1.40	58	.165
Scanning	.600	.968	-.266	.944	-3.50	58	.001
Skimming	.366	.764	-.100	.884	-2.18	58	.033
Understanding Main Idea	.433	1.10	.033	.927	-1.51	58	.134
Understanding Supportive Idea	.266	.868	.200	.846	-3.01	58	.764

Table 44.6 displays the comparison between two groups in relation to overall performance of reading proficiency. It was calculated by adding achievement scores gained in all elements of reading skill. The result shows that experimental group ($M = 2.433$, $SD = 2.38$) performed better than control group ($M = .233$, $SD = 2.19$) in the improvement of reading skill with significant difference $t(58) = -3.71$, $p < .001$ which doesn't support to accept the null hypothesis. Cohen's d is 0.960 which shows that effect size is substantive. It presents an evidence that Facebook integrated instructional method is much more effective than traditional method of teaching in improving learners' reading proficiency.

Table 44.6: Overall comparison of reading skills

	Groups						
	Experimental (n=30)		Control (n=30)				
Elements	M	SD	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Reading Achievement Score	2.43	2.38	.233	2.19	-3.71	58	.000

Discussion

This study was carried out in order to find out the effectiveness of Facebook-integrated instructional method in improving learners' reading proficiency in English. The result showed the positive impact of this social media in enhancing reading proficiency because experimental group performed better than control group in post-test with significant difference. The finding of the study is inconsistent with the study carried out by Monica-Ariana and

Anamaria-Mirabela (2014). However, the study supports the studies carried out by Al-Smadi (2013), Chen (2011), Dogoriti and Pange (2014), Faryadi (2017), Montoneri (2015), Omar, Embi, and Yunus (2012), Özdemir (2017), and Ping and Maniam (2015) because the study provides an evidence of potentiality of this social media in enhancing learners' reading proficiency. In this sense, this might be an alternative instructional method of teaching reading skill.

Limitations of the study

The study is not free from its drawbacks because the study comprises of small sample size. The researcher strived for controlling extraneous variables throughout the study. However, other factors might have affected the study. The intervention was introduced only for a short period due to constraint of time frame. Further, focus was given only on literal comprehension of reading proficiency. There might be threat to its external validity because the researcher could not examine its effect beyond the study. However, consistent result with previous research supports for its generalisation.

Direction for future research

The study focused on the investigation of effectiveness of Facebook in promoting reading proficiency of secondary level learners. Therefore, future research can be carried out to investigate its effectiveness in promoting other language skills and aspects. Its effectiveness can also be examined among the learners of other level. Further, the study was confined to enhance literal comprehension of reading skill. Future research can be carried out to examine its effect on the improvement of interpretive and critical comprehension of reading skill.

Conclusion

This experimental study aimed at investigating the impact of Facebook-integrated instructional method on the improvement of learners' reading proficiency. The result revealed its effectiveness because experimental group outperformed its counterpart. The finding is consistent with the previous research. Therefore, this study gives an insight to ELT practitioners to implement it because this instructional method might be an alternative instructional method to

enhance reading proficiency of learners who are bringing up in the virtual world.

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Notes

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An Anthropological Study of the Role of Maoist Insurgency in the Creation of Federal Nepal

Dr Chandra Kumar Laksamba

Abstract

This paper explores the role of Maoist insurgency in the creation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. The Maoist insurgency of Nepal that began in 1996 ended in 2006 directly losing more than 13,000 people within a decade. This decade-long civil war was one of the bloodiest conflicts of modern times. The country also spent another decade in the process of peace building. During the peace process, political parties of the country successfully abolished the existing parliament and formed a Constitution Assembly (CA). The CA declared the nation as the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal in 2008 ending 240-year-old, the Hindu Kingdom ruled by monarchism. Finally, the CA promulgated a constitution in 2015. I used qualitative-political-anthropology as a research methodology to explore the contents of highly politicized articles that were published in Himal Khabarpatrika and Mulyankan during the emergence and growth of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) Maoist insurgency (1995 - 2006). In the past, the oppressed and socially marginalised groups attempted several occasions to bring changes in the socio-political structure without any success. However, the Maoist insurgency that began in February 1996 succeeded in capitalizing them by generating an environment for

socio-political change. The paper has found substantial changes brought in the structures of the country, such as in the system of governance, politics, social organisation, or inter-group relations. However, oppressed, and marginalised populations, war-wounded, and soldiers with disabilities from both sides the former People Liberation Army (PLA) and the state are still living in poverty and miserable condition.

Keywords: Maoist; Insurgency; Oppression; Oppressed; Creation; Public Meaning; New Democracy; Federalism; Nepal

Introduction

Nepali people have been fighting against oppressions and for their rights since the 1930s. However, the rulers and elites keep aborting and diverting the struggles from reaching their destinations. The first struggle for democracy was aborted in 1951 that transformed power only from the Rana Regime to the monarch. But people were kept in dark by telling them the country achieved democracy. Political leaders again created an illusion in 1990 by interpreting completion of democracy restoration process that was aborted in 1951. Thus, the CPN (Maoist) launched a decade-long civil war in 1996, aiming to bring people's democracy in the country which eventually ended up with the death toll over 13,000 people.

Background

This paper, therefore, concentrates on exploring the public meanings that were created in the emergence and growth of insurgency. The exploration is important as these meanings, often created in rather informal settings, particularly by both the normally silent mass and the critically vocal segments of society, were often undermined by academia and policymakers alike. Before the emergence of conflict, societal discourses, such as social interactions, media, and political reporting, political and non-political deliberations at various levels -micro, meso, and macro, both formally and informally, had seriously highlighted the critical historical, socio-political, and economic problems faced by the country. Exploration of these various formal and informal discourses, including media reporting, indicates that historically Nepal has been the victim of bad governance as the rulers have mostly been self-serving, and grossly

lacking in openness, efficiency, and accountability to the people. Similarly, democratically elected successive governments of the 1990s only contributed to the production and reproduction of social inequality and poverty, and to the institutionalisation of corruption. By 1995, the legitimacy of the major political parties was beginning to be undermined and their authority was being questioned. On the political front, the Panchayat politicians held fast to the democratic rule, despite their expulsion by the popular people's movement of 1990 which bore on the sentiment of the general public. Although the forces of production - such as poor and socially marginalised groups- have time and again risen to bring about changes in the socio-political structure, their struggles were ignored. However, the Maoist insurgency that began in February 1996 succeeded in capitalising over these social inequalities generating an environment for socio-political change. Various discourses during the conflict have substantially highlighted the relevance of insurgency. They have created and spread the message through micro informal means, which proved to be instrumental in creating a positive environment for expanding and growing the conflict, giving it a momentum.

A public meaning of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal has been created with the emergence and growth of the CPN (Maoist) insurgency through the analysis of contents of media publications. To explore the public meaning, the paper has been divided into four sections. The first section defines the public meaning in the context of the CPN (Maoist) insurgency. The second section presents a glimpse of the CPN (Maoist) which has provided a brief insight of how and why it emerged and expanded. The third section covers the methodology and methods of data collection. Finally, the fourth section is the exploration and interpretation of the CPN (Maoist) insurgency looking in particular at the causes of the insurgency and creation of public meaning during the period of 1996 - 2006 followed by successful abolishment of the existing parliament and forming up CA and declaration of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal in 2008, ending 240-yearold the Hindu Kingdom ruled by a monarch. Ultimately, the CA promulgated a constitution of Nepal in 2015. The findings and discussion section has been divided into three phases, such as 1996 - 1999 as the first phase, 2000 - 2006 the second phase, and 2006 - 2020 as the third phase.

Public meaning in the context of the CPN (Maoist's) emergence and growth

People's action that affects people, community, and nation or state is called public meaning. In the context of the CPN (Maoist) insurgency, public meaning is an oppressed people's interest, belonging, voice or action which is directly associated to the socio-political and economic problems of the people of Nepal. When people's voices and actions become recognised as a public meaning, it becomes an integral part of the people's power and movement, which can be both constructive and destructive. But it solely depends on how the power is exercised. The CPN (Maoist) carried out both constructive and destructive actions in the process of establishing of what they term as a 'New Democracy' (Naya Janabad).

A glimpse of the CPN (Maoist)'s insurgency

Initially, there was only one communist party in Nepal, which was founded in 1949 in Calcutta, India, by Pushpa Lal Shrestha. Since its formation, the CPN evolved into the two largest parties of the country, namely CPN (Maoist) and CPN United Marxist Leninist (UML), and another half dozens of small parties. The main cause of division after division of communist parties is differences in ideological interpretation mainly on socio-political and economic issues. Instead of finding ways for unification, they always preferred to split, and this has been developed as a way of life within the communist parties of Nepal. Hence, the culture of division mentality is heavily embedded in all communist parties of Nepal to this day regardless of their shape and size.

As mentioned earlier, over the years of ideological exercises, the CPN (Maoist) emerged in 1995 after many splits and mergers from the original CPN. Regarding the formation of the CPN (Maoist) and its principal guideline 'Maoism', Mulyankan (1994) commented in the following way:

The CPN (Maoist) has taken 'Maoism' as the principal guideline which has set an ideological discourse as 'Maoism' which is a 'thought' developed by Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) going beyond the conventional Marxism-Leninism paths. Hence, the 'Maoism' without the Marxism-Leninism is incomplete and it becomes an unscientific guideline.

In contrary to this, Thapa (2004) wrote:

The CPN (Unity Centre/renamed Maoist) accepted 'Mao Tse-tung Thought' as the third, new and better phase of Marxism-Leninism and itself as Maoism' and passed the resolution to initiate a 'people's' war to bring about a new democratic revolution in Nepal.

Thapa has further substantiated the notion quoting the Worker, June 1996:

It would be based on the lesson of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism regarding revolutionary violence. On the occasion of formulation of the plan for initiation of the process that will unfold as protracted people's war based on the strategy of encircling the city from the countryside according to the specificities of our country, the Party once again reiterates its eternal commitment to the theory of people's war developed by Mao as the universal and invincible Marxist theory of war.

In this sense, the CPN (Maoist) accepted 'Mao Tse-tung Thought' as 'Maoism' and the party Central Committee announced that the Party would be based on the principle of Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism. It meant a protracted people's war, where a city is normally encircled from the countryside. This is the theory of people's war that was developed by the late Chairman Mao, which is based on the Marxist theory of war, and was used in the liberation of China.

In this context, the CPN (Maoist) had a clear political goal, which was to overthrow the 'semi-feudal and semi-colonial' system led by the king to establish the 'New Democracy' where oppressed, poor, landless and backward indigenous nationalities would be able to exercise the power. Concerning this, the CPN Maoist (1995) document called 'Plan for the Historic Initiation of the People's War' stated:

This plan would be based on the aim of completing the new democratic revolution after the destruction of feudalism and imperialism, then immediately moving towards socialism, and, by way of cultural revolutions based on the theory of continuous revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, marching to communism - the golden future of

the whole humanity. We are firm that it is a crime against the proletariat and the general masses of the people to start an armed struggle without the firm conviction of carrying it through to the end. We shall never allow this struggle to become a mere instrument for introducing partial reforms in the condition of the people or terminating in a simple compromise by exerting pressure on the reactionary classes. Thus, our armed struggle will be totally free of all sorts of petty bourgeois, narrow nationalist, religion-communal and casteist illusions.

Hence, the above glimpse has highlighted the goal of the CPN (Maoist) insurgency. Media played a vital role in the meaning creation process publishing articles and widely covering news on insurgency and drawing the attention of the general public. To explore this assumption, a research methodology is required which has been covered in the next paragraph.

Methodology

I used qualitative-political-anthropology as a research methodology to explore the contents of highly politicised articles that have been published in Himal Khabarpatrika and Mulyankan (Plate 45.1) during the emergence and growth of the CPN (Maoist) insurgency (1995 - 2006). The basic criteria in choosing the research approach is based on suitability, effectiveness, and representation for the targeted research topic so that research findings would be of high quality. I purposefully selected these two Nepali language magazines which have become highly influential in spreading and shaping people's views due to their overly critical, political, academic, and analytical nature.



Plate 45.1: Collection of Himal Khabarpatrika and Mulyankan magazines

Hence, this paper aims to explore these social discourses. It includes the Maoist party documents, and Maoist insurgency related published literature in general and Himal Khabarpatrika and Mulyankan published between 1995 and 2006 in particular, which have created public discourse in the context of Maoist insurgency and generated public meaning in Nepal.

Exploration and interpretation of the CPN (Maoist)'s insurgency and public meaning

The emergence of the CPN (Maoist) insurgency in Nepal has been perceived from two different perspectives such as views from the centre of the left (articles and news published in Mulyankan monthly) and views from the centre of the right (articles and news published in Himal Khabarpatrika). People from the centre of the left perceive that it is a poor, marginalised, oppressed, and indigenous people's uprising because of suppression and marginalisation of them by the

upper class and social elites. The centre of the right group sees it as a failed development and indigenous people's uprising. A few, especially the royalists, including the former king, have concluded that it was an outcome of bad governance and failed democracy. According to Upreti, (2002), the root causes of the emergence of the CPN (Maoist) are:

Rampant poverty, structural inequality, political oppression, social discrimination against certain groups like Kamaya, women, Dalit, etc., failure of the public administration, widespread corruption and continuous failure of the successive governments to address these structural problems are all root causes of the current conflict in Nepal. The Maoist insurgency is only the manifestation or intermediate result of these problems. Feudal legacy, political instability, dependency syndromes, lack of transparency and the social exclusion are further contributing to fuel the conflict. In addition, the growing awareness of the Nepalese people, awareness about poverty and inequality and the destruction of indigenous social networks in Nepal.

As stated by Upreti above, academics and think-tanks of the country argue that it is a socio-economic and political problem that has been building since the foundation of modern Nepal.

Causes of the insurgency and the creation of public meaning

Since the unification of modern Nepal, middle and elite classes of Brahmins, Chhetris, and Newars were given opportunities to enter the state mechanism. Since then, they have been consolidating their privileges and at the same time, holding the state power. This type of power became dominant due to fear; hope remains intact. Lukes (2005) writes, "power as domination is the ability to constrain the choices of others". Almost all political and bureaucratic positions were occupied by people from the middle and elite classes of these three castes that were also very close to the royal power. They were advisors to the king, the country's policymakers, controllers of knowledge, and facilitators to global powers. The CPN (Maoist) called them 'social elites and bureaucratic comprador classes. According to Marxist classification, the majority of these castes form the feudal class in Nepal. The above, middle and elite class of

three castes succeeded in settling down in places like Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Birganj, Pokhara, Bhairahawa, and Nepalganj which are economically and politically important places for Nepal, and "those inhabiting the backward and oppressed regions are often indigenous people" Bhattarai (2003a). Most indigenous nationalities are socially, economically, and politically excluded and marginalised by the dominant elites of Brahmins, Chhetris, and Newars. Thus, Thapa and Sijapati (2003) wrote:

Many of Nepal's socio-cultural groups have never had access to the state apparatus. The presence of Dalit (so-called untouchable), Madhesi (people of Tarai origin) and Janajati (members of ethnic groups), in the state has been negligible. Because of this polarisation, Nepali civil servants operating from Kathmandu, are oriented to the Kathmandu valley – seen to be the real hub of national life – and the welfare of ethnic villagers in remote places is completely ignored. As a result, the incidence of poverty is higher among ethnic groups ... whilst the other hardest hit has always been Dalits.

The socio-political and economic conditions have remained unchanged in the country regardless of political changes. Considering this, the Maoists started their revolution in the early 1990s from the Magar-occupied areas called Rukum and Rolpa where "Magars, which make up 7.2 per cent of Nepal's population, are the largest ethnic group in the country" (Shaha, 1996). People of this area have been socially, politically, and economically marginalised since the unification of Nepal. Shaha further writes, "and ... this very area of Magarat is now bearing the brunt of the Maoist "People's War" launched by Mohan Vaidya aka Kiran, Puspa Kamal Dahal aka Prachanda along with Baburam Bhattarai and Pampha Bhusal of the United People's Front (UPF)". Rukum and Rolpa became the safe haven for the CPN (Maoist) insurgency. This is a classic example and indication of public meaning created by the CPN (Maoist)'s insurgency at the early stage as the local people understood the meaning of the Maoist's uprising and started to join the insurgency.

Additional causes that fuelled insurgency are, in the 1990s, Nepal was "... the last second poorest country in the world" (Ibid). . The government statistics have shown that '38% of Nepal's population live under the poverty line'. Prachanda (Bhattarai, 2003b) stated,

“more than 72% of the Nepali people live below the poverty line” and annual per-capita income was only “US\$210” [11]. However, “per capita income was less than US\$100 in the Maoist stronghold of Rolpa” (CBS, 2000). Nepal is a country of unfairness. As mentioned above, the feudal class and the social elite are policymakers and the way such policy was made always biased in various ways e.g. donor manipulation, class marginalisation, caste exclusion, urban favouritism, etc. About this, Thapa and Sijapati state, “the economy has worked in favour of the urban and rural rich and a handful of elites.” As a consequence, policy never matches with reality, never fully transforms into practice and used to end without achieving its objectives. Nepal has suffered from this malady for a long time. This has created the gap between rich and poor, urban and rural, upper caste and lower caste and finally the state has been converted into a puppet, dependent on donor agencies. Bhattarai (2003b) described:

The present era one of imperialism or monopoly capitalism, unequal and uneven development inherent in capitalism-- is suffering from underdevelopment and poverty. The gap between the rich and the poor has never been so wide in the history of mankind and this gap is growing ever wider.

Besides, the state rulers of Nepal often failed to put people to the centre stage of governance system. Consequently, people suffered from a lack of basic needs such as food, housing, drinking water, health, employment and so on. Moreover, there was social discrimination, marginalisation, and exclusion to poor, Janajatis, Madhesis, and women. Foreign loans and donation from 1951 to date did not bring any changes; instead, the state became much poorer and “this dependence has also been rising over time” (Shaha, 2003).

Even after the restoration of democracy in 1990, both the ruling and opposing parties did not take the socio-economic and political issues seriously, rather spending their time on corruption and personal gain than the development of the country. “The national– level politicians and political parties have failed Nepal” (Karki, and Seddon, 2003). The situation of the major political parties became particularly serious and had got worse by 1995. On the political front, the Panchayat politicians again ruled the country despite their expulsion by the popular people’s movement of 1990.

They further state, "it is the dismal performance of these mainstream national political groupings so far that has strengthened the Maoist appeal to the people in some areas."

Nepali people's movements against the oppression have been aborted many times without a full achievement. For instance, the revolution of 1950/51 against the Rana rule that aimed to establish a broad-based democracy was terminated with an agreement between the monarch, the Ranas and India. The students' movement to overthrow the Panchyat regime in 1978/79 ended in a referendum in which the government used all available means to retain the status quo. The people's uprising of 1990 was aborted by granting the system of partial democracy. Thus, all these movements have ended without achieving the goals of the Nepali people. Having said that, although there was only a partial democracy in the state, since 1990 people were allowed to organize and express their views openly. There is no doubt that the Maoists took full advantage of those political privileges in different areas of their revolutionary work. In this context, the system itself created an environment where new public meanings favourable to the Maoist insurgency could emerge.

Hence, these structural inequalities created by rulers and elites have made an environment conducive for the emergence of the CPN (Maoist) insurgency as well as highlighting the importance and its meaning to the people of Nepal. At the same time, under the instruction of the multi-party government of 1995, the police forces carried out an operation, code named 'Romeo', to suppress the Maoists of Rukum and Rolpa. Police killed many poor farmers and peasants and raped their mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters. In regard to this, Karki and Seddon (2003) wrote:

During Operation Romeo in 1995, the police were particularly violent and even barbaric in operations in the mid-western hills. They treated everyone as a potential Maoist and many innocent people were arrested, ill-treated, tortured and killed almost randomly.

Many poor villagers left their villages for India and young boys and girls joined the CPN (Maoist). The remaining fathers and mothers became supporters and provided shelter to the Maoist fighters. Thus, the local people became more politically aware because of police

oppression, rather than the Maoists' education, and joined the CPN (Maoist) insurgency. This gave a clear public meaning to the people.

Findings and discussion

The findings and discussion section has been divided into three phases, such as 1996 - 1999 as the first phase, 2000 - 2006 second phase, and 2006 - 2020 as the third phase. The First Phase 1996 – 1999: Findings and Discussion In the process of initiating the insurgency, the newly formed CPN (Maoist) declared its People's War to establish a new democracy in the country. On 4th February 1996, the party submitted the 40 point demands to the government with the warning of armed struggle if the government ignored it. However, the government did not take the Maoist demands seriously. Consequently, on 13th of February 1996, the CPN (Maoist) declared 'people's war' and launched attacks with knives and homemade guns, in Sindhuli (eastern Nepal), Gorkha (central Nepal) and Rukum and Rolpa (western Nepal). They attacked the Agriculture Development Bank in Gorkha; seized the loan papers signed by the farmers and the land registration certificates (lalpurja) and returned them to the respective farmers. The Maoist attacked police posts in Rukum, Rolpa, and Sindhuli.

In the period between 1996 and 1999, the Maoist carried out several operations throughout the country. They successfully captured weapons from the Nepal Police Forces and established guerrilla zones. The party demonstrated the existence of the central military commission. According to the Nepal National Intellectuals' Organisation (NNIO) (1997) which analysed the Maoist efforts used for various purposes, "the Maoist carried out 80% publicity, 15% destruction and 5% other activities." The CPN (Maoist) carried out 80% publicity to create public meaning at a local, national, and global level. Besides, a special issue of Mulyankan (1997:6-11) was issued with the front cover "Kasto Rahyo 'Janyuddha' ko Ek Barsa? (How was the One Year of 'People's War'?), Maobadi 'Janayuddha' ko Ek Barsa ko Samikchha (Review of the One Year of Maoist 'People's War')." It had published articles covering all-round activities of the CPN (Maoist). Most of the writers, commenters, and reviewers were leftist political leaders, think tanks, and academics. One or two were from other schools of thought. The editorial of

the special issue explained that “this one year of guerrilla warfare movement has achieved to establish the CPN (Maoist) as a distinct and different political entity in the Nepali politics.” In the review, General Secretary of the CPN (UML) Madhav Kumar Nepal said, “we do not agree with the current movement of the CPN (Maoist) as this is heading in the opposite direction of the 'New People's Democracy'" DFID (2003). Another renowned communist leader, Comrade Mohan Bikram Singh, the Party General Secretary of CPN (Mashal) commented, “the CPN (Maoist)'s struggle is an immature and childish activity" Sharma (2003). Academics, writers, and other political leaders had also expressed their views in a similar way. However, Comrade Prachanda, the General Secretary of the CPN (Maoist) stated, “the first year of the 'People's War' for freedom has remained successful, historical and memorable. More than 70 Nepali mother's sons and daughters have sacrificed their lives since the commencement of the 'People's War' last year". This publicity definitely played a vital role in creating public meaning of insurgency and the speed of the struggle had accelerated. To control the CPN (Maoist) movement, the government decided to table a terrorist bill at the parliament. Regarding this, the editorial of Mulyankan, Himal Khabarpatrika (1999a) wrote:

The government has tabled a new terrorist bill in the parliament to suppress the Maoists but those who have decided for 'do or die' are not affected by this bill. Instead, it will create more terror and people will become fed up with the government and join the Maoist insurgency.

As mentioned above, on the one hand, the government carried out an operation called 'Kilo Sierra Two' across all the Maoist-affected areas of the country in order to stop Maoists from spreading further. On the other hand, the Maoists revolution had accelerated and the rate of joining into the 'revolution' had jumped. Similarly, local, national and international media reporting had unexpectedly increased to cover the news of the conflict. Talk and tale on the insurgency started to spread across the nation. People became interested in knowing about the insurgency. They were more and more interested, the media coverage became ever more extensive, and knowledge about the Maoists and their insurgency became more widespread. According to DFID, Himal Khabarpatrika (1999b) “hundreds of

innocent civilians were reported killed, tortured and raped by police during 'Kilo Sierra Two' operations". Sharma (2004) writes, "The Maoists demonstrated their strength by carrying out simultaneous attacks in twenty-five districts on the night of 22 September 1999." From August until December in 1999, Himal Khabarpatrika published a series of articles in relation to the CPN (Maoist)'s insurgency such as "Maobadi and Congress" by Gaunle (1999), "Three questions related to the Maobadi" by Jayaprakash Ananda [26], "Maobadi problem or Solution" by Bhattarai (2003a). Gaunle (1999) wrote, "The Nepali Congress Central Committee spent long hours discussing the statement issued by the CPN (Maoist) which says 'historical necessity of the joint revolutionary government of nationalists and communists forces'." In a similar way, Mulyankan (2002) wrote :

The Maoist insurgency has reached four years of age. During this time more than 1,000 people have been killed. On the one hand, the government is trying to suppress the insurgency by introducing the operation called "The Jungle Search". In the name of this operation, more than dozen people have already been killed. On the other hand, the CPN (Maoist) has recently announced the strategy of the establishment of base areas.

The statement above clearly indicates the CPN (Maoist) insurgency's height and meaning during the periods of the late 1990s. Media, journalists, writers, academia, politicians, and civil society activists started to take even more notice. About this, Sharma (2004) wrote:

Prior to 1995, few people were aware that the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) was one of the dozens of communist parties that existed in Nepal. Press releases issued by the Maoist leader Prachanda (a.k.a. Pushpa Kamal Dahal) were largely ignored by the media; even when his statements were printed, they did not enjoy a wide readership. By late 2001, things had changed to such an extent that each and every word that came from Prachanda attracted a tremendous amount of interest and speculation amongst all sections of Nepali society.

Further, the following section explores the public meaning that was created by the insurgency and the role played by the Media in it between the period of 2000 until 2006.

The second phase 2000 – 2006- findings and discussion

The CPN (Maoist) stepped up the scale of attacks from the year 2000. For example, they overran the headquarters of Dolpa district on the 25th of September 2000. This was the first historic large-scale attack carried out since the declaration of the people's war in 1996.

In the meantime, the Government started debating at the parliament for uses of military force against the Maoist insurgency. In this context, the editorial of Himal Khabarpatrika (2004) expressed:

On the one hand, the Maoists have accelerated the revolution by spreading their control in one third of the Districts of the country. On the other hand, the Government has started debating on 'the uses of the existing military force or the formation of a paramilitary force' in order to fight against the Maoists revolution.

There were some in favour and some in opposition to the motion that was debated by the Government. The editorial Himal Khabarpatrika (2004) argued, "It is undemocratic to say the Government and the Prime Minister do not have authority to use the military force of the state when it is needed."

In regards to the uses of the Army to suppress the Maoists, Jhalanath Khanal, one of the leaders of the CPN (UML) stated his argument in his article published in Himal Khabarpatrika (2004) in the following way even after the Dolpa attack:

The Royal Nepal Army (RNA) is an integral part of the Government and it comes under the control of the Government. Therefore, on recommendation of the Security Council, the Government can use the RNA when the circumstances arise. In the case of the CPN (Maoist) problem –this is political and needs to be solved by political means such as table talk (negotiation) in order to achieve a productive and healthy solution.

Editorial of Mulyankan (2001) wrote, "If the Government really wants to solve the Maoist problem, it needs to find the root causes of the insurgency in order to solve the problem by negotiation and roundtable talk." For negotiation "The ball is in the court of the Government" Jwala (2002). Sharma (2003) writes, "Much had changed in the Nepalese political situation since the Dolpa operations

of the Maoists". After Dolpa attack, for the first time, there was direct contact between the government and the Maoists. This was a clear indication of the recognition of the CPN (Maoist) power and the creation of public meaning. As regards to this, Mulyankan (2004) wrote, "The current politics of Nepal are revolving around the issues raised by the Maobadi".

Towards the end of 2000 and during early 2001, "the CPN (Maoist) announced its alternative government in three districts namely: Rukum, Salyan and Jajarkot of West Nepal. This announcement created an upheaval in Nepali mainstream politics" Himal Khabarpatrika (2004a). One after another, on the 25th of February 2001, the CPN (Maoist) announced its new doctrine, 'Prachanda Path', a distinctive Maoist ideology adapted for the context of Nepal. Sharma (2003) explained 'Prachanda Path' in the following way:

'Prachanda Path' has the flexibility to provide the CPN (Maoist) with an avenue to escape from becoming mired in communist fundamentalism. ... Keeping in mind the new changes the world is experiencing, none of the proletariat revolutions of the past was deemed to be as appropriate as 'Prachanda Path' in the Nepali context.

The 'Prachanda Path' was a blend of Mao's model of a protracted people's war with the Marx-Lenin's theory of general armed revolution and contextualised into the Nepali context. Gautam (2001) argued "there are no ideological, philosophical and political bases to become a Path". In this sense the 'Prachanda Path' only encourages worship of the individual or personality cult (byaktipuja). Despite criticism, they had claimed their objective had been adopted in accordance with their new guiding principle, which was 'to consolidate and expand base areas and move forward and toward a people's government in the centre'.

The Maoists demonstrated their power carrying out a half dozen attacks in April 2001 at Rukum, Rukum Kot, Naumule, and Dailekh killed 70 policemen. They abducted 69 police from Holeri, Rolpa on 12 July 2001, as reported by both Himal Khabarpatrika and Mulayankan.

The government and the Maoists declared a ceasefire on 22 July 2001. The first round of peace talks took place between the government and the Maoists on 30 August 2001, followed by

second and third rounds on 14 and 13 November 2001, respectively. The Maoists were dissatisfied with the government and ended the four-month long ceasefire with well-coordinated attacks throughout the country including on the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) on 23 and 25 November 2001. About the attack, Mulyankan commented, "the CPN (Maoist) made mistake calling off smoothly progressing negotiation, and by attacking Nepal Army camps." Jwala added "The country is suffering from this mistake." The government declared a 'state of emergency', denounced the CPN (Maoist) as a 'terrorist organisation' and proclaimed the entry of the RNA into the conflict on 26 November 2001. That meant the Maoist armed force, the People Liberation Army (PLA) had to fight with three different types of government armed forces i.e. RNA, Armed Police Forces (APF) and ordinary Police Forces (PF). Since the government's declaration, most of the nation's development budgets had been channelled into the armed forces for the purpose of arms and ancillaries. Both the Government and Maoists were committed to war. The development process of the nation was completely at a standstill. By that time, more than 8,000 people had already lost their lives. For these very reasons, the battle between the Nepali Armed Forces and CPN (Maoist) PLA had gone beyond the stage of conflict and entered the stage of war i.e. 'Civil War'. In the war, the PLA carried out offensive manoeuvres and the government armed forces were in defensive position. In the course of PLA's offensive manoeuvres, the PLA attacked:

1. Two telecommunication security camps, Ratmate and Kaprukot on 7 and 8 December 2001, respectively.
2. Bhakundebeshi Area Police Office (APO) on 5 February 2002.
3. Sanphebagar Airport on 16 February 2002.
4. Mangalsen, Lalbandi, on 11 April 2002.
5. Satbaria APF and Lamahi, Barpak APOs on 17 April 2002.
6. Army camps namely: Gam, Lisne, Khara, Damachaur and Chainpur in the month of May 2002.

In addition to the above list, the Maoists carried out two attacks in September 2002, one in October 2002, two in November 2002

and one in December 2002. Their targets were police posts to army garrisons and domestic airports to district headquarters. The Inspector General of the Armed Police Force, his wife and bodyguards were shot dead in the capital city, Kathmandu at the beginning of the year 2003. Apart from this, 2003 was mainly occupied by the process of negotiation and was less violent. However, minor battles took place. The government realised that the Maoist problem was not as simple as the incumbent prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba had initially thought, when on 4 February 1996, Dr Bhattarai handed over the 40-point agenda to him. Thus, the Deuba government of 2003 set up a 'High-Level Committee' to provide suggestions to solve the Maoist problem under Sher Bahadur Deuba in early 2003. Deuba had considered the Maoist's 40-point agenda as meaningless back in 1996. However, it succeeded to become meaningful and able to create public meaning at local, national, and global level. In the end, these negotiations also failed.

In March 2004, two consecutive large-scale successful attacks were carried out by the Maoists in Bhojpur and Myagdi. In addition, dozens of small-scale attacks and ambushes were carried out by the Maoists in different parts of the country. Himal Khabarpatrika reported "Maobadi top ranking leaders are freely roaming around in their declared base areas." The CPN (Maoist) claimed 80 per cent of the country was in their control. They were popular with the mass public. Mulyankan stated, "Maobadi do not attack public and friends." Himal Khabarpatrika expressed a different view:

The whole Nepali and world community think the Maoists are a group who are using terror, killing and destructive work to capture the state power. In fact, the majority do not like Maoists' inhuman activities in the name of the revolution.

Besides positive and negative criticism, Maoists had to face ideological war within the party members. Intra members' ideological war is sometimes more dangerous than external war. In 2005, "Dr Baburam Bhattarai and other high-ranking members were disciplined and kept in the so called 'People's Prison' as they opposed the notion of upgrading 'Prachanda Path - Prachanda Way' to 'Prachandabad –Prachanda-ism' Upreti (2008).

The third phase 2006 – 2020- findings and discussion

The above positive and negative articles, news and views of that time have given a clear indication of the public meaning of the Maoist insurgency. For example, editorial of Himal Khabarpatrika wrote about the Maoists telling them to “give up atrocity and take part in the government” and a similar appeal made by the political parties and the people, which was a clear acknowledgement of the CPN (Maoist)'s political power. Taking into consideration of the public recognition, Chairman of the CPN (Maoist) made the party policy public by releasing a press statement about the intention of the Maoist to join and support the Seven Party Alliance (SPA)'s movement to restore democracy, which was seized by the king on 4th of October 2002. Nepali Congress (NC), UML and other democratic forces known as SPA were on the street carrying out the movement. Upreti highlighted the agreement process of SPA and CPN (Maoist) and their further action plan in the following way:

CPN (Maoists) and the SPA leaders reached an agreement in New Delhi on 19 March 2006 and agreed to coordinate their plan for a nationwide general strike. CPN (Maoists) not only declared unilateral ceasefire on 3rd of April 2006 and called a halt to all offensive operations by it in the district headquarters and... lifted the indefinite transportation blockade they had imposed on Kathmandu... these steps were necessary for making the people's movement successful. Once, the SPA and the CPN (Maoists) agreed to hold the constituent assembly elections, restructure the state, and to decide the fate of the monarchy by the constituent assembly meeting, public support for the movement suddenly increased and the mass came on to the streets. Prachanda issued several statements against the royal takeover and expressed his commitment to support the political parties to restore democracy.

On joining the CPN (Maoist) with the SPA, the mode of the 'People's Uprising – Janaandolan II' had flared up which made the King step down from the absolute power and later the 240-year-old monarchical institution was abolished by the Peoples' Parliament. It is clear that the whole Media world including Himal Khabarpatrika and Mulyankan played a vital role in creating 'Public Meaning' of the Maoist insurgency in the emergence and growth. This public

meaning became power at the local and national level politics. The SPA and the CPN (Maoist) restored democracy, formed Constitution Assembly (CA), endorsed interim constitution, abolished 240-year-old monarchical rule and the Hindu Kingdom, and declared the secular Federal Republic of Nepal in 2008. The country spent almost a decade in writing an inclusive constitution as per people's wish was finally promulgated in 2015. The constitution ratification process is in progress, not completed yet.

The constitution of Nepal 2015 divided the country into seven provinces. The province executive head is Chief Minister, elected by the province parliament and the ceremonial head is the governor appointed by the centre. Nepal Communist Party (NCP) is the ruling party winning the 2017 election with a two-thirds majority. The government is endorsing and ratifying the constitution aiming to achieve prosperity and happiness in the country. However, people are not receiving their expectation from the government and are not satisfied with the performance of the government as well. Especially the family members of Maoist fighters who sacrificed their lives (Plate 45.2) and got injured and disabled are facing miserable life. Party leaders are in power and spending lavish life and forgot their past days, comrades and promises.



Plate 45.2: A dead body of forgotten Maoist fighter on the footrest of a rickshaw

Conclusion

The civil war launched by the CPN (Maoist) in 1996 to bring people's democracy ended up in 2006 with the death toll over 13,000 people. It took a similar length of time in the peace process. The CA declared the nation as the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal in 2008, ending 240-year-old the Hindu Kingdom ruled by monarchism. As mentioned earlier, the people upraised against the oppression at first in 1951, and the second time in 1990. However, both uprisings aborted without achieving goals. To deconstruct the monopoly, the CPN (Maoist) emerged and launched a war against the monarch, corrupted political parties, and oppressors. The Maoist party committed not to abort the battle, and compromise with the reactionary classes in the middle of the struggle as in the past. Besides, the Maoist stated that the armed struggle would be away from petty-bourgeois, narrow nationalist, religion-communal, caste influence, and interferences. The struggle would not distort until the oppressed and marginalised people capture the state power. There is no question, the people's war led to very substantial changes in the structure of the country, in the system of governance, politics, social organisation, and inter-group relations. However, at the end, the struggle ended up as it was in the past, not fully achieving its goals. Besides, oppressed, and marginalised people, war-wounded, and disabled former People Liberation Armies (PLA) are suffering from hands to mouth (bread and butter) problem. Parents and relatives of those were killed in the people's war are suffering from anxiety and psychological trauma. Continue medical treatment of injured PLA soldiers and welfare are beyond imagination as the government and leaders are not interested in these matters.

Notes:

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माओवादी सेनाको व्यवस्थापन

डा. चन्द्र लक्सम्बा

माओवादी छापामारहरू वास्तवमै सेना हुन ? के तीसँग राष्ट्रिय सेनामा सामेल हुने योग्यता छ ? सरकारी सेनामा समाहित गरियो भने अहिलेका माओवादी छापामारले भोलि राष्ट्रिय सेनाका रूपमा पक्षपातरहित व्यावसायिक धर्म निभाउलान् ? अनि दुई फरक पृष्ठभूमिका सेनाबिचको सम्बन्ध त्यतिखेर कस्तो होला ? यतिखेर धेरै 'विज्ञ'हरू यी प्रश्नमा घोट्लिइरहका छन् र धेरैको उत्तर नकारात्मक छ ।

पहिलो प्रश्न हो, माओवादी जनसेना पूर्ण सेना हो कि होइन ? एउटा व्यावसायिक सैनिक र माओवादी छापामारमा फरक पक्कै छ । व्यावसायिक सेनामा एउटा युवाको प्रवेश सबैभन्दा पहिले छाती र पिडुँलाका नाप दिएर हन्छ । शारीरिक रूपमा सक्षम सावित भएपछि उसले व्यवस्थित तालिम प्राप्त गर्छ र बल्ल मोर्चामा खटिन्छ । तर, एउटा माओवादी छापामारले पहिले विचार बोकेको हो, त्यसपछि मात्र बन्दुक । तर सेना हुन यो पहिलो र अन्तिम मापदण्ड होइन ।

राजनीतिक आस्थाका अर्को पाटो पनि छ । नेपाली सेनामा यतिखेर तिनीहरू नै दुई तिहाई संख्यामा छन्, जो ०४६ सालपछि भर्ती भएका हुन् । सबैलाई थाहा छ, ०४६ को राजनीतिक परिवर्तनलगत्तै नेपाली समाजको यति गहिरो र सर्वव्यापी पार्टीकरण भयो कि झन्डै सबैजसो नेपाली कुनै न कुनै पार्टीका (कोही कोही त सदस्यता रिसिद बाँड्न आउने जति सबैका) सदस्य थिए । ०४६ पछि शाही सेनामा भर्ती भएका अधिकांश युवाले काँग्रेस वा कम्युनिस्ट भएर निर्वाचन अभियानहरूमा सक्रिय सहभागिता जनाएका वा कम्तीमा राजनीतिक आस्थाका आधारमा कुनै एक पार्टीलाई मतदान गरेका थिए । तर, सेनामा प्रवेशपछि तिनले

त्यो आस्थालाई पखालेको देखियो । त्यसैले माओवादीका हकमा पनि आशा गर्ने ठाउँ बाँकी छ ।

अर्को प्रश्न, माओवादी सेनाको योग्यतासँग सम्बन्धित छ । माओवादी छापामारमा जनजाति, महिला र दलित बढी छन् । ती राज्यले सबैभन्दा बढी उपेक्षा गरेका वर्गबाट आएका हुन् । तीमध्ये अधिकांशसँग सरकारी सेनामा आवश्यक मानिने न्यूनतम शैक्षिक प्रमाणपत्र छन् । तिनले सरकारी सेनाको जस्तो व्यवस्थित तालिम पनि पाएका छैनन् । तिनले जे सिके, सुविधासम्पन्न तालिम केन्द्रहरूमा होइन, असमान युद्ध मैदानहरूमा सिके । माओवादीका कमान्डरहरूले पनि पूर्व शाही सेनाका कमान्डरहरूले झैं संसारका श्रेष्ठ सैनिक विश्वविद्यालय वा तालिम केन्द्रहरूमा युद्धकौशल र रणनीतिको औपचारिक शिक्षा पाएका होइनन् । माओवादी छापामार र सरकारी सेनाको अर्को फरक के हो भने छापामारहरूले लडेर युद्ध सिके जब कि सरकारी सेनालाई युद्धकौशल सिकाएरमात्र युद्धमा पठाइएको थियो ।

व्यवस्थित तालिम पक्कै महत्त्वहीन कुरा होइन तर एउटा पूर्व सैनिकका रूपमा मेरो अनुभवले के भन्छ भने कुनै निजामती कर्मचारी र सिँपाहीका योग्यताको मापदण्ड अलि फरक हुन्छ । त्यसो हुँदैनथ्यो भने अशिक्षित, दुनियाँबारे असाध्यै कम जानकारी भएका गोर्खालीहरूले संसारको युद्धविज्ञानमा यति गौरवमय ठाउँ बनाउने थिएनन् । हो, सबै माओवादी छापामार सेना होइनन् र माओवादी आफैँले पनि तिनलाई मिलिसिया र सेनाका रूपमा वर्गीकरण गरेका छन् । उनीहरूले 'सेना' मानेकामध्ये पनि थुप्रैसँग राष्ट्रिय सेनामा हुनुपर्ने न्यूनतम योग्यता नहुन सक्छ । तर माओवादीको मुख्य सैनिक सैन्यविज्ञानको हिसाबले सेना नै हो । सिपाही आखिर युद्धका प्रयोगशालाबाट जन्मन्छ । युद्ध नै सिँपाहीको विद्यालय र परीक्षा हो । माओवादीले दस वर्ष लामो युद्धमा त्यो परीक्षा दिइसकेका छन् ।

माओवादी विद्रोहका दस वर्षमा मुलुकले जनधनको ठुलो क्षति बेहोच्यो । त्यो विद्रोहका आर्थिक, राजनीतिक र सामाजिक पक्षबारे विभिन्न कोणबाट विभिन्न तर्क गर्न सकिएला । तर सैन्यविज्ञानका दृष्टिले यी दस वर्षको केही राम्रा पक्ष पनि छन् । दस वर्षको यो युद्धले नेपाली समाजलाई ठुलो घाउ दिएको होला तर युद्धविज्ञानको हिसाबले त्यो अनुभव एउटा पुँजी हो ।

नेपालको माओवादी छापामार युद्धको अध्ययन गर्न संसारका विभिन्न देशबाट थप टोली नेपाल पुगेका थिए । अमेरिकाले त ससाना क्षेत्रीय एकाई नै गठन गरेको थियो । बेलायतबाट पनि एउटा टोली खटिएको थियो । दक्षिण र दक्षिणपूर्वी एसियाका यस्तै प्रकृतिका छापामार आन्दोलन दबाउन कुनै बेला बेलायतले

गोखालीहरूलाई प्रथम पंक्तिमा उतारेको थियो । बर्मा (अब म्यान्मा) र मलायाका कम्युनिस्ट छापामारहरूलाई मूलतः गोर्खाली सैनिकले नै दबाएका थिए । तिनैका देशमा यति ठुला छापामार युद्ध पश्चिमाहरूका लागि एउटा आश्चर्य थियो । हाम्रै बेलायती कमान्डरहरू हामीलाई सोध्थे, 'यो कसरी सम्भव भयो ?'

माओवादीले सैन्य विज्ञानका दृष्टिले आफूलाई एउटा सीमासम्म योग्य सावित गरे । संसारकै दुर्दान्त मानिने श्रीलंकाका तमिल छापामारलाई भारतले सुरुमा व्यवस्थित तालिम र हतियार दिएको थियो । सोभियत संघले अफगानिस्तानमा कठपुतली सरकार गठन गरेपछि अमेरिका, युरोप, अरब विश्व, पाकिस्तान र चीनले समेत मुजाहिद्दिनहरूलाई तालिम, हतियार र धन उपलब्ध गराएका थिए । भियतनामका कम्युनिस्ट छापामारहरूलाई त्यतिखेर समाजवादी विश्वले सबै सहयोग दिएको थियो । तर नेपाली माओवादीको हकमा यस्तो कुनै सहूलियत थिएन ।

दोश्रो विश्वयुद्धपछि छापामारहरूले शत्रु पक्षलाई दबाव सिर्जना गर्न प्रायः आत्मघाती आक्रमणहरू गर्दै आएका छन् र तिनले भिडहरूलाई निशाना बनाएर आमहत्या पनि मच्चाएका छन् । मध्यपूर्वका हमाज र हिजबुल्लाह र श्रीलंकाका लिटटेमात्र होइन, कश्मीरका मुस्लिम छापामार र पूर्वोत्तर भारतका लडाकाहरूले यसैलाई मुख्य हतियार बनाएका छन् । तर, नेपालका माओवादीले त्यसो गरेनन् । यी दस वर्षमा उनीहरूले एउटा पनि आत्मघाती आक्रमण गरेनन् । हो, तिनले पटकपटक नाकाबन्दी र नेपाल बन्द गरे तर राष्ट्रिय राजमार्ग नै अवरुद्ध हुन गरी पुलहरू उडाएनन् । यावत ध्वंसकै बिचमा पनि उनीहरूले आतंकलाई भन्दा बललाई बढी जोड दिए । संसारका अरू छापामार युद्धभन्दा या अलि नैतिक देखिन्छ ।

सरकारी सेना सबैभन्दा पहिलोपटक ११ मंसिर ०५८ मा ब्यारेकबाहिर आयो । पहिलो वार्ता भंग भएपछि अनि माओवादीले दाङ र सल्लेरीको ब्यारेकमा आक्रमण गरेपछि संसदले संकटकाललाई अनुमोदन गर्‍यो । त्यतिखेर सेनालाई संसदमा रहेका झन्डै सबै दलको समर्थन थियो । अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय रूपमा भारत, चीन, अमेरिका, बेलायत र बेल्जियमले समेत आधुनिक हतियार, तालिम, युद्ध रणनीतिका प्रशिक्षण र सम्पूर्ण राजनीतिक समर्थन प्रदान गरेका थिए । माओवादी आतंककारी सञ्जठन घोषित भइसकेको थियो र नेताहरूका नाममा रेड कर्नर नोटिस जारी गरिएको थियो । सेनालाई संकटकालीन अधिकार दिइयो । वास्तवमा त्यतिखेर सरकारी सेनासँग केवल अनुकूलता थिए, माओवादीसँग केवल प्रतिकूलता । तर युद्धमैदानमा सेनाले श्रेष्ठता सावित गर्न सकेन । जर्नेलहरू 'हामीले खम्पा विद्रोह र काँग्रेसका तीनवटा सशस्त्र क्रान्ति दबाएका हौं, माओवादीलाई पनि सय दिनभित्र

दबाउँछौं' भन्थे । प्रहरी र माओवादीबिचको युद्धको सेनाले राम्रो अध्ययन गरेको र माओवादीको युद्ध रणनीतिलाई राम्ररी बुझेको दाबी गरिएको थियो । तर केही मोर्चामा बाहेक सेना प्रभावकारी देखिएन । यत्ति हो, सेनाले माओवादीलाई राजधानी कब्जा गर्न वा स्थायी आधार तयार गर्न दिएन ।

शान्ति सैनिकका रूपमा 'रुटिन' भूमिका निर्वाह गर्न र शाही उत्सवहरूमा कवाज खेलबाहेक पछिल्ला चार दशकमा सेनाले अरू केही गरेको थिएन । शाही सेनाको आर्थिक जीवन एकदम अपारदर्शी छँदै थियो, अझ पहिला संकटकालका असीमित अधिकारले सेनालाई स्वेच्छाचारी पनि बनायो । अचानक पाएको सत्ताको स्वादले सेनाको उपल्लो पंक्तिलाई हदसम्म महत्वाकाङ्क्षी बनायो । एकातिर अकर्मण्यता र भ्रष्टाचार, अर्कातिर सत्ताको स्वादले सैनिक सङ्गठनलाई कति अप्रभावकारी तुल्यायो भने डेढ लाखभन्दा बढी सुरक्षाकर्मी तीस हजार माओवादी छापामार दबाउन असफल भए ।

युद्ध विज्ञानका दृष्टिले माओवादी हिँसाले माओवादीमात्र होइन, सेना, प्रहरी र सशस्त्र प्रहरीको युद्ध क्षमता पनि बढाएको छ । यी दस वर्षमा माओवादीले सिकेको छापामार युद्ध कौशल पनि देशकै पुँजी हो । हाम्रो छिमेकीसँग कथंकदाचित हामीले सैनिक प्रतिरोध गर्नेपर्ने विडम्बनापूर्ण अवस्था आयो भने युद्धको हाम्रो शैली पनि छापामार युद्ध नै हो । त्यसैले माओवादीको यो अनुभवलाई राष्ट्रिय सेनामा कति र कसरी समेट्न सकिन्छ, समेट्नुपर्छ । त्यो केवल माओवादीको पुँजी होइन । अमेरिकी र बेलायती सैनिक अधिकृतहरूलाई आश्चर्यचकित तुल्याउन त्यो युद्ध-अनुभवलाई हामीले खाडी राष्ट्रमा मरुभूमिमा पोखिन दिन हुँदैन । त्यो राष्ट्रिय क्षति हुनेछ ।

अन्यथा अर्थ नलागोस्, मेरो आशय शाही सेना र सबै माओवादी सेना गाभेर डेढ लाख सेना तयार गर्नुपर्छ भन्ने होइन । यसले अहिले र पछि पनि आर्थिक, राजनीतिक र कुटनीतिक समस्यामात्र ल्याउनेछ । नेपालमा यति ठुला संख्यामा स्थायी सेना आर्थिक र व्यावहारिकरूपमा समेत उपयोगी छैन । हामा तीनवटा छिमेकी आणविक शक्तिसम्पन्न छन् । तिनका नियमित सेनाका संख्यामात्र झन्डै हाम्रो जनसंख्या बराबर छ । प्रविधिका हिसाबले त उनीहरूसँग हाम्रो तुलना गर्न खोज्नु पनि हाँस्यास्पद हुन्छ । हामीले न उत्तरी सीमामा सैनिक प्रतिरक्षाको कल्पना गर्न सक्छौं, न दक्षिणमा । त्यसैले नेपाललाई बीस हजारभन्दा बढी नियमित सेना आवश्यक नै छैन । एक सैनिकलाई पाल्न झन्डै तीनवटा अध्यापक राख्न पुग्छ । गाविसमा हेल्थ असिस्टेन्ट पठाउन राज्यसँग पैसा छैन । कतिपय विद्यालयमा दरबन्दी पुगेको छैन । बजेट भने ब्यारेकमा बालुवामा पानी झैं खेर जाने स्थिति छ ।

संसारमै आजसम्मका आम नियम के हो भने प्रत्येक युद्धकालमा सेनाको संख्या बढ्छ र शान्तिकालमा घट्छ। नेपालमा पनि अहिले सरकारी सेनाको जुन संख्या छ, त्यो आन्तरिक युद्धको परिणाम हो। तर, रातारात ठुलो संख्यामा सेना कटौती गर्दा त्यो प्रत्यूत्पादक हुन सक्छ। माओवादी सेनालाई समेट्न नसक्दा पनि देशभरि अरू थप 'जनतान्त्रिक तराई मोर्चा' गठन हुने सम्भावना छ। त्यसैले अन्तरिम अवधिका लागि सेनाको संख्या थोरै बढाउनुको विकल्प छैन। एउटा मापदण्ड तोकेर माओवादी जनसेनाको एउटा हिस्सालाई राष्ट्रिय सेनामा ठाउँ दिइयो भने उनीहरूले आर्जेको छापामार युद्धकलाले पनि राष्ट्रिय सेनामा ठाउँ पाउँछ।

राजालाई परमाधिपति मानेको सेनाको लोकतान्त्रिक रूपान्तरण सम्भव छ भने प्रचण्डलाई परमाधिपति मानेको सेनाको रूपान्तरण चाहिँ असम्भव छ भन्न मिल्दैन। फेरि माओवादी जनसेनाको ठुलो हिस्सा सेनामा आउन तयार हुँदा पनि हुँदैन। त्यो राजनीतिक महत्वाकांक्षा बोकेको समूह हो। उसको 'करिअर' राजनीतिक हो, सैनिक होइन। त्यसैले मोटामोटी हेर्दा माओवादीको मुख्य सैनिक फोर्सको बढीमा एक तिहाई हिस्सा अर्थात करिब नौ हजारभन्दा बढी सेनामा आउने पनि छैन।

वास्तवमा द्वन्द्व समाधानमा आएको पछिल्लो समस्या विशेष गरी माओवादीलाई हेर्ने दृष्टिकोणसँग सम्बन्धित छ। माओवादीको राजनीतिक र वैचारिक स्थिति जे भए पनि अहिलेलाई यो केवल एउटा पार्टीमात्र होइन। पहिले बाह्रबुँदे र पछि आठबुँदे सम्झौताको गाँठी कुरा के हो भने माओवादी केवल आठौँ पार्टी नभएर वैकल्पिक राज्यसत्ता हो। संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघसम्मले सरकार र माओवादीबाट एउटै बेहोराका तर बेग्लाबेग्लै औपचारिक पत्र खोज्नको कारण पनि यही हो। नेपालको शान्ति स्थापनाका मूल चुनौती यी दुई राज्यसत्ताको एकीकरण हो। त्यसैले नौ हजार सेनालाई राष्ट्रिय सेनामा ठाउँ दिन कन्जुस्याई गरिनु हुँदैन। अरू असी हजार सेनामा ती त्यसै बिलाउनेछन्। र, अरू सेनासँग तिनको लोकतान्त्रीकरण सम्भव छ।

नोट :

यो लेख ४ सेप्टेम्बर २००६ मा कान्तिपुरमा प्रकाशित भएको हो। सो समयमा डा. लक्सम्बा बेलायतका सरे युनिभर्सिटीमा अनुसन्धानरत हुनुहुन्थ्यो।

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Appendix

परिशिष्ट

A Selection of Condolence Messages

Following the sad news of the passing of Dr Chandra Kumar Laksamba on 26 January 2021, condolence messages from friends and families across the world poured through phones, emails and social media messages. There were separate memorial services organised by different organisations, including the Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNSUK), Nepal Open University, Lumbini Buddhist University, and NRNAUK. Prof. Abhi Subedi, Prof. John Holford and Guy Horridge, OBE, and Jit Gurung, who sent us their sympathies, have each now contributed an expanded article to this volume. The condolence messages received were too many to include here, and below are only a selection of them. These messages are presented here as they were received, without editing.

Message from Dr Durga Bahadur Subedi, then Nepali Ambassador to the UK



नेपाली राजदूतावास
EMBASSY OF NEPAL
LONDON, U.K.

मिति: २०७७/१०/२०

श्रीमती कल्पना सबसम्बाङ्ग
सँ, संयुक्त अधिराज्य।

मातोदय,

संयुक्त अधिराज्य (बेलायत)को नेपाली समाजका एक अग्रज अभिपन्ना, प्रशिक्षक व्यक्तित्व एवं वरिष्ठ समाजसेवी डा. चन्द्र सबसम्बाङ्गको अल्लामयिक निधनमा नेपाली राजदूतावास परिकार र मेरो व्यक्तिगत तर्फबाट हार्दिक सम्बेदना व्यक्त गर्दै दिवङ्गत आत्माको शीर शान्तिको निमित्त प्रार्थना गर्दछु।

डा. सबसम्बाङ्गको असाध्यै निधनले राष्ट्रले एक उच्च बौद्धिक र समर्पित राष्ट्रभक्त व्यक्तित्व गुमाएको छ भने बेलायतको नेपाली समाजले एक सक्रिय अग्रज र विशिष्ट अभिपन्ना र वरिष्ठ समाजसेवी गुमाएको छ।

दुःख र शोकको यस घडीमा तपाईं र सम्पूर्ण शोकसंतप्त परिवारमा यस अलहनीय दुःख र वियोगलाई सहन गर्न सक्ने शक्ति परमलला परमेश्वरले प्रदान गरुन् भनी प्रार्थना गर्दछु।


डा. दुर्गाबाहादुर सुबेदी
राजदूत

EMBASSY OF NEPAL, 12A KENSINGTON PALACE GARDENS, LONDON W8 4QU
Tel: 0044-02072291594.

Message from Professor Surya Prasad Subedi, OBE.

<S.P.Subedi@leeds.ac.uk>

Sent: 26 January 2021 21:18

To: Krishna Adhikari <krishna.adhikari@anthro.ox.ac.uk>

Subject: Sad News

Dear Krishnaje,

I was shocked and saddened by the news of the demise of Dr Chandra Laksamba. It is a huge loss for the Nepali intellectual community in the UK. My condolences to you all associated with CNS UK. Please convey my sincere condolences to his family if you get in touch with them.

With kind regards.

Surya

Professor Surya P. Subedi, QC (Hon), OBE, DCL, DPhil.

School of Law, University of Leeds, United Kingdom.

Membre Titulaire, Institut de Droit International.

Message from Deepak Thapa, Director Social Science Baha

Wed, 27 Jan. 2021

Dear Krishnaji,

Bandita shared with me your post on Chandraji's passing. That came out of the blue and was a real shock. I can imagine what a loss it has been for you, and can only wish strength to you. Please pass on my condolences to his family. He was a gentleman in every sense of the term.

Deepak Thapa

[Director]

Social Science Baha

345 Ramchandra Marg, Battisputali

Kathmandu - 9, Nepal

Phone: 977-1-4472807, www.soscbaha.org

Message from Nepal Studies Team, Cambridge International

***From Nicola Twitchett, Product Manager of Nepal Studies,
Cambridge International:***

I'm sad as well as shocked, working with Chandra on Nepal Studies was a joy. He was so knowledgeable, instinctively knowing the right approach to take and with an innate understanding of what it would be fair to expect a 16–17-year-old student in Nepal to know. Without Chandra Nepal Studies would not have been the success it was. Chandra was always so modest about his own achievements, when I discovered him on LinkedIn. I realised his immense contribution to both the Nepali diaspora in the UK and within academia in Nepal. I held Chandra in the utmost respect and always enjoyed his company in our meetings in Cambridge. My sympathies go to you, his family, about whom he spoke with obvious love.

***From Gale Deeney, Principal Examiner of Nepal Studies
Paper 1:***

I was fortunate to work with Chandra on Nepal Studies. He was a lovely colleague, caring, inspirational and a passionate advocate of all things Nepal. He challenged my perceptions, deepened my understanding and made me think differently – the hallmarks of a great teacher.

From Tim Rice, Principal Examiner of Nepal Studies Paper 1:

Farewell to a perfect gentleman whose calm but assured manner put everyone at ease and whose knowledge of his subject commanded everyone's respect. Chandra's role certainly ensured that Nepal Studies was based on a firm foundation. Our lives were considerably enriched by the pleasure of knowing him. Rest in peace Chandra, we will miss you.

From Jo Christopher, Setter of Nepal Studies Paper 2:

I am so sorry to hear about Chandra's untimely death. I have really fond memories of him from our time working together on Nepal Studies at Cambridge International. Please accept my sincere condolences to you and your family.

From Stefanie Lotter (SOAS) Academic Advisor:

My sincere condolences to you on the passing of your loved father and husband. Chandra spoke always so fondly of his family and his love for you. The warmth with which he spoke makes me only vaguely sense how much he must be missed by you now. My heart goes out to you and I wish you that time can soften the pain. I have enjoyed working with Chandraji immensely over many years and have always cherished our short interactions outside work, over lunch and coffee discussing Nepal, his house and his dreams. We have both shared the same optimism and trust in civil society and I have only praise and the deepest gratitude to have known him.

Message from Capt. (Retd.) Bishnu Prasad Shrestha

7 Market Garden
Aldershot
Hants GU11 7BA
31 January 2021

श्रीमति कल्पना लक्सम्बा
79A Middlemoor Road
Frimley
Camberley
Surrey GU16 8DA

प्रिय कल्पना बहिनी,

तपाईंको श्रीमान डा. श्री चन्द्र लक्सम्बाको मृत २५ जनवरी २०२१ को दिन असाधारण निधन भएको, रक्तदाने हामी अत्यन्त दुःखी भएका छौं। यो दुःखद समाचार प्राप्त हुनु बाबु मैले ७ GR Regimental Association को Chairman, Major (Retd) Bhuvan Singh Limbu HVO लाई जेन मार्शल मार्फत जानकारी गराएको थिएँ। यस दुःखद घडीमा उहाँ, लगायत ७ GR Regimental Association को सम्पूर्ण सदस्यहरूको साथै हक डा. लक्सम्बाको आत्मा प्रति शान्ति दे। व्यंग्य गरी हार्दिक शोकजली का हामी तपाईं लगायत तपाईंको सम्पूर्ण परिवारमा पर्ने गलको, यो शक्ति प्रति दुःखमा बाबु हार्दिक समवेदना व्यक्त गर्नु भएको छ।

मैले डा. लक्सम्बासित ७ GR मा ३ वर्ष (१९६५-६७) सँगै काम गरेको थिएँ। म नेपाल बाट UK तर्फै सर्दा २०१४ मा उहाँले मेलाई भेट्न आउनु भएको थियो। त्यस पछि २०१९ मा तपाईंको नेपाल फर्कनु अघि गोर्खा-मौलाही अन्तर्व्यवहारको कार्यक्रममा तपाईं सहित भेट्न आउनु भएको थियो। भनाकानको तिला त्यो भेटमा अन्तिम देखे।

यो अत्यन्त दुःख र अश्रुनिमि क्षति हो। दुःखद घडीमा हक डा. श्री चन्द्र लक्सम्बा प्रति भावपूर्ण आस्थाजली अर्पण गर्दै तपाईं र तपाईंको परिवार जसमा यो धारण गर्ने शक्ति मिलेको भन्ने व्यंग्य गरी हार्दिक समवेदना व्यक्त गर्ने चाहान्छु।

Capt (Retd) Bishnu Prasad Shrestha Ex 7GR



Society of Nepalese Engineers UK

24.03.2021
Ref: 008-CL-002/21

To:
The Executive Director
Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNSUK)

Condolence Letter

We are deeply saddened to hear about the untimely demise of Dr Chandra Laksamba, a founder member of the CNSUK. We know it is an irreparable loss to the Nepalese community he has been serving from various fronts in Nepal and here in the UK. Many of us here know him personally and he was well-loved among our society members. He will be greatly missed.


Please pass on our sincere condolences to his family members and to all there at the CNSUK.

Sincerely,

Dr Bidur Ghimire,
General Secretary,
SONEUK Executive Committee.

Mr Sanyukta Shrestha,
Chairperson,
SONEUK Executive Committee.

Poster of the Memorial Service Organised by the CNSUK on 27 February 2021.





Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNSUK)
नेपाली विद्यालय ब्रिटेन (ने.वि.ब्रि.)


Memorial Service (Shraddhanjali Sabha)

In loving memory of
The Late Dr Chandra Kumar Lakshamba

Saturday, 27 February 2021
Time: 4:00 – 6:00 pm

 **zoom**
Meeting ID: 810 4484 5973
Passcode: 886122

 **LIVE** : CNSUK



(25 Nov. 1961 - 26 Jan. 2021)

PROGRAMME

SN	Activity	Duration (min.)	Speaker
1.	Opening remarks	10	Lokendra Dhakal, ED, CNSUK
2.	Observance of 1 minute's silence	1	All present
3.	Chandra in his early years: student politics and beyond	7	Dr Achyut Gautam
4.	Chandra as student and friend in Surrey University	7	Prof. John Holford
5.	Some memories of working with Chandra in the UK	7	Prof. Sondra Hausner
6.	Poem recitation: "Sapanakra jhudaai chhan"	5	Dr Sangita Shrestha 'Swechha'
7.	One and half decades of companionship	7	Prof. David Gellner
8.	Chandra's life in CNSUK and beyond, and his legacies	20	Dr Krishna P. Adhikari
9.	Chandra as a father and Chandra's dreams	10	Basanta Lakshamba
10.	Vote of thanks	5	Dr Ganga Ram Dahal

Life of Dr Chandra Kumar Laksamba in Photos



सन् १९६५ मा आमा बुबाको साथमा सिङ्गापुरमा
In Singapore with Mother and Father (1965 CE)



डा. लक्सम्बाका बाजे बोजू
Grandfather and Grandmother



सन् १९८१ मा पिताको साथमा सिङ्गापुरमा ।
In Singapore with father (1981 CE)



काठमाडौंको पिपलबोटस्थित क्यापिटल फोटो
स्टुडियोमा श्रीमती कल्पना लक्सम्बाको साथ ।
At Capital Photo Studio, Peepalbot,
Kathmandu.



ताप्लेजुङ कुन्जारी गाउँमा डा. लक्सम्बाको जन्मघर ।
House in Kunjari, Taplejung, where Chandra was born.



जेठो छोरा बसन्तको साथ लक्सम्बा दम्पती, सन् १९८२ ।
Mr and Mrs Laksamba with eldest son, Basanta (1982 CE)



अस्कल क्याम्पसको विद्यार्थी जीवनमा साथीहरूसँग ।
With ASOCL College friends



ससुरा पूर्व मन्त्री अम्बिका साँवा र सासु जसमाया साँवाका साथमा कार्ल मार्क्सको समाधी हाइगेट, बेलायतमा
With the in-laws, Mr Ambika Sanba and Mrs Jasamaya Sanba at Highgate Cemetery (Karl Marx's tomb)



कियोग ब्यारेकमा ।
Keogh Barracks - 2002



सन् २००५ मा सरे विश्वविद्यालयमा विद्यावारिधि दीक्षान्त समारोहमा भाग लिएपछि सुपरिवेक्षक प्रा.
पिटर जार्भिस र प्रा. जोन होल्फोर्डका साथमा ।

With Prof. Peter Jarvis and Prof. John Holford, PhD supervisors, and Kalpana Laksamba, after attending the PhD graduation ceremony at the University of Surrey (2005 CE)



सीएनएस युकेले १५ नोभेम्बर २००८ मा आयोजना गरेको एक कार्यशालामा भाग लिएका
बेलायती विश्वविद्यालयबाट दीक्षित तथा दक्ष जनशक्तिहरू ।

UK-based university graduates and professional Nepalis after attending the CNSUK's workshop on securing funding and jobs. (Photo. Dr Krishna P. Adhikari, 15 Nov 2008.)



छाया रक्षा मन्त्री केभान जोन्सलाई सीएनएस युकेको गोर्खा पेन्सनबारेको प्रतिवेदन हस्तान्तरण गर्दै ।
साथमा रशमोर बरोका पूर्व मेयर अलेक्स क्रोफर्ड ।
Handing over CNSUK's report on Gurkha Pensions to Shadow Minsiter
Kevan Jones, with former Mayor of Rushmoor, Alex Crowford. (Photo.
Krishna Adhikari (29 March 2013)



रेडिडमा सीएनएस युकेको गोर्खा पेन्सन प्रतिवेदन सार्वजनिक गर्दै, सांसद रब विल्सन र अन्य ।
Releasing the CNSUK's Gurkha Pensions Policies report in Reading, with
MP Rob Wilson and others (Oct. 2013)



गोर्खासम्बन्धी त्रिपक्षीय समितिले बेलायती रक्षा मन्त्री मार्क लाङ्कास्टर र नेपाली राजदुत डा. दुर्गा ब. सुवेदीलाई प्रतिवेदन बुझाउँदै ।

Tripatriate Technical Committee on Gurkha submitting their report to the UK Minister Mark Lancaster and Nepali Ambassador Dr Durga B. Subedi, March 2018.



स्याण्डहर्स्टस्थित सैन्य तालिम केन्द्र तथा गोर्खा सेवाको केन्द्रीय कार्यालयको भ्रमणमा
(२४ नोभेम्बर २०१४)

At Sandhurst Academy after visiting the Headquarters of Brigade of Gurkhas
(24 Nov. 2014)



रशमोर बरो काउन्सिलमा सीएनएस युकेको सामाजिक गतिशीलता अध्ययनको नतिजा प्रस्तुत गर्दै ।
Presenting the findings of the Social Mobility research at Rushmoor Borough
Council Office (2015)



बीनएसीको नेपाल अध्ययन दिवसमा शोधपत्र प्रस्तुत गर्दै ।
Presenting at the Nepal Study Days (2016)



कान्छो छोरा बहारको दीक्षान्त समारोहमा ।
At younger son Bahar Laksamba's graduation ceremony.



१४ वर्ष काम गरेपछि सीभीक्यूओ छाड्दाको बखत बिदाईमा, निर्देशक गाइ होइजका साथमा ।
CVQO with Guy Horridge (Director) on his last day at work before
retirement (2019)



सीएनएसयुकेको अन्तिम पारिवारिक भेटघाट (समर रिट्रिट) कार्यक्रम (रेडिङ जुलाई २०१९) ।
 CNSUK's last family gathering (Summer Retreat) programme in Reading
 (July 2019)



विद्यार्थी र सहकर्मीहरूको साथमा नेपाल खुला विश्वविद्यालयमा ।
 With students and colleagues at Nepal Open University 5 Apr. 2019.



बेलायतको फ्रिम्लीस्थित आफ्नै निवासमा परिवारसँग मनाएको अन्तिम दसैं (वि.सं. २०७७)।
The Dasain festival celebrated with family, at own residence in Frimley, UK.
(2020 CE)



१.अन्तेष्टि कार्यक्रमका केही भलकहरू ।
1. Picture from funeral programme.



२. अन्तेष्टि कार्यक्रमका केही भलकहरू ।
2. Picture from funeral procession.



३. अन्तेष्टि कार्यक्रमका केही भलकहरू ।
3. Picture from funeral procession.

Dr Chandra Kumar Laksamba was a remarkable man, who made quite a journey in his life. Despite being born in a Gurkha *Lahure* family in remote Kunjari village of Taplejung district, Nepal, he had very different dreams to pursue. After completing high school from his native village, he came to Kathmandu to join ASCOL College, a premier college in the field of science in Nepal. Rather than focusing on science, he got into politics. However, as destiny had it, his *Lahure* heritage was not to be abandoned so lightly, and he joined the British Gurkhas. Despite this, Chandra's interest grew more in the academic field than in military leadership. He continued his studies in London while still in service and completed a PhD in lifelong learning from the University of Surrey. He co-founded the Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNSUK) in 2007, and went on to work, among others, for Cambridge International and the University of Oxford, before returning to Nepal to teach at Nepal Open University. Chandra took many avatars in his life: he was a political activist, a soldier, a Gurkha rights campaigner, a community organiser, a journalist, a diaspora leader, a researcher, and a professor. He was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and a friend. In every sense of the word he was a gentleman, as well as a tireless fighter.

I discovered that he was not only charming but also a charming powerhouse. His courteous and reserved exterior concealed a man who could and did move mountains in pursuit of the causes he worked for.

Prof. John Holford, University of Nottingham

एउटा दुर्गम जिल्ला ताप्लेजुङको एउटा लिम्बू परिवारमा जन्म लिएर लाहुरे हुँदै विद्यावारिधि उपाधि प्राप्त गर्न सफल एउटा विद्वानको साहसिक र महत्वाकाङ्क्षी एवम् सङ्घर्षशील जीवनी हेर्दा जो कोहीका लागि पनि पठनीय एवम् मननयोग्य हुनेछ । अब त्यो समुदायबाट क्याम्ब्रिज र अक्सफोर्ड विश्वविद्यालयमा प्राज्ञिक काम गर्ने विद्वानको जन्म हुन कति समय पर्खनु पर्ला ?

– प्रा. गणेश मान गुरुङ, कुलपति, गण्डकी विश्वविद्यालय, नेपाल ।

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