

Research Article

Nepalese Diaspora in India: An Epistemological Contestation

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Date of Submission: 15/11/2021; Date of Acceptance: 09/02/2022

ABSTRACT

Diaspora as a concept has come a long way and includes voluntary as well as forced migration. The Nepalese diaspora particularly in India has been understudied. Nepalese are dispersed almost all over the world. India remains one of the key destinations for many of them since the historical period. Scholars are working in this domain found to be more inclined to describing rather than conceptualising Nepalese diaspora in the context of Nepalese diaspora in India. Many of the literatures have described it assuming all Indian Nepalis as a part of it. This article tries to comprehend the context of Nepalese diaspora delineating the history of Nepalese migration outside Nepal. It presents the prevailing debate regarding the status of Nepalese diaspora in India. This article presents that all Indian Nepalis are not a part of Nepalese diaspora because Indian Nepalis are not all descendants of immigrants from their homeland Nepal. This article will be useful for those working in the field of migration and diaspora studies, ethnicity and public policy, as well as history, anthropology, and international studies. The paper is based on the review of research literatures published in different journals and edited books. Besides, observation method was employed.

Keywords: Nepalese diaspora, Emigration, Indian Nepalis, Immigrants, Migration, Homeland, Epistemology

INTRODUCTION

The word diaspora has its root in the Greek verb ‘diaspeirein’ which is a compound of ‘dia’, meaning over or through and ‘speirein’, meaning to scatter or sow (Kenny, 2013; Dufoix *et al.*, 2008; Cohen, 2008; Esmen, 2013). Thus, the word diaspora is related to

scattering and dispersion (Kenny, 2013; Dufoix *et al.*, 2008; Lahiri, 2019) which was historically used to refer to the Jewish dispersion (Cohen, 2008), the physically scattered and exiled religious groups (Dufoix *et al.*, 2008, p. 3). It is to be mentioned that the term diaspora was used to refer to the involuntary and forced migration of the people. The term had a negative connotation but during the later period of the twentieth century the term diaspora covered almost all kind of migration besides forced one (Kenny, 2013). Nevertheless, scholars such as Safran (1991), Tololyan (1991), and Cohen (1996) have expressed their disagreement for claiming all kinds of migratory movement as diaspora. Their intention has been to keep the importance of the term diaspora which was being used almost synonym of all kind of migration. When it comes to the question of defining diaspora, different scholars have given different parameters for defining it. The parameters of diaspora given by different scholars are often considered to be an ideal type (Jung, 2016). However, three criteria were considered by most of the scholars as basic features of diaspora formation such as dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary maintenance (Butler, 2001; Brubaker, 2005). It is to be mentioned that diaspora explains certain kinds of dislocations taking place all over the world (Lahiri, 2019). It is being observed that many scholars of diaspora studies have utilised the two terms diaspora and transnationalism interchangeably. Disagreeing with such interchangeability of the terms Lahiri (2019) contains the basic differentiation between the two terms as diaspora is clearly a human-centric phenomenon-lived and experienced. Whereas, transnationalism is associated with the capital flow due to globalisation and global capitalism. However, both the terms can be used together in a broader sense to refer to man-capital flow far off national boundaries (Lahiri, 2019, p. 3). The terms such as migration, transnationalism and diaspora neither can be used synonymously nor inseparably as diaspora explains the world created by human migration (Kenny, 2013) that is now characterised by transnationalism. The habit of indiscriminate usage of the three terms diaspora, migration, and transnationalism often create **epistemological differences** in studying diaspora formation. Similarly, overemphasis on synchronic approach in diaspora studies, scepticism in usage of the term (for instance Nepalese/ Nepali diaspora) may lead to the epistemological contestation. Besides, diaspora studies without the transnational theoretical approach may lead to the possibilities of homogenising explicitly different categorical processes of immigration such as diasporisation, transnationals and transnational outsiders. This has been discovered in several literatures of Nepali diaspora studies.

With this background, the article delineates the emergence of Nepalese diaspora formation in general and examines it in the India context particularly with the help of available research literature. It contextualises the Nepalese diaspora in India and argues that not the entire population of Indian Nepalis constitute the diaspora society. Keywords such

as diaspora, Nepalese diaspora, Nepali outside Nepal, Nepalese emigration have been useful for scouting academic articles on various professional networks (research gate), digital library (JSTOR), free resource (PubMed), search engine (Google), shadow library (Z library, library genesis) and online PDF search engine (PDF Drive). Besides, *Journals of Social Science Information, Sociological Bulletin, Diaspora studies, Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies, Economic and Political Weekly, Asian Studies, Migration Studies, Ethnic and Migration Studies, International Migration, Journal of Political Science, Journal of Political Geography, Asian Ethnicity* have been useful for searching articles using these keywords. Moreover, books related topic has also been consulted.

THE NEPALI/NEPALESE DIASPORA: AN AMBIGUITY OF NOMENCLATURE?

All kinds of movement of people cannot be considered as diasporic move. Therefore, the need for microscopic scrutiny before claiming a diasporic status of a group of people or a community is indispensable. Nepalese diaspora, Sharma (2021) says, includes people of Nepal origin and their communities all over the world. Many scholars including pioneers of Nepalese diaspora studies such as Gellner (2018); Subba and Sinha (2016) preferred using the term Nepali instead of Nepalese in their writings. Practically, the term Nepali is ambiguous in referring its actual sense of concept in the context of Nepalese diaspora. It is to be mentioned that the term Nepali contains a variety of meanings. Pradhan (2010) tries to explore the possible meanings of the term Nepali. First, it refers to the language. Secondly, the citizens of Nepal (who are not necessarily the national of Nepal). Thirdly, it refers to the people of a specific ethnic community (i.e. Nepali) no matter inside or outside Nepal. Therefore, the Nepalese diaspora and Nepali community in diaspora bear completely different meanings altogether. The former encompasses all the nationals (not necessarily the citizens) belonging to any ethnic community (Bengali, Punjabi, or Bihari) including the Nepali community of Nepal, living permanently or semi-permanently outside the nation-state Nepal. The latter refers to the people belonging specifically to the Nepali community that lives outside their country permanently or semi-permanently. The country is not necessarily Nepal. For instance, when a group of people from Nepal of any ethnic origin lives outside Nepal, as the nationals of a nation-state they are a part of the Nepalese diaspora. Interestingly as mentioned above, people living anywhere in Nepal are also known as Nepali politically. Such distinctiveness was found to be overlooked in Nepalese diaspora literatures to some extent due to the selection of their nomenclatures (choosing a name or thing) such as Nepali diaspora but not Nepalese diaspora. As mentioned, scholars such as Gellner (2018); Subba and Sinha (2016) preferred using the term Nepali instead of Nepalese denoting the second sense of meaning of the term mentioned by Pradhan

(2010) which perhaps possibly creates ambiguity with the third sense of the meaning of the term. In this context, it is worth mentioning that Nepalis are Nepalis because they speak Nepali language as lingua franca and form a culturally homogenous community whereas Nepalese are Nepali because they are nationals of Nepal and not because their lingua franca is also Nepali. Consequently, an ambiguity in the usage of the terms Nepali and Nepalese has been very common among the Nepalese diaspora scholars. Taking account of such an ambiguity, throughout the article, the term Nepali will be used to denote a specific community whereas the term Nepalese will be used to refer the nationals and citizens of Nepal.

EMERGENCE OF NEPALESE DIASPORA FORMATION

Nepalese had been highly mobile and dispersed in different parts of the world in different historical trajectory. Historically, Nepalese immigration took place in the then kingdom of Sikkim (Included then Darjeeling region), Bhutan, Burma (Myanmar), British North-East India, colonial Darjeeling, and Tibet on various grounds. These destinations were prominent for the Nepalese during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. In this context, the mobility of people outside boundary of the present-day Nepal is not a new phenomenon. There were migration waves into and aloof the Himalayas (Gellner, 2018; Turnbull, 2016; Hutt, 2012). However, then the notion of Nepal as such was not in existence. In this ground, one can argue that people from present-day boundary of Nepal emigrated before the emergence of nationalism in Nepal cannot be considered as Nepalese. They were rather ethnic groups such as Magar, Rai, Limbu, Chherti, Gurung, Newar, etc. Regarding the diaspora formation, Gellner (2018) proclaims the sense of national or quasi-national identity is indispensable. In the context of Nepal, there is no unity among the scholars on the emergence of the nationalism. Furthermore, Gellner (2018) argues that it was not before the twentieth century that the notion of nationalism was developed in Nepal. According to Bhandari (2016), the nation has an important role in the articulation of group identity. In this sense, the emergence of nationalism can be traced in Nepal during the nineteenth century. Because, it was the treaty of Sugauli 1816, which ignited the concept of nation-state formation in Nepal (Burghart, 1984). Nevertheless, Liu and Turner (2018) argue that national identity is the product of modern nationalism. Contrary to Gellner (2018); Burghart (1984) and Bhandari (2016), Nationalism in Nepal, according to scholars such as Muni (2016) and Shrestha (2020), can be traced to the later period of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the emergence of nationalism in Nepal becomes less important so far as the homelands of all emigrants were within the present-day boundary of Nepal. Because in diaspora studies *homeland* is important from where the emigration took place. Homeland is one of the three criteria in identifying the diaspora formation as mentioned earlier. In fact, one cannot do away

with the notion of homeland completely in diaspora studies (Jung, 2016, p. 79) despite being the contested notion (Lahiri, 2019). So far as the Nepalese historical emigration is concerned, the Himalayan life was migratory even before the eighteenth century mostly towards the northwest to the southeast direction (Subba, 1992; Gellner, 2018; Hutt, 2012). Hutt (2012) argues that the Nepalese emigration was not a force as they were not driven out from their homeland. Based on his argument, we can say that it was a voluntary emigration. The voluntary migration is considered to be a planned movement (Lee, 1966). The migrants evaluate homeland, host land and the prevailing intervening obstacles before their actual migration takes place. It is not so much the actual factors at homeland and hosts land as the perception of their factors that results in migration. Such perceptions about the host society according to Lee (1966), depends upon personal contact and sources of information. Based on his argument one can assert that the destinations of emigration during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Nepalese emigrants were not unfamiliar with. Nonetheless, the permanent and mass emigration of people from present boundary of Nepal was manifested only Gorkha conquest onwards (Hutt, 2012). Gellner (2018) has mentioned three waves of Nepalese emigration based on the nature, purpose, and direction of emigration. Nevertheless, his classification is limited as it does not explain Nepalese emigration that took place pre-1845s and post-1990s. In addition to his classification, one can rather classify Nepalese emigration into five emigration waves and different phases within it.

The period of first emigration wave that of prior to 1845 took place especially, due to socio-political reasons. The Gorkha king, Prithvi Narayan Shah who annexed several small and diverse ethnic principalities for the purpose of his mission of unification of Nepal. His annexations and conquests made Nepal geographically unified. Whereas, for installing a sense of unity among diverse ethnic groups with distinct tribal cultures, he propagated Hinduism among them. Muni (2016) in this context, holds up that although less importance was given on socio-cultural components of nationalism, Gorkha king Prithvi Narayan Shah tried to bring about a unity among its inhabitants. Yet Baral (2020) argues that the unity of the nation was also given an equal attention by the king as for him the nation (Nepal) was a garden of many sorts of people. In fact, we found a supporting statement to the argument given by Baral (2020) in *Divya Upadesh* (Divine Counsels, an instruction in the form of a text given by king Prithvi Narayan Shah from his death bed to his successors and citizens) as:

(यो) मेरो सानो दुःखले आर्जिएको मुलुक होइन। यस मुलुकको आर्जनमा देशका विभिन्न जात तथा जातिका धेरै नागरिकहरूको परिश्रम परिरहेको छ। यसैले यो मुलुक सबै जात तथा जातिहरूको (साझा) फूलबारी हो। सबैलाई यस कुराको चेतना भए राम्रो हुने थियो। यस फूलबारीलाई साना-ठूला चार वर्ण छत्तीसे जाताका जनता ले समानरूपले सम्भार गर्नुपर्दछ। यो अरिल हिंदुस्तान हो। (Acharya & Narharinath, 2070 B.S, p. 50).

Meaning – (This is not a country earned by my little misfortune. In the earnings of this country, many citizens of different castes and ethnicities of the country are working hard. So, this country is a (common) garden of flower for all castes and ethnicities. It would be good if everyone was aware of this. This garden should be taken care of equally by the people of thirty-six castes of four Varna in making her a real Hindustan).

The above-cited text from Dibya Upadesh also supports the argument regarding the propagation of Hinduism by the king for Nepalese. Hinduism for all the inhabitants irrespective of their ethnic belonging and affiliation of Nepal proved to be an encumbrance for many indigenous people. Reacting to the king's conquest first and much later the cultural imposition of Hinduism, emigration of many indigenous ethnic communities took place. They preferred to immigrate due to exploitation by the Hindu caste people, land alienation as well as for the sake of their own cultural preservation. Chettri (2013) also asserts about their emigration as many Kirati ethnic groups of the eastern district emigrated eastward especially, to Sikkim and Bhutan. The reasons were cultural imposition, Sanskritisation, land alienation, internal migration of *Khas* people into their district and exploitation by the feudal and superior elite castes (Chettri, 2013, pp. 44–46). In fact, the presence of diversity in terms of race or ethnic origin and tradition boost the possibility of higher rate of migration from the region of origin (Lee, 1966, p. 52). In this context, internal migration of *Khas* (Hindu) people into the eastern districts also was one of the prominent push factors for emigration of Kirati ethnic groups. Moreover, the Kirati emigration towards eastward was a response to the Gorkha conquest of the districts (Hutt, 2012, p. 111). According to Nakane (1964), a large-scale immigration of Nepalese cultivators into different regions of Sikkim took place which was further increased during post-treaty of Sugauli, 1816. Interestingly, the first phase (before the treaty of 1816) of the first wave of Nepalese emigration was rural to rural primarily for socio-cultural, economic and political reasons. However, the economic reason was secondary which was a primarily push as well as pull factor during second phase of Nepalese emigration. The period for second phase of emigration can be estimated during post-treaty of Sugauli, 1816. The mass Nepalese emigration took place for recruitment in the British Army. The major destinations were Burma (Myanmar) and British North-East region of India. Thousands of Nepalese from Eastern Nepal were recruited in British Army of Burma, Burma Frontier Force and Burma Military Police. Consequently, Gorkha settlements were found in Burma as a result of the immigration of the families of Gorkha officers. In the early 1942, more than 30,000 people fled to Gorkha recruitment depots near Indo-Nepal border from Burma as a result of Japanese invasion of Burma (Gurung, 2016). These refugees were consisting of families of Gurkha soldiers belonging to Burma Frontier Force, Burma Military Police and Burma Army including Gorkha

civilians. They took shelter in the *Motahari* refugee camp. Later on, many of them returned to their home in Burma, Nepal and many among them got settled in Darjeeling district (Gurung, 2016). A section of people was accommodated in tea garden regions of Assam by the Indian tea Association. Besides, several of them took shelter in present north-east region of India including Imphal, Manipur and Dimapur. However, Nepalese immigration had already taken place in north-east region of British India for the recruitment in the British India Army from 1816 onwards. Nevertheless, immigration of civilian grazers, herders including families of retired military men could be traced during later periods of nineteenth century (Chettri, 2013, p. 47). The immigration of thousands of non-Gorkha immigrants also was encouraged for their hard-working nature (Subba and Sinha, 2015, p. 4). It is to be mentioned that after the First World War total 11,000 Gorkhas were discharged from the British Indian Army. Among them, 7,334 chose to permanently settle in different parts of India (Blaikie *et al.*, 1980) including different parts of present north-east India. Additionally, six Gorkha regiments served in India after the independence of India out of total of ten Gorkha regiments (Subba and Sinha, 2015, p. 4). Furthermore, a large scale permanent Nepalese immigration took place in colonial Darjeeling especially, for the construction work and labourers in tea plantations. In this regard, it should be mentioned that Darjeeling, a region of Sikkim became part of British India in 1835. According to O'Malley (1999), Darjeeling was under a dense forest when the British acquired the region and found only 100 souls as the population of the area. In contrast, Pradhan (2010) argues that well enough of the Nepalese population was already lived in the region before they were forced out by the Sikkim monarch. Captain William Lloyd, a British Army officer, wanted Darjeeling to become a sanatorium for European as well as to serve as a strategic hub. Consequently, being a newly appointed superintendent of Darjeeling, Dr Campbell imported more labourers from Nepal to help with the building of the road, office, and bungalow (Subba, 2008). Pradhan (2010) says that the entire construction was completed by Nepalese workers in this context.

The second wave of emigration (1845–1949) took place especially, in search of work which also was characterised by rural-to-rural migration stream. The destinations were Bhutan, colonial Darjeeling, Dooars and Assam tea plantations. Since 1848, tea has been grown in Darjeeling (Hooker, 1854; Griffiths, 1967) in a real sense. For fulfilling the demand of labourers, Nepalese (especially, people from Nepali ethnic community) labourers were imported into Darjeeling tea plantation not only from Nepal but also from Sikkim, and Bhutan. Almost 10,000 immigrant labourers were imported in Darjeeling till 1849 (Griffiths, 1967, p. 86). Moreover, as the tea plantations grew in numbers, the Nepalese began settling in the region, particularly from eastern Nepal. Approximately 19,000 Nepalese were estimated to have lived in the tea plantations of Darjeeling up until

1874 (Griffith, 1967). According to Hutt (2012), there were 19,000 tea plantation workers in Darjeeling in 1876, 90% of whom came from eastern Nepal. In addition to this, the immigration of Nepalese as labourers of tea plantations also took place in Assam tea plantation. British planters imported large numbers of Nepalese to work on tea plantations in Assam during the year 1868 (Griffith, 1967). The evidence of which one can find in a letter from a British tea plantation manager. In the letter, he has stated the problem of importing labourers from Nepal as:

Coolies were imported at great expense and risk. A large proportion of the earlier batches of coolies were up-countrymen, who if survived, lost the health and unusable for tea garden. (Griffiths, 1967, p. 94)

Besides, the mass immigration of Nepalese into Bhutan can be traced after the treaty of Sinchula in 1865 (Chettri, 2013, p. 47; Mitra, 1995; Hutt, 2005) except the late eighteenth-century immigration. The majority of Nepalese immigrants permanently settled in the southern belt of the kingdom (Mitra, 1995) for this reason later on, the Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuck constitutionally provided them a nomenclature of *Lhotshampa* meaning the southerners in 1975. According to Hutt (2005), they were agrarian communities in Bhutan. In the later period of the nineteenth-century British also played an important role in settling Nepalese in Bhutan. The immigrants were not only responsible for bringing cash-based economy in Bhutan but also contributed to the process of its development. They worked for construction of buildings, powerhouse, township, road, office and monasteries (Sinha, 2016). Later on, due to the Nationality Act of 1958 of Bhutan authority, thousands of Nepalese immigrants were forced to exile from the territory of Bhutan. Consequently, Nepalese immigrants became refugee. Thus, Lhotshampas had to leave Bhutan to refugee camps in Nepal set up by the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees in a request of the government of Nepal (Vartak, 2008, p. 36). In this regard, one cannot be denied the fact that many Bhutanese Nepalese permanently settled in India during their exile from their homeland Bhutan.

The third emigration wave (1950s–1960s) was mostly dominated by rural to urban emigration stream. People from Nepal mostly immigrated to the Indian cities primarily for economic reason. They were employed as watchman, waiters and domestic help workers. The wave of emigration was dominantly individual unlike eighteen and nineteenth centuries emigration. Later on, many of the immigrants settled in Indian cities such as Delhi, Kolkata to name a few with their nuclear families. Furthermore, permanent immigration into India during post-colonial period was reinforced due to the treaty of peace and friendship between India and Nepal governments in 1950. According to Article 7 of the treaty Nepalese are not illegal immigrants in India even without any documents such as passport and visa. The article says that Nepalese and Indian can

work across the border. Both the governments of India and Nepal grant the same privileges to them as they would grant to the native citizens in terms of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce (Nayak, 2010). The consequence of the treaty had been that during the 1950s and 1960s immigration in India has increased to a large extent as there was increased in migrating population from merely 0.15 million to 0.35 million during 1952/1954 and 1981 census years (IOM, 2019).

The fourth wave (1970s–1990s) of Nepalese emigration can be estimated to emerge especially, due to promulgation of Foreign Employment Act, 1985. It was over air emigration unlike previous waves. Subedi (2016) maintains that the greater proportion of international movement has been that of the labourers particularly after the 1970s. Nepalese were very limitedly dispersed prior to the promulgation of Foreign Employment Act, 1985 in a strict sense. According to Jung (2016), large-scale Nepalese emigration to other (West Asian, South-East Asian) countries apart from India marked during the 1990s. Subedi (2016) also notes that before the late twentieth century, the dispersal of Nepalese was not possible outside Nepal except in a few destinations like India. During the later period of the twentieth century, Nepalese emigration has been noticed to have different destinations, purposes. It was not specific to ethnicity and caste (Subedi, 2016, p. 34). Emigration destinations such as West Asian and Southeast Asian countries became popular among Nepalese (Gellner, 2018, p. 17). The purpose of emigration also was educational except employment. Low level of employment generation, increasing labour force, unemployment and poverty has been stimulating factors for out-migration of young population from Nepal. During the early 1980s, the major destination was the East Asian countries for Nepalese emigrants. However, during the late 1980s and 1990s, West-Asian countries were the most popular immigration destinations (Subedi, 2016, pp. 27–29).

Similarly, the fifth wave of emigration (2001 onwards) over air that was characterised by rural to urban as well as urban to urban migration stream. The destination in this wave according to Subedi (2016), had been both South East Asian as well as West Asian countries. However, it has been observed that increasing immigration in South-East Asian countries reduced the volume of Nepalese immigration in West Asian countries after the year 2001.

Bhutan, Burma and India were the most common emigration destinations for Nepalese people in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because destinations like Sikkim and Darjeeling have now become part of India. Scholars such as Jung (2016) suggest that the concept of Nepalese diaspora evolved only after the 1990s in this context. It is worth noting that the dispersion of Nepalese emigrants to other locations, such as South-East Asian and West Asian countries, began in the late twentieth century.

Diaspora implies a scattering of people rather than merely a transfer from the homeland to a single host land (Butler, 2001). Therefore, a specific type of dispersal is an undeniable precondition of diaspora. Butler (2001) argues that there must be a minimum of two dispersal destinations for a diaspora formation. In this context, Nepalese were very limitedly dispersed prior to the promulgation of Foreign Employment Act, 1985 in a strict sense. A large-scale emigration to other (West Asian, South-East Asian) countries apart from India was marked only during the 1990s (Jung, 2016, p. 78). In addition to this, Subedi (2016) also mentions that it was not prior to the late twentieth century that the dispersion of Nepalese was possible outside Nepal except few destinations such as India. Nevertheless, they were dispersed to more than one destination even prior to the late twentieth century. Moreover, the merger of the destination of Sikkim into India transpired after their immigration took place. Furthermore, Brusle (2012) expresses that the conception of Nepalese diaspora was not in existence prior to the 1990s. Because there were few philomath who talked about Nepalese diaspora. However, lack of the academic indictment on a particular issue does not betoken that the issue would have no essence. In this sense, it can be argued that the emergence of Nepalese diaspora formation was a matter of the eighteenth century. It is a modern and state-linked diaspora as per Sheffer's (2003) classification of diaspora. Whereas, based on time factor in which diaspora takes place, Nepalese diaspora in the context of India, Bhutan, and Burma (Myanmar) is well settled old diaspora. However, it can be termed as incipient (new) diaspora in the context of other destinations where Nepalese dispersed especially, after the promulgation of Foreign Employment Act, 1985.

CONTEXTUALISING NEPALESE DIASPORA AND TRANSNATIONAL FORMATION IN INDIA

India had been a popular destination for Nepalese immigrants no matter decrementing volume of immigration has been traced in the very recent decenniums (IMO, 2019, p. 38). Thousands of Nepalese still get employment in various parts of India. So far as the status of Nepalese diaspora in India is concerned, it is an old and well-settled diaspora as mentioned. It is to be mentioned that the Indian Nepali community is a component of the Nepalese diaspora. In the context of four ideal types of transnational formations given by Dahinden (2010), Nepali community in India can be conceptualised as *localised diasporic transnational formation*. However, not entire Nepali communities form Nepalese diaspora society. Nepalese diaspora in India perhaps is a transnational formation formulated by the permanent Nepalese immigrants in India provided they are not assimilated into the dominant culture of the host society as there must be self-awareness about who they are? As well as they have certain (imaginary) relationship to the homeland Nepal. Moreover, temporal–historical dimension has been an important aspect to

understand diasporic dimension of a group or community (Brubaker, 2005). Furthermore, according to Brubaker (2005), diaspora is all about the generations of immigrants because if, the second and third generations are completely assimilated to the host society denying their previous identity of homeland then, they are not a part of diaspora formation. In fact, a diasporic ethnic group or community can deny their linkage with homeland and abolish their boundaries in order to become a part of host society (Subba and Sinha, 2016, p. 3). The congruous example of this is the Indian Nepali community. It is worth noting that Nepali community comprises different ethnic communities such as band of Kirati ethnic groups and other ethnic groups such as Thapa, Gurung, Chhetri, etc. They had been staying in India from generation to generation for over three hundred years. India is the homeland for many of them. However, their forefathers' homelands were Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Myanmar, etc. Subba (2003) argues that they are striving to acquire an Indian identity as either they do not have sense of being a component of Nepalese diaspora or they do not express it. Nevertheless, entire population of Indian Nepali are not a part of the Nepalese diaspora. Because, ancestors of all descendants of Indian Nepalīs were not from homeland Nepal. Moreover, entire Nepali speaking (lingua franca) people are not component of Nepalese diaspora formation in India. In India, Nepalīs are not a homogenous category of population in terms of origin and homeland. Indian Nepalīs and Nepalese in India are two different categories of people. It is to be mentioned that the epistemology of the Nepalese diaspora has been misunderstood by some academicians as they considered all Indian Nepalīs as a part of Nepalese diaspora. Their inscriptions do not make differentiation between Indian Nepalīs and Nepalese in India. In this context, Butler (2001) mentions that there has been less epistemological development than the writing of monographs and comparative studies in diaspora field of studies. Here, it is eminent to discuss the category of Nepali verbalising population in India to answer the question of who are the Indian Nepalīs? As well as to identify the constitutive part of Nepalese diaspora in India. We can categorise the entire Nepali speaking population in India as their lingua franca into two broad categories and various sub-categories within it. These are:

1. Indian Nepalīs (INs) and
2. Nepalese in India (NIs)

The INs are those who are citizens (may not be the nationals) or the nationals as well as the citizens of India. The INs can be classified into three sub-categories. First, those who are born in India and thus the Indian nationals and citizens. They are the descendants of the ancestors from homeland of the then kingdom of Sikkim, Bhutan, Burma (Myanmar), etc. rather than from homeland Nepal. However, their ancestors' ancestors were from homeland Nepal. Secondly, those who are born in India and are descendants

of ancestors from the homeland Nepal. Thirdly, those who are the first-generation Indian citizens of Nepal origin (ICNO). They have a real and active patrilineal linkage with their homeland Nepal. They are permanently settled in India. Subba (2012) argues that some of them serve various uniformed services in India and remit money to their families in Nepal. They visit home occasionally and are continuously connected with their families in homeland Nepal. They apply modern means of communication such as mobile, internet and social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc. for homeland connectedness. After their retirement, they buy land and build house in India and become part of Indian society (Subba, 2012). One of the reasons for their permanent settlement in India can be their children who are Indian by birth and their undesirability to go back to Nepal. It is to be mentioned that the first as well as the second sub-category of INs may or may not have their real patrilineal linkage with the ancestral homelands. Similarly, the second and third sub-categories of INs fall under the *localised Nepalese diasporic transnational formation* in India. The ideal type of Localised diasporic transnational formation (given by Janine Dahinden) is characterised by high level of local anchorage in the receiving and low level of local anchorage in the sending country (Dahinden, 2010, p. 53). Moreover, they do not circulate between homeland (Nepal) and host country (India). However, they may occasionally visit sending country. They and their offspring are settled in India (host land) in a way that the sense of belongingness has transformed the host land (India) into homeland. These diasporic transnationals are the immigrants with naturalised children. According to Dahinden (2010), they have a high level of integration with the local (host land) structure. Nevertheless, it is to be mentioned that the first category of INs (i.e. Indian Nepalis having ancestors from other than homeland Nepal) does not constitute a part of Nepalese diaspora formation. Thus, the homeland is crucial in diaspora studies. Although Brubaker (2005) discloses the decreasing importance of homeland in determining diaspora formation. Emphasising its gravity Jung (2016) argues that the dispersion, a central criterion of diaspora formation also depends on a space for enabling movement *from* and *to*. One can define homeland as a multifaceted, historically contingent socially constructed entity (Cohen, 2008, p. 123). It is a space that enables people to encounter themselves as distinct and different from the host-land and provides both hope and alienation (Jung, 2016, p. 79). Homeland, where a residential population occupy a place have some degree of control over with which they must have certain kind of bound (Nostrand and Estaville, 1993). Nostrand and Estaville (1993) say that place, people, sense of place and control of place are the axiomatic for a homeland to be existed. In this context, Subba (2008) in his biographical writing does not feel any emotional attachment for his birthplace in Nepal than that of where he has lived experiences, memories and attachment where he grew up (Sikkim). He says – ‘If home refers to the desiring place of return, Bagha (birthplace) is certainly not my home; it is Tanek (place of brought up)’ (Subba, 2008, p. 216).

NIs are the nationals and citizens of Nepal who live in different parts of India temporarily and semi-permanently. They are different from that of INs. Because, neither they are Indian born nor they have Indian citizenship. As soon as they accomplish their purposes in India, they move to their country Nepal. Basically, they are temporary immigrants which include manual labours, students, patients, pilgrims, and tourists. This particular category of people can be termed as *localised Nepalese mobile transnational formation* based on ideal types of transnational formations given by Janine Dahinden (2010). Localised mobile transnationals move regularly back and forth between the homeland and host land (Dahinden, 2010, p. 55) for family obligations, festivals and other socio-economic purposes. Subba (2012) contains that they cannot buy land and build house in India and grow old doing manual works in India. Thus, the category of NIs is not a constitutive part of Nepalese diaspora based on the theory of transnational formations.

It has become a common-sense knowledge that all Indian Nepalis are the descendants of immigrants from homeland Nepal. However, Subba (2012) argues that this common-sense knowledge has no base as Indian Nepalis are not all descendants of immigrants from Homeland Nepal. Indian Nepalis comprised of the descendants of ancestors not only from homeland Nepal but also from Sikkim, Bhutan, Burma (Myanmar) and Tibet. Therefore, one cannot homogenise Indian Nepali population and thus cannot claim that Nepal was only the original homeland of ancestors of all Indian Nepalis. Historically, Sikkim was a theocratic kingdom until its merger into India in 1975, it was an original homeland for many Nepali communities such as Limbu and Magar (Subba, 2012). Limbu is one of the indigenous communities of Sikkim. In fact, the term *Sikkim* is originated from Limbu word *Su Khyim* which means *new house* (Arora, 2007). Similarly, the high caste Nepalis such Chhetri and Bahun (Brahmin) especially, for Bahuns the original homeland is considered to be India particularly, Ujjain from where some of their forefathers emigrated to Nepal which is historically evident during the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries (Subba, 2012). Furthermore, according to Subba (2012), Tibet is believed to be the original homeland of some of the Nepali communities such as Sherpa, Gurung, Tamang and Yolmu. Thus, few of the Indian Nepalis of Nepal origin may constitute the diaspora society in India. Therefore, the entire Nepali population in India do not form a diaspora society. The question of Nepalese diaspora is generally concerned with the second and third sub-categories of INs. However, most of the scholars include all categories of INs as Nepalese diaspora while some scholars include even NIs categories of people while explaining the Nepalese diaspora formation. Therefore, before describing Nepalese diaspora it is necessary to define it in the light of empirical data for the sake of genuine knowledge production.

Diaspora studies have become one of the pertinent subject matters in contemporary dynamic world. However, by the time the concept of diaspora itself had been in the

process of proliferation. Consequently, the concept of diaspora not only explains the world resulting by the force but also voluntary migration. Migration history plays an important role in defining diaspora society. Nepalese diaspora in India is an emerging field of research in contemporary period. Many scholars describe Nepalese diaspora in India without realising its epistemological complexities. Sometimes, they amalgamate all Nepali speaking population in India making them Nepalese diasporic elements without pondering upon the heterogeneous composition of the Nepali speaking population in India. Research conducted overlooking methodological complexity in studying Nepali diaspora in India perhaps describe Nepalese diaspora in India but without defining it. Therefore, the category of Nepalese diaspora especially, in the Indian context needs a serious empirical attention under the surveillance of Nepalese immigration history. Besides, we need to discover an appropriate nomenclature in order to move ahead of the puzzle of Nepali and Nepalese diaspora.

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How to cite this article: Bhujel, B. and Raj, A. (2022) 'Nepalese Diaspora in India: An Epistemological Contestation', *Journal of Exclusion Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 70-85.