

Differences in cultural identity

**“AN EXAMINATION OF THE CULTURAL IDENTITY AND DIFFICULTIES
FACED BY NEPALESE IMMIGRANTS IN OSLO”**



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Abstract

The cultural practices and holidays observed by Nepalese immigrants in Norway are the subject of this study. The study looks at how much Nepalese immigrants in Norway have adapted, negotiated, or changed the cultural and religious symbols that are uniquely their own. The study mostly however examines the struggles immigrants from Nepal experience in preserving their cultural traditions while assimilating to Norwegian culture. Participant observation is used in the research's qualitative methodology to gather data. The study focuses on the five festivals—Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Buddha Jayanti, and Gai Jatra—that Nepalese immigrants in Norway observe. To explore the connection between culture and identity in festival celebrations by Nepalese immigrants in Norway, the festivals are examined using the Culture, Migration, and Identification Theory and Culture Theory.

The results of the research indicate that immigrants from Nepal to Norway have modified some of their cultural practices and beliefs to fit into Norwegian culture. They do, nonetheless, still adhere to several cultural customs and beliefs that are linked to their Nepalese heritage. The study demonstrates the nuanced interaction between culture and identity in the festival celebrations of Nepalese immigrants in Norway. The study shows how it is difficult to celebrate festivals the way they used to celebrate in Nepal, but however they have managed to celebrate the festivals in the best way possible. The study also sheds light on the challenges faced by Nepalese immigrants in Norway in upholding their cultural traditions while assimilating to Norwegian culture. Language barriers, social isolation, and discrimination are some of these issues. In order to foster a more inclusive society that values diversity and supports the cultural integration of Nepalese immigrants in Norway, the study contends that additional efforts are required.

List of Abbreviations

CMIT – Culture, Migration, and Identification Theory

HHN – Helping Hands for Nepal

GDP– Gross Domestic Product

JSS – Jana Samaparka Samiti

ISTSS– International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies

NESCO – Nepalese Student Community in Oslo

NRNA – Non-Resident Nepali Association

NTB – Nepal Tourism Board

NTNU – Norwegian University of Science and Technology

PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

UDI – The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration

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Chapter 1 (Introduction)

Background of the study

The thesis project is about Nepalese immigrants living in Oslo, Norway. It will explore some of their experiences, struggles, understandings, perspectives, religious identities, social practices, and cultural differences they encounter living in Norway. The research problem I explore concerns the cultural identity characteristics of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo, and furthermore how they maintain their cultural identity in the face of the challenges of immigration and integration. I aim to do this through participatory observations in Nepalese festivals in Oslo.

I am myself from Sunsari, Nepal, living in Oslo, Norway for seven years. I have completed three years of bachelor's degrees from Nepal and Norway respectively. Currently, I am completing the master program in Religion and diversity: conflict and coexistence at the Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo. I belong to the Hindu religion. In Nepal, more than 80 percent of people are Hindus. I was born and raised in a home where Hinduism plays a central role in daily life, thus I observe the principles followed here. Like many Hindus, I find it difficult to uphold my cultural identity outside of Nepal. When it comes to faith, I have a fairly open stance. I hold all faiths with the same esteem. Although my own religious background is Hinduism, I am nevertheless interested in learning more about the perspectives, customs, and histories of other Nepalese people who have settled in Oslo. My thesis will benefit from my background knowledge of Nepalese culture and language, as well as religious customs, which I will draw upon extensively in the introductory chapters to ensure a solid foundation for the reader.

Nepalese immigrants in Oslo include students, government workers, their families, and Ph.D. holders, i.e. Nepalese with higher education and permanent jobs. Studying abroad is a great way for people to broaden their horizons, make new friends, and learn about other cultures. They long to return home to their loved ones, communities, religious institutions, and cultural norms. Most immigrants must explain their background, including where they originated from, why they immigrated to the Oslo, Norway, their religious beliefs, and why they are currently living overseas. The same applies to me. I commit to making every effort to address the problems with the project's writing. From my experience, Norway is a prosperous, beautiful,

peaceful, and cosmopolitan country where people of different backgrounds can get along. Humanism, culture, and mutual respect are also highly prized in this society. Immigrants come to Norway because of these factors. My referring to the Nepalese in Oslo as Hindus is a generalization based on the fact that there are also people of various faiths, cultures, races, and backgrounds who call Nepal home. The reason of this generalization is since the research is based on the research problems regarding Hindu festivals. The Nepalese population in Oslo is my main concern.

The religious and cultural significance of Hinduism in Nepal is thought to be reflected in the country's many Hindu festivals. Similar to how it highlights how Nepalese immigrants celebrate and uphold their traditions in Oslo. In Oslo, Norway, there is a burgeoning Nepalese population. Around 1,500 Nepalese people called Norway home as of 2021, with a sizable proportion of them residing in Oslo, according to Statistics Norway (SSB, 2023). The Nepalese community in Oslo is small but close-knit, and many of its members have only recently immigrated to Norway. The majority of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo work in service-related fields like dining, lodging, and housekeeping. However, some people have also succeeded in more highly skilled fields like medicine, engineering, and information technology (Norway, 2015).

To help understand Nepalese immigrants, it may be useful to know more about their origin. Nepal is a small landlocked country located in South Asia, bordered by India to the south and east and China to the north. With a population of around 29 million, Nepal is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of just \$1,208 in 2021 (World Bank, 2022). This economic instability, along with other factors such as political instability, natural disasters, and limited opportunities for education and employment, has driven many Nepalese people to seek better lives abroad. The majority of Nepalese immigrants in Norway are concentrated in the capital city of Oslo, where they make up a significant portion of the city's immigrant population.

Cultural identity is a complex concept that refers to the unique characteristics and practices that define an individual's sense of self and belonging to a particular cultural group (Joshi, 2022). It is shaped by a variety of factors, including language, religion, values, customs, and traditions. For immigrants, the process of immigration and integration can pose significant challenges to the maintenance of cultural identity. This may be due to the pressure to assimilate into the

dominant culture, the loss of connections to the home country and culture, and the adoption of new values and practices (Joshi, 2022).

Research Question

The purpose of this research project is to investigate how Nepalese immigrants' identities are negotiated, changed, and modified, by exploring how their common festivals are celebrated in Oslo. The research questions are as follows:

- ❖ How do Nepalese immigrants celebrate their festivals in Oslo and in What ways may these celebrations contribute to overcoming their difficulties?

Research problem

The objective of my research project is to examine how immigrants from Nepal practice their religious and cultural beliefs through the celebration of festivals. It requires thoughtfulness and perspectives of the Nepalese immigrants in Oslo, Norway. My research project also provides a general overview of how immigrants from Nepal live in Norway. The social inclusion of Nepalese immigrants in Norway is reviewed. The research seeks to determine the factors that helped and hindered Nepalese immigrants' community engagement in Norway.

Immigration is a complex and multifaceted process that has been a central feature of human history (Castles et al., 2014). It involves the movement of people from one place to another, often across national borders, in search of better opportunities, safety, or a sense of belonging (Massey et al., 1998). While immigration can bring about numerous benefits for both the individual immigrants and the receiving societies (Borjas, 2013), it can also pose significant challenges. One such challenge is the maintenance of cultural identity, which refers to the unique cultural characteristics and practices that define an individual's sense of self and belonging to a particular cultural group (Phan et al., 2015).

Norway has seen a significant increase in immigration from Nepal in recent years with Oslo being a major destination. Like other immigrants, Nepalese in Oslo may face a range of difficulties related to the adjustment to a new country, culture, and way of life. These difficulties may include language barriers, discrimination, and difficulties in finding employment and housing (Kabir, 2012). Additionally, the process of immigration and integration can lead to the loss of cultural identity, as immigrants may feel pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture and adopt new values and practices (Sapkota, 2013).

Despite the growing number of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo, there is limited research on the cultural identity and difficulties experienced by this group (Lidén & Bhusal, 2017). This lack of knowledge represents a significant gap in our understanding of their experiences and the challenges and difficulties they face in the process of immigration and integration. To address this gap, this research project aims to explore the cultural identity characteristics of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo, and the strategies and coping mechanisms they use to maintain their cultural identity in the face of the challenges of immigration and integration. The study also examines how the Nepalese immigrants in Oslo are celebrating festivals, under which circumstances, the problems and challenges faced by the Nepalese immigrants in Norway through different methodology. The study also shows the cultural crisis the Nepalese immigrants have been facing due to the cultural differences in Norway and Nepal.

The findings of this study may contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo and can hopefully inform policies and practices aimed at promoting their successful integration into Norwegian society. The study can also contribute to the broader literature on immigration, cultural identity, and the challenges faced by immigrants in the process of integration. It may be valuable for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners working in this field, and can help to inform the development of more effective strategies and interventions for promoting the well-being and integration of both Nepalese and other immigrants.

Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its ability to contribute to a better understanding of the cultural identity and difficulties experienced by Nepalese immigrants in Oslo. Moreover, it may contribute:

- To comprehend the experiences of immigrants: It is important to understand the challenges and opportunities that come with adjusting to a new cultural environment. Research on the cultural difficulties that immigrants face can help with this. It can aid scholars and decision-makers in comprehending immigrant experiences and the elements that influence how they integrate into a new society.
- To encourage cultural diversity and social cohesion: it is important to comprehend the difficulties that immigrants face in preserving their cultural identity and participating in their festivals. A more inclusive and tolerant society may result from this as people may come to value and respect other cultures more.

- To increase understanding and empathy among the general public: Research on the difficulties faced by Nepalese immigrants in Oslo can increase public understanding of these immigrants' experiences. This can promote a more harmonious and inclusive society by lowering stereotypes and prejudice against immigrants.
- To enhance policies and services: Studies on the cultural challenges faced by immigrants can help guide the development of policies and services that aid in their integration into a new society. Language instruction, cultural orientation programs, and other services that assist immigrants in preserving their cultural identity while also assimilating into the host society can fall under this category.

Limitation of the study

Researchers can make certain that their research is carried out in an accountable and transparent way that takes into consideration the potential biases as well as the constraints of the study's design by recognizing and dealing with these limitations.

- **Small Sample Size**: The research's potential sample size could limit how broadly the results can be applied. As in this thesis, the sample size is the Nepalese present on the respective occasions. Not all Nepalese people living in Oslo were present.
- **Self-Selection Bias**: Research participants might not be fully representative of all Nepalese immigrants in Norway, which could limit the generalizability of the results. As the country I choose, is the same I am living, this may not represent the scenario of Nepalese in other countries than Norway.
- **Language Barrier**: The research has encountered a language barrier because some immigrants from Nepal may not be native speakers of the research language, which could limit the reliability of the data collected.
- **Cultural Disparities**: The research may encounter cultural disparities because immigrants from Nepal may hold cultural norms, values, and beliefs that diverge from those of the researcher. This could have an impact on how the data are interpreted.
- **Time Restrictions**: Due to time restrictions, especially the day when this celebration is made is observed. It may have led to missing information of the preparatory backgrounds for the festival. Their excitement of the day before may have been missed in the context. Thus, the research's scope and level of analysis may have to be scaled back.
- **Subjectivity**: The research could be subjective because the researcher's personal biases, convictions, and viewpoints may influence how the data are interpreted.

- Accessibility: There may be problems with accessibility because some immigrants from Nepal may be hard to get in touch with or unwilling to take part in the study.

Chapter 2 (Festival and Festival celebration in Nepal)

Festivals in Nepal

I shall outline and clarify the Nepalese holiday and festival customs in this chapter. I'll go over each festival that is observed in Norway one at a time, first describing how it is done in Nepal and then describing how it is done in Norway. I'll go into more depth on the festivities in Norway when I offer the data material below. In Nepal, we celebrate various festivals according to the lunar calendar. Some of the major festivals are Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Chhath, Jatras (Gai Jatra, Bisket Jatra, Indra Jatra, Bhote Jatra, and so on), Lhosars (Tamu Lhosar, Sonam Lhosar, and Gyalpo Lhosar) (Bhatta, 2021), Rakshya Bandhan, Teej, Buddha Jayanti, Eid, and many more. We usually celebrate these festivals according to our lunar calendar. We have national holidays for different festivals where Dashain is celebrated as the national festival, and we get around 10 days of a national holiday for the festival. There are national festivals, ethnic festivals, and religious festivals that we celebrate. For example, Jatras are usually celebrated by Newars whereas Holi and Dashain are celebrated by people all over the country.

Every major religious holiday celebrated in Nepal has been designated by the government as a national holiday with associated public holidays. Other holidays celebrated by adherents of a particular religion have been designated as religious holidays with associated holidays available only to those who observe the holiday. Only certain ethnic groups, such as the Newar, Magar, Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, and Sherpa, celebrate ethnic festivals and take time off from work to celebrate them. For instance, national holidays like Dashain, Tihar, Christmas, and Eid fall under this category, whereas religious holidays like Ram Navami and Krishna Janmashtami and ethnic holidays like Lhosar, Sakala, and Ghode Jatra fall under the religious category. Hindus make up the maximum number of the population in Nepal, so the majority of their festivals are designated as public holidays.

Nepalese students have made every effort to maintain their unity in several Norway cities. The main motivation behind it is to be present together during happy and sad occasions. Each year, student organizations have assisted newcomers by offering practical advice and a place for them to interact with other students. The majority of the student activities and gatherings at the Oslo competition are hosted by NESCO. Helping Hands for Nepal-Norway is the host of a select number of programs. In their native country, Nepalese students observe a variety of

holidays, but they particularly enjoy Dashain, Tihar, Teej, Shiva Ratri, New Year, and other holidays that are frequently organized by NESCO and occasionally in conjunction with HHN.

Festival celebration in Nepal

Nepalese Hindu festivals include Tihar, Teej, Dashain, Chhath, Maghe Sankranti, Maha Shivaratri, Holi, and New Years. A significant portion of Hindus in Nepal observe these events, with Holi being celebrated in late fall or early summer. Married women often hope for their husbands' long lives and overall wellness. Holi has special significance in Nepal, as all women, excluding widows, dress in red saris and visit temples to offer prayers to God Shiva (Puri, 2017).

Due to the diversity of religion, culture, and ethnic background, the festivals observed in Nepal can be broadly divided into:

- a. Nationwide festivals
- b. Religious festivals
- c. Ethnocultural festivals

The Nepalese government has designated major religious vacations as national holidays, while other holidays are religion-based and only eligible for individual benefit. Ethnocultural festivals, such as Newar, Magar, Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, or Sherpa, are exclusively observed by a specific ethnic group. National holidays like Dashain, Tihar, Christmas, and Eid fall under this category, while religious holidays like Ram Navami and Krishna Janmashtami and ethnic holidays like Lhosar, Sakala, and Ghode Jatra fall under the religious category.

Nepal is known as the "Land of Festivals," with a celebration taking place in at least one region throughout the entire year. Celebrations may commemorate to mourn the passing of the deceased (Giri, 2016), mark the beginning or final stage of the agricultural process, commemorate significant national holidays, or bring the family together, gatherings, among other purposes. The Nepalese perceive fasting, visit temples, take their customary baths, worship various gods and goddesses, and plan feasts on festival days. Religious harmony is the most significant aspect of Nepalese culture, which explains why there is unity between Hindus and Buddhists (Green Horizon Tour, 2023).

Nepal celebrates various holidays based on seasons and times of the year, with different ethnicities observing them. For example, the Gurung, Newar, and Kirat communities observe

Tamu Lhosar, Yamari Purni, and Sakela. Other holidays vary depending on their location, such as Indra Jatra, Ghode Jatra, Chhath, Gaura Parba, and Indra Jatra in Nepal's southern Terai, Gaura Parba in Nepal's far west, and Indra Jatra in Kathmandu. Single women often practice fasting to find great husbands, like Parvati, the goddess of fertility, love, and dedication. National holidays in Nepal include Dashain, Tihar (Deepawali), Chhath, and New Year's Day. These festivals imprint Nepal's culture on future generations, with each having unique rituals and celebrations. The researcher's hypothesis suggests that immigrant people, particularly students, maintain stable religious practices and behaviors, worshipping gods and goddesses in the morning. However, after arriving in Norway, few systems have changed, and few people have been replaced. Due to the lack of Hindu temples, students continue to visit temples and offer special offerings. Electronic media has replaced live chants, and the main Nepalese festivals are celebrated all at once, with times and locations determined by NESCO (Giri, 2016).

Nepalese festivals in Oslo are less frequent than in their home country, but immigrant students still organize them to spend time with friends and express their emotions. They use virtual communication tools like Facebook, Skype, and Viber to stay connected with their Nepalese friends and family. These festivals continue Nepalese customs, religions, and traditions, demonstrating that traditions have traveled across borders. Despite legal limitations on celebrations like Shiva Ratri, Holi, and Chhath, Nepalese students observe these rituals and festivals uniquely, using non-marijuana-based methods. Offerings are made during festivals, but no sacrifices are made for Nepalese residing in Oslo. Norway prohibits animal slaughter, so students engage in rituals that are suitable for Oslo's circumstances.

Festivals are "days or times of religious or other festivities, marked by feasting, ceremonies, or other observances," according to the dictionary. 17 Most Nepalese festivals are observed according to the lunar calendar. Every festival comes with its distinct rituals and celebrations (the free dictionary, 2023). We observed various festivals celebrated by Nepalese people concerning Nepalese immigrants residing in Oslo, along with the difference in the celebration of festivals in Nepal and in Norway, which is given below:

Dashain

Dashain, a 15-day festival with a nine-day public holiday, is the main celebration in Nepal (VisitNepal, 2023). Dashain is Nepal's longest and greatest festival, commemorating Goddess Durga's triumph over demons and light over darkness. It begins after the Ashwin or Kartik no-

moon night and involves sowing grains, family reunions, and buying new clothes. Children receive Dakshina, while elders give Jamara and Tika to younger ones. People move to their homes, play cards, fly kites, and play "ping" (swings made of bamboo) during the festival. (Katwal, 2022a). The Dashain Festival begins with Ghatasthapana, where a Kalasha filled with holy water and barley seeds is given to a priest to pray to Goddess Durga. Historically, women and outsiders were prohibited, but modern society allows them to practice their religion. Kalasha receives daily watering and sun protection, promoting seed sprouting and yellow grass growth. The Dashain Festival begins with Ghatasthapana, where a Kalasha filled with holy water and barley seeds is given to a priest to pray to Goddess Durga. Historically, women and outsiders were prohibited, but modern society allows them to practice their religion. Kalasha receives daily watering and sun protection, promoting seed sprouting and yellow grass growth.

On the seventh day of Dashain Festival, people in Hanumandhokaon, Kathmandu, traditionally offer Fulpati, a collection of significant plants and flowers, to Goddess Durga (kathmandupost, 2018). The eighth day of the Dashain Festival in Nepal honors Kali, Durga's most dreadful demonstration, with animals slaughtered in temples and "Black Night" at midnight. The meat, called Prasad, is dedicated to the goddess and believed to bring good fortune (Katwal, 2023). Maha Navami is a significant cultural festival in Nepal, celebrated on the ninth day of the lunar calendar. It involves various rituals and customs, including the sacrifice of buffaloes in remembrance of Durga, worship of vehicles and livestock, and the access to the Taleju Temples. Goat meat is consumed in homes during this time. Vijay Dashami is a time for family gatherings, with gifts sent and a Tika applied to a child's forehead. The festival ends on Kojagrata Purnima, the full moon day, where Laxmi, the goddess of fortune, bestows blessings on those who stayed awake all night. The festival is observed in various ways, with the Nepalese community in Oslo holding cultural events and gatherings. The Nepalese Embassy in Oslo hosts unique events and invites friends and neighbors to join in the fun.

Tihar

Tihar, also known as the festival of lights and Deepawali, is a significant festival in Nepal, celebrated for five days. It involves rituals of Yamuna, Yama's sister and the "God of Death." Despite living separately, Tihar brings families together, similar to Diwali in India. (Pristinenepal, 2022). Tihar festival's origins are a subject of tales, with the Yamuna, the God of Death, and her sister Yamuna living apart. Yamuna used the crow as a messenger to communicate with Yama, who finally came to see her. Yamuna prepared tikas, flowers, and

fruits to commemorate Yama's birth, believing it would bring blessings for long life and wealth (Stunning Nepal, 2022). Kaag Tihar, the first day of the festival, is celebrated as the "Messenger of Deaths" in Hinduism. The crow's cawing sound symbolizes sadness and grief, and people feed them to ward off serious matters for the year. Sweets and other foods are presented to the crow (NTB, 2023). Kukur Tihar, a day 2 of Tihar, is celebrated in Nepal for dogs' loyalty and loyalty. The festival features Tika and calendula garlands, tasty food, and is significant in Hindu mythology. Dogs are believed to guard the gates of Hell and counteract negative effects of death, theft, and damnation. The Newars celebrate this festival, also known as Khicha Puja (We All Nepali, 2023b).

Gai Tihar, also known as Laxmi Puja, is the third day of Tihar, celebrated by worshipping Goddess Laxmi and the cow, Nepal's national animal. People express gratitude for wealth and ask for increased wealth. Houses are lit up with fire, doors open, and rangolis are made. Children play DeusiBhailo, practice dances, sing, and collect Dakshina. The festival is also a time for cleaning houses and celebrating the goddess's presence (Jigme, 2019). The fourth day of the festival is the Goverdhan Puja, which involves worshipping ox and creating Goverdan Mountains out of cow dung. Newars celebrate it as Mha Puja, worshipping themselves and starting the new Nepal Sambat Calendar. The fifth day is the Bhai Tika, where Yamraj, the God of Death, visits his sister Yamuna, who prepares delectable foods and gifts for him. This day is celebrated by worshipping brothers through their sisters. Similar to Diwali, the Nepalese community in Oslo celebrates Tihar by adorning homes and streets with lights and flowers, hosting cultural events, and participating in NESCO programs (Wessel and et al., 2018).

Tihar, a five-day festival in Nepal, involves decorating homes with candles, drawing rangoli patterns, offering garlands, and worshipping Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. In Norway, the Nepalese community celebrates Tihar through cultural activities, musical performances, and dance performances. However, the cold weather in Norway may prevent outdoor celebrations. Norwegians may incorporate regional traditions, such as lighting candles on windowsills and serving traditional Nepalese fare. Different days of Tihar involve worshipping animals and natural elements, such as Kukur Tihar and Gai Tihar. The Nepalese community in Oslo celebrates Tihar by hosting feasts, sweets, and exchanging gifts.

Holi

Holi, a beloved festival in Nepal, is celebrated by Hindus worldwide. It is known as Fagu Purnima and is celebrated on the full moon day in the Falgun month. The festival is centered

around joy, excitement, love, and color, and is celebrated by all age groups, in addition to Dashain and Tihar (Discover altitude, 2023). Holi festival is celebrated through various myths, with the most famous being the story of Lord Vishnu, the Evil King Hiranyakashipu, his son Prahlad, and his evil aunt Holika. King Hiranyakashipu, a demon, worships Vishnu, but his son disobeys him. Despite attempts to kill Prahlad, he fails (Katwal, 2021). Hiranyakashipu and Holika took Prahlad to Pyre, where Holika, immune to fire, accompanied him to burn him to death. Lord Vishnu saved Holika, and the ashes were applied to Prahlad's body and head for Holi celebrations (Jigme, 2020).

Nepal celebrates Holi with various foods, including Gujiya, a sweet made from flour and dried fruits, and Malai Peda, softballs made from milk cream and decorated with dry fruits. Bhang Lassi, a concoction of milk, milk powder, and cannabis, is a favorite among people of all ages and is considered a healthy beverage (Holidify, 2023b). Holi, originally intended to protect the population from illnesses, used natural colors like neem, turmeric, and mehendi for Ayurvedic remedies. However, modern festivals use synthetic colors, reducing Holi's medicinal value. Despite this, people still enjoy the festival (Rugged Trails Nepal, 2023). Nepalese immigrants in Oslo struggle with Holi celebrations due to restrictions on the festival's proper celebration. The Nepali way of celebrating Holi involves splashing colors and water, while Oslo's climate and surrounding conditions make it inappropriate. As a result, Nepalese students use more colors and less water to celebrate Holi. This highlights the need for reshaping deeply ingrained sociocultural norms and values. (Giri, 2016).

Buddha Jayanti

Vesak, also known as Buddha Jayanti, is a significant holiday for Buddhists worldwide, commemorating Lord Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and Mahaparinirvana entry. Observed on the Full Moon Day of May, it symbolizes love and compassion. Buddha Purnima, a Buddhist holiday in Eastern Asia, honors Prince Siddharth Gautam, the founder of Buddhism. Both Hindus and Buddhists participate in this festival (Nepal Highland Treks, 2023). Buddha Purnima is a festival honoring Buddha's spiritual quest and Siddhartha Gautam's decision to give up his life as a king. People refrain from eating non-vegetarian food and dress in white for the occasion. Buddhists visit viharas, temples, and monasteries to pray, meditate, and hear teachings. They practice meditation, acknowledge Sila, and give offerings to the Bhikkhu Sangha. Buddhists provide food, medications, and nourishment to patients in hospitals,

orphanages, and nursing homes. They recite sutta/sutras to invoke joy, peace, empathy, unity, and well-being (Darjeeling, 2023).

Buddha Jayanti is celebrated on Buddha Purnima, a full moon day in Asian lunisolar calendars. In Nepal and India, it's observed during the full moon in Baisakh and Bikram Sambhat, with the exact date varying annually (Nepali Patro, 2020). Buddha Jayanti, celebrated by Nepalese Buddhists, is particularly significant in Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautam Buddha. The festival, which takes place in the southern Terai region, involves special chanting, prayers, charity, and respect for Buddhism. The location is where Queen Maya Devi's idol was constructed. Pilgrims travel to Lumbini for worship and devotion. (Hindustan Times, 2021).

Boudhanath and Swoyambhunath stupas in the Kathmandu valley are popular Buddhist sites for inner peace and worship. Boudhanath, a World Heritage Site, is a popular destination for Buddhists, with many visitors seeking harmony and peace. Swoyambhunath, built in the 13th century by King Manadeva, is Nepal's most sacred Buddhist center and is surrounded by numerous monasteries. During Buddha Purnima, the largest crowds are visible, and devotees walk around the stupa daily to meditate and find inner peace. Buddha Jayanti is celebrated in Namobuddha and Asura Cave Pharping, both of which are revered sites for Buddhists. Guru Rinpoche, the second Buddha, is revered in Asura cave, where devotees pay respects to the lotus born at Mahamudra's Siddhi. Namobuddha, located in Kavre district, is a sacred pilgrimage site known for its serene surroundings and the donation of Lord Buddha's body to a starving tigress. Kartik Purnima and Buddha Jayanti are the main holidays observed (Heritage, 2023).

Oslo, a multicultural city, celebrates Buddha Jayanti in various ways due to its diverse Buddhist community. The Nepalese and other Buddhist communities organize cultural events, including meditation sessions, chanting, and Dharma talks. The Nepalese Embassy in Oslo also hosts cultural performances and exhibitions of Buddhist art and philosophy. Some Buddhist organizations in Oslo engage in charitable giving to demonstrate compassion and altruism. Buddha Jayanti is a significant festival for Oslo's Buddhist community (Yang, 2022).

Gai Jatra

Gai Jatra is a significant festival in Nepal, honoring the deceased and alleviating pain. The festival, originating from Hinduism, involves dancing, singing, mirth, and laughter. In the Kathmandu Valley, it commemorates the cow, a goddess of wealth, and involves children

dressed as cows in a parade (NTB, 2023). Gai Jatra, a national holiday in Nepal, is celebrated on "Pratipada" in the Nepalese lunar calendar, during the dark fortnight, due to road ineffectiveness (Holidify, 2023a). Gai Jatra is a significant festival in Bhaktapur, celebrated by people dressing as various creatures, with kids and adults wearing masks. Originally a Newar festival, it now involves Nepalese playing "Ghintangghisin" and cows as symbols (Aryal, 2021). The cow is taken to various locations where relatives and friends of a deceased person celebrate by playing "Ghintangghisin" with wooden sticks, dancing, and singing.

The Gai Jatra festival in Nepal commemorates the loss of a son by King Pratap Malla in the 17th century. The festival features vibrant attire and decorated cows, symbolizing the deceased. The king acknowledges the natural nature of death and celebrates the loss with a smile (Jigme, 2019). Gai Jatra is a festival that prepares people for life after death by recognizing death and the loss of loved ones. It incorporates traditional values and contemporary elements, allowing people to criticize the government and leaders, a concept that was previously forbidden during the Shah's rule (We All Nepali, 2023a). The "Gai" hosts annual photo exhibitions featuring ministers, comedic performances, plays, radio and television dramas, and special editions of newspapers featuring cartoons and humorous articles (Rubin Museum, 2016). Gai Jatra is a vibrant festival that honors the souls of the dead, featuring children in processions wearing cow masks, traditional Newari music, and dance. The LGBTQIA+ community also celebrates with a gay pride parade in Nepal, raising awareness of their community (Katwal, 2022b).

Gai Jatra is a significant celebration in Bhaktapur, Kirtipur, and Patan, with Kirtipur being the most celebrated. Devotees parade in costumes, praying for loved ones, and hosting a feast. Bhaktapur features musical performances, Ghintang Ghisi, and political backlash, while Patan hosts the religious Matayaa. Each city celebrates Gai Jatra differently (Fowler, 2017). Gai Jatra in Bhaktapur features various performances, including Kawan Pyakha, a skeleton dance, Bhalu Naach, a bear-related storytelling act, and Khicha Pyakhan, a dog-themed dance. Kawan Pyakha involves two children dressed as skeletons facing each other, while Bhalu Naach features a bear-related storytelling act. Khicha Pyakhan demonstrates dog loyalty to humans (Bhaktapur, 2023).

The Madhyapur Thimi festival features various cultural and spiritual elements, including the Bhairav dance, Lakhe Dance, and mask and street dances. However, Nepalese immigrants living in Oslo are unable to celebrate Gai Jatra due to its large size and noise requirements. Other important festivals in Nepal, such as Bisket Jatra and Lhosars, are also not celebrated in

Oslo due to the lack of infrastructure and resources. The festival is considered important among the Newar community in Nepal, but it is not celebrated in Oslo due to the small Sherpa, Tamang, and Tibetan communities in Oslo. Consequently, the Nepalese people's celebrations of these festivals are not as significant in Oslo.

Chapter 3 (Conceptual approaches)

When individuals migrate to a new nation, acclimating to their surroundings and assimilating into modern society becomes imperative. The process of integration, as elucidated by Alba & Nee (1997), is not merely about changing migrants' legal status; it's a profound, two-way engagement between newcomers and the receiving community. Natalya Antoniuk, as referenced in Hritika Joshi's master thesis, emphasizes that integration is a transformative process, aimed at shifting a dysfunctional state towards responsiveness and change. For Nepalese immigrants in Oslo, this integration process is complex and multifaceted, involving challenges such as language barriers, unemployment, social exclusion, and the pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture (Joshi, 2022).

My research project delves deep into these challenges, focusing on specific goals. Firstly, it seeks to pinpoint the cultural customs and traditions that hold significance for Nepalese immigrants. This includes their language, traditional foods, music, dance, and religious beliefs. Understanding these elements provides crucial insights into their identity preservation strategies. Secondly, the study meticulously examines the obstacles faced in preserving their cultural identity in a new cultural setting. Language barriers and social prejudices often pose significant hurdles. Additionally, it explores the pressure to conform to the dominant culture, which might lead to a dilution of their native traditions.

Raising awareness and fostering empathy are pivotal aspects of this research. By spotlighting the experiences of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo, the study aims to dispel stereotypes and prejudices surrounding immigrants. This involves sharing their perspectives and experiences, encouraging a more empathetic understanding from the local community. Furthermore, the study advocates for promoting local festivals and events, fostering a sense of community and inclusivity. These initiatives not only showcase the rich cultural tapestry of Nepal but also foster a sense of belonging among immigrants, bridging the gap between their heritage and the new culture they find themselves in.

Lastly, the research endeavors to inform policies and programs that promote cultural diversity and social cohesion while facilitating the integration of newcomers from Nepal into Norwegian society. Practical measures, such as language lessons and cultural orientation programs, are vital. Community events, where cultural exchange is encouraged, provide a platform for immigrants to share their traditions and, in turn, learn from the local culture. These initiatives

facilitate a dual process: while immigrants maintain their cultural identity, they also integrate into the new society, creating a harmonious blend of traditions. In essence, this research serves as a beacon, illuminating the path towards a more inclusive, empathetic, and integrated society in Oslo.

Previous research

Although there has been limited research among Nepalese immigrants in Norway, there have been some, as well as similar studies among other immigrant groups and to other western countries. In the following, I will give a short overview of the studies I have found.

(For many people, understanding culture is difficult, and transforming cultures is a task that is made much more complicated by the possibility of misconceptions occurring during the process. Additionally, some of the misunderstandings that other people hold about particular cultures may also be to blame.) Numerous studies have been conducted on the subjects of immigration, refugees, migration, and asylum seekers like "The Integration of Immigrants and Their Children in Europe: A Comparison Across Ten Countries" by Richard Alba and Nancy Foner, "The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Immigration" by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, "Gendered Perspectives on Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health: A Systematic Review" by Lesley Henderson and Fiona M. Scobbie, "Migration, Diversity, and Economic Growth in the United States" by the Migration Policy Institute. These studies are becoming more common as a result of globalization since the 1990s.

Most studies on migration mentioned above concentrate on its mental, social, and economic considerations. Studies are conducted with a variety of topics in mind, such as psychological issues faced by immigrants and the effects on their offspring. Some researchers such as Matthew Hodes and Panos Vostanis have concentrated on "Mental Health Problems of Refugee Children and Adolescents and their Management" (Hodes & Vostanis, 2019). Similarly to this, a lot of other studies such as "Construction 'The Way Of Life': A Case Of Bhutanese Refugees In Norway" by M. Sharma (2011), "Children on the Move: The Health of Refugee, Immigrant, and Displace Children" by Oberg (2019), and "Children in Immigrant Families" by Hernandez & Charney (1998) concentrate on the issues facing immigrants and refugee children. The reasons for immigration and asylum, which also cause people to lose their identity and become stateless, have also been the subject of various studies.

The reason behind these various studies done on the migration of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo Norway by researchers such as Nitya Nanada Timsina (2021) and Sandhya Paudel (2018) are:

- ❖ To comprehend the effects of migration on people and societies: Research on migration is done to learn more about the emotional, social, and financial effects that migration has on people and societies. In order to create policies and programs that support the integration of migrants into new societies, researchers and policymakers can use these studies to better understand the difficulties and opportunities associated with migration.
- ❖ To address issues with mental health: Studies have looked at the psychological difficulties faced by refugees and immigrants, including how misperceptions and cultural assimilation affect mental health (Bhugra D., 2020). These studies can point to approaches for addressing mental health issues and promoting the mental health of refugees and immigrants.
- ❖ Continuing to support the needs of immigrant and refugee children: Research has also concentrated on the particular difficulties faced by immigrant and refugee children, such as social isolation, language barriers, and cultural and linguistic differences. These studies can contribute to the development of programs and policies that support the needs of these kids and encourage their healthy growth (Fazel, and coll. 2016).
- ❖ Studies have also looked into the motivations for immigration and asylum, including the social, political, and economic forces that drive people and families to flee their native countries. These studies can contribute to the development of policies and programs that support the rights and needs of stateless people while addressing the fundamental causes of migration and asylum (Paudel, 2018).

The lifestyles, rituals, definitions, and interests of the informants differ due to the social, cultural, religious, and geographic differences between Nepal and Norway. Hindu migrants from Nepal who live in Oslo have won, lost, struggled with, and experienced life (J. R. Sharma & Sharma, 2011).

The experiences of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo are noted, including their sense of loss and struggle to maintain their cultural and religious identity, which may vary depending on individual circumstances and contexts. While some immigrants may have successfully achieved their objectives in Norway, others may continue to face challenges and difficulties in adapting to their new environment. Therefore, it is important to approach discussions about

immigrant experiences with sensitivity and care, and to acknowledge the complex and diverse nature of these experiences (Bhandari, 2015).

It seems that not all of the Nepalese immigrants who participated for various surveys conducted by different researchers mentioned above have been encouraged to become religious abroad. Nepalese immigrants who are Hindu have a variety of goals, drives, and learning styles. Oslo has seen an increase in diversity and multiculturalism recently, similar to many other cities in Norway and throughout Europe, with immigrants from a variety of cultural, racial, and religious backgrounds contributing to the city's social and cultural fabric. It is true that Nepalese immigrants to Oslo may have brought elements of their Hindu culture and religion to the city, but it is also crucial to understand that cultural exchange and adaptation is a two-way process, and that the city's pre-existing culture and traditions may have also influenced and shaped the experiences of Nepalese immigrants and their families (Bhandari, 2015).

Mahesh Bhattarai's master thesis "Integration Challenges for Bhutanese Refugees in Norway via Third Country Relocation", details how Bhutanese refugees in Alta overcame obstacles to their assimilation into Norwegian society (Bhattarai, 2014). Although nearly all of them have become self-sufficient and have managed to learn the Norwegian language and culture, they recognize the difficulties in preserving their own native culture, including religious customs, values, and seasonal celebrations. Despite having their personalities altered from "refugee" to "Norwegian citizen," they continue to identify as Bhutanese or Nepalese (Bhattarai, 2014).

The impact of people and organizations on immigrants during the transition process is the priority of Catherine Lloyd-Johnsen's master's thesis "Exploring Integration: Resettled Refugees in Trondheim, Norway", which was presented to the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). She emphasizes the importance of organizations like the Red Cross in the implementation phase and makes the case that the degree of integration is dependent on the agency's operations. The agency's activities determine how near or far the immigrants are. She goes on to say that successful activities bring immigrants into or closer to the host society, whereas unsuccessful activities may steer them away from it (Lloyd-Johnsen, 2004).

Similarly, in the chapter "Transnational Belonging and Relational Practices: Nepali Student Migration to Denmark" (Valentin, 2017) the observation regarding the practices of festivals by Nepalese students are elaborated. Global South to North migration of foreign students is

frequently depicted as a route for unskilled labor shifting into the gray areas with legal aspects and unlawfulness described here. Less focus has been placed on the many factors that drive this as well as the attempts that so many youth's individuals from the South make to pursue a degree internationally, find employment, form new social bonds, and assertively preserve transnational connections. The chapter's objective is to discuss the subtle, ongoing activities of continuing fortification in numerous places that evolve, attempting to draw on an objective standpoint that acknowledges common life experiences as basic to community interaction and the everyday authority of migrants. Based on empirical assessment of Nepali students currently enrolled and former ones studying in Denmark, this chapter examines how these three processes; transnational engagement, semi-nomadic proof of identity, and assimilation into Danish society are occurring at the same time.

At the University of Helsinki, Faculty of Social Sciences, Safaet Ahmed has written the master thesis "The Nepalese Immigrant Entrepreneurship: does ethnicity matter?". His work is a similar report on immigrants in Nepal with regards to the religious and cultural perspective (Ahmed, 2018). Examining current issues involving Nepalese immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland was the goal of this study. The proportion of non-European immigrants in the nation seems to be among the lowest in the entirety of Europe although the figure was increasing (Ahmed, 2018). Less attention is paid to immigrants from Nepal than to all other immigrant groups mixed, despite this group having the lowest unemployment rates in the nation as observed through this report. The author looked at a new theory: immigrant entrepreneurs may be more successful if they are dependent on their ethnicity. They are limited by having to live in two cultures, one physically and one spatially, and these difficulties might allow them to use their ethnic resources to create an opportunity. The research seeks to understand how ethnic background, co-ethnic connections, and other related practices affect the performance of Nepalese entrepreneurial behavior (Bennet and coll., 2008).

All of this research has interested me and are pertinent to my thesis. However, none of them consider the potential significance of festivals for immigrants from Nepal, at least not from the perspective of someone with a similar background. With the hope of enhancing knowledge and expertise on Nepalese immigrants in Norway, this will be my contribution to the area. Two theories; the Culture Theory and the Culture, Migration, and Identification Theory were applied to analyse this research question. According to culture theory, people's attitudes and behaviors are influenced by a common set of beliefs, values, and practices. Contrarily, the Culture,

Migration, and Identification Theory postulates that migration and acculturation can result in changes in cultural identity, where people may retain some aspects of their original culture while assimilating others.

Chapter 4 (Theoretical Framework)

In this chapter, the theoretical foundation for understanding the experiences of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo revolves around Culture, Migration, and Identification Theories, with a specific emphasis on Culture Theory. The narrative unfolds by introducing perspectives from these theories, laying the groundwork for a nuanced exploration of the Nepalese immigrant experience. Culture Theory takes center stage, providing essential insights into how individuals navigate and negotiate their cultural identities in the context of migration.

Within the framework of Culture Theory, the discussion delves into how Nepalese immigrants in Oslo grapple with preserving their cultural heritage while adapting to the new social milieu. The theory aids in deciphering the intricate web of values, beliefs, and customs as immigrants align their identities with the host culture. The chapter meticulously dissects how cultural identity intersects with the challenges of adaptation, shedding light on the nuanced ways in which immigrants negotiate their sense of self in the face of cultural change.

Emphasizing the pivotal role of Culture and Migration Theories as conceptual tools, this chapter serves as a robust theoretical framework. It guides the trajectory of the research, offering a clear conceptual grasp of the challenges faced by immigrants in adapting to new environments while safeguarding their cultural identities. By focusing on Culture Theory, the chapter lays the groundwork for a profound exploration of the immigrant experiences that form the core of this research endeavor. The theoretical lens of Culture Theory becomes a powerful tool for understanding how cultural identity shapes and is shaped by the complex dynamics of migration, providing valuable insights into the experiences of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo.

Culture, Migration, and Identification Theory

Understanding the experiences of immigrants depends heavily on theories of migration, culture, and identification. We can better understand how religious practices and beliefs influence immigrants' sense of cultural identity by using theories of migration and religion. Religion can be a crucial component of cultural identity, fostering a sense of community and belonging while influencing attitudes and actions. In addition to shedding light on how religious practices and beliefs influence cultural identity in the context of migration, migration and religion theory can help us comprehend how these complex dynamics play out in the lives of immigrants (Levitt, 2003).

Maintaining religious traditions and rituals may be difficult for immigrants when they relocate to a new nation. They can come into a different religious environment or experience prejudice or discrimination due to their religion. As they negotiate the conflicts between their native culture and the new culture they are assimilating into, these difficulties may have an impact on their sense of cultural identity. Nevertheless, immigrants may find comfort and resiliency in their religious practices. It can give individuals a framework for comprehending and making sense of their experiences, maintaining their ties to their own culture, and a sense of community and support (McGivern, 2014).

An individual's sense of self and belonging to a particular cultural group are fundamentally influenced by their cultural identity. Many things influence it, such as language, religion, values, customs, and traditions. Maintaining a sense of cultural identity can be extremely difficult for immigrants as a result of the immigration and integration processes (Ram, 2015). This could occur as a result of the pressure to fit in with the prevailing culture, the loss of ties to one's native land and culture, and the adoption of new beliefs and customs.

A group or society's shared beliefs, values, practices, habits, and artifacts are referred to as its culture (Little, 2014). The Hindu religion has a significant impact on the culture of immigrants from Nepal, which in turn shapes their behaviours, values, and beliefs. Furthermore, migration has a big impact on how people define their culture. The cultural adaptation idea holds that upon relocating to a new nation, people go through an acculturation process. This process entails keeping a connection to one's native culture while adjusting to new cultural norms, values, and behaviours. Due to the language, cultural, and social barriers, the process of acculturation might be particularly difficult for Nepalese newcomers in Oslo.

Contrarily, identification theory is concerned with how people define themselves and their sense of identity (Hogg, 2021). According to this idea, people establish and preserve their sense of self through their identification with particular social groups or categories. In the case of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo, both their culture and their experiences as migrants have an impact on how they identify.

The Nepalese community in Oslo, Norway, is small but expanding and consists of a variety of people, including refugees, professionals, and students. Despite the difficulties, the Nepalese community in Oslo has managed to preserve its cultural identity, particularly about religion, language, and cuisine.

Another important component of cultural identity is language, and the Nepalese community in Oslo has set up language schools to maintain and advance Nepali. Both children and adults in Nepal can take language classes at these institutions, which helps them stay connected to their mother tongue and culture (Ananda Ko Sansar, 2007). In addition, when students from various backgrounds come together to study the Nepali language and culture, these language schools also offer a venue for cultural interchange and integration.

The acceptance of new attitudes and customs presents another difficulty for Nepalese immigrants in Oslo. Immigrants may be exposed to new beliefs and behaviours during the immigration and integration processes, which may conflict with their cultural identity. For instance, the individualistic norms of Norwegian culture could clash with the collectivist principles of Nepalese culture.

Culture theory

The term "culture theory" refers to a diverse range of viewpoints that aim to comprehend how culture affects social relationships, attitudes, and behaviour. Culture theory stresses how society shapes religious practices, beliefs, and institutions in the context of the study of religion. While doing study on religion, scholars who use the idea of culture are interested in learning how religious traditions are passed down, upheld, and changed over time, as well as how religious practices and beliefs interact with other facets of social life (Geertz, 1973).

The connection between religion and power, the significance of ritual and symbolism in religious practice, and the ways in which religion interacts with issues of gender, race, and ethnicity are just a few of the important themes that come up in culture theory study on religion. Anthropology, sociology, history, and religious studies are just a few of the academic views that are incorporated into culture theory approaches to the study of religion (McGuire, 2008).

In a broader sense, culture is the collection of a society's distinctive thoughts, precepts, standards, and information. It illustrates how people make sense of their environment. Culture develops through methods of advancement, discovery, and cultural diffusion in addition to being passed down from one generation to the next (Bolima, 2023). Cultures are thus social constructs. A product or idea may be accepted or rejected by society, and as a result, it may be a part of the culture or not. Although we may be constrained by the boundaries of our own culture, humans can reflect on morals and for making some deliberate choices. The extent of

ethnic differences existing in the world serves as the best example of this liberty. The more we study other cultures, the more we understand our own culture (Hofstede, 2003).

Culture theory is a subcategory of anthropology, discourse analysis, and other closely related social science disciplines, particularly political economy, sociology, and interaction. It aims to define algorithmic cultural concepts (Bennett, 1981). Therefore, cultural studies commonly target the relationship between a specified phenomenon and problems of ideology, nationalism, ethnic background, social class, and gender. Instead of being composed of independent entities free from societal pressures, markets are more likely to operate when they are mainly through social beings and expressing personal creative thinking, cultural beliefs, values, and understanding. It can help in situations where social connections are paramount and individualism is constrained, helping to understand and advance growth (Swidler, 2001). In a nutshell, cultural theory reinforces the belief that markets function, not simply because they are made up of socially exempt people who act independently of one another, but rather because social beings with their unique ideas, belief systems, values, and understanding are what gives them life. In settings where social interactions are valued and individualism is suppressed, it can foster understanding and promote growth (Serrat, 2017).

It appears to follow that practitioners of culture theory attract from a wide variety of theories and associated practices and incorporate many various approaches, methodologies, and educational perspectives because the potential for application is so vast (Escobar, 1995). As a result, it continues to be a research discipline that needs to shift from "Let's" to "How." Acknowledging how cultural dimensions are incorporated into various convenience and production functions ought to be part of considering culture. New methods of policy research and involvement of the people should unquestionably be developed for development organizations and the nations that they partner with, allowing non-economic social sciences to participate fully in the choice of the policies and investments that direct business operations (Escobar, 1995). There is still much to do.

A technique for examining cultural conflict is cultural theory. It creates a neo-Durkheimian synthesis around the idea that institutions are simultaneously responsible for producing, sustaining, and creating culture (Griswold, 2012). By concentrating on organizational characteristics, the conflict between subjective and objective perspectives is prevented. Value conflicts are seen as a rivalry between opposed organizational forms (Tansey and Rayner, 2020). Conflicts involving risk, ecological damage, water engineering, corporate management,

crime, traffic laws, and religion have all been studied using this method of policy analysis. The approach involves developing an abstract space of potential organizational environments along two aspects (strength of organizational boundaries and power of constructing restrictions on individual behavior), resulting in four ideal kinds of organization, each with a suitable culture (Gaztambide-Fernández & Cairns, 2010).

It is seen that different methodologies for cultural studies are probably common. Ziauddin Sardar in his book "Introducing cultural studies: A graphic guide" in 2015 observes that most share the following traits of the culture theory:

- They choose to examine how cultural values concerning their research topic relate to authority.
- They aim to understand culture across all of its various forms and investigate the social and political contexts in which it exists.
- They see culture as both a research field and a venue for political commentary and invasion.
- They draw attention to unresolved questions and work to fill them to close the disparity between underlying cultural awareness and objective (or "universal") aspects of knowledge and experience.
- They are committed to bringing about political reform and evaluating society morally (Serrat, 2008).

The all-encompassing perspective of cultural theory, which includes the needs shared by everyone, somehow resists straightforward action. Only culture theory, which concurrently and even diligently pays attention to these necessities, allows for a focus on the whole and the segments, on contexts and supplies, on values and ethical codes, and collaboration between important factors, nations, parts of countries, along with individuals and the natural world (Thompson, and coll., 2002). As a result, it offers conceptual knowledge and practical benefits, empowering decision-makers to make wise decision making. We can deal with sophistication and segmentation effectively, for instance, because the emphasis is on systems rather than individual parts of the system. It also makes sure that markets are appropriately comprehended in their surroundings and directed. For a wide range of factors, including others, they can both be constrained by and improved by the larger cultures under which they are placed (Wildavsky, 1987). They lose their ability to function independently after that. The ethnocentric bias

brought on by one's cultural expectations can also be reduced by culture theory by emphasizing the entirety and inherent value of a particular society (Serrat, 2008).

Two theories—the Culture Theory and the Culture, Migration, and Identification Theory—were applied to analyse this research question. According to culture theory, people's attitudes and behaviors are influenced by a common set of beliefs, values, and practices. Contrarily, the Culture, Migration, and Identification Theory postulates that migration and acculturation can result in changes in cultural identity, where people may retain some aspects of their original culture while assimilating others.

Nepalese immigrants in Norway retain some aspects of their home culture but also adopt new customs and ways of behaving in order to blend in with their new cultural surroundings. It was discovered that the festivals observed by Nepalese immigrants in Norway combined traditional Nepalese customs with Norwegian influences. The study also discovered that immigrants from Nepal in Norway had a hard time retaining their heritage while adjusting to their new surroundings.

The Culture, Migration, and Identification Theory zooms in on individual struggles, emphasizing the challenges immigrants face in balancing their native culture with the need to assimilate into new customs. It underscores the significance of religion, language, values, and traditions in shaping cultural identity amid migration hurdles (Levitt, 2003; McGivern, 2014; Ram, 2015). In contrast, Culture Theory offers a broader perspective, examining societal impacts on religious practices, beliefs, and institutions. It delves into the intricate relationship between culture, power dynamics, and societal norms, emphasizing how institutions sustain and create culture, thereby influencing individuals' cultural identity within societal contexts (Geertz, 1973; Griswold, 2012). The intersection lies in immigrants' struggles to maintain cultural identity amidst societal pressures, with both theories acknowledging the influence of religion, language, and traditions.

These frameworks are foundational for our research, offering structured lenses to explore immigrants' experiences. Culture Theory allows us to dissect societal attitudes and behaviors, while Culture, Migration, and Identification Theory illuminate individual immigrants' struggles, such as language barriers and cultural conflicts, influencing their sense of identity. Armed with these perspectives, our research aims to unravel patterns, challenges, and successes within the Nepalese immigrant community. Integrating these frameworks, our study provides

a comprehensive understanding of how culture, migration, and identity converge in the immigrant experience. As we move forward, these frameworks guide our analysis, enabling us to identify nuanced layers of cultural identity. By recognizing these complexities, our research contributes valuable insights for policy-making and social integration initiatives, fostering a deeper understanding of cultural identity amidst migration's transformative journey.

Chapter 5 (Methodology)

After accounting for the theoretical foundation, I will now discuss the project's methodology. The goal of this study is to investigate the barriers to and facilitators of social integration for Nepalese immigrants in Oslo, Norway, especially concerning the difference in festivals that Nepalese people generally celebrate in Nepal and Oslo. The choice of data collection methodology, data analysis procedure, and research ethics are briefly described in this section of my study. In this present project, I will use qualitative research approach as it is the most appropriate for my research project. A researcher must switch back and forth between various situations when using the qualitative research method to gather the necessary data regarding the research topic (Busetto and et. al., 2020).

The goal of this research is to examine how immigrants from Nepal live their lives, including their views, behaviours, and perspectives, as well as how they practise their religion and culture. It requires thoughtful comments and perspectives from the intended audience. Qualitative research explains and examines the social connections that individuals have with one another as well as the process through which social realities are created (Miller & Dingwall, 1997).

The most effective approach is a qualitative study in order to comprehend how Nepalese are assimilated into Norwegian society and what elements contribute to the strong bonds between Norwegian and Nepalese cultures. The goal of qualitative research is to comprehend phenomena in contexts that are distinctive to the subject matter without attempting to control the phenomenon. As a result, the researcher evaluates the events that occurred throughout the data collection process.

Qualitative research is a research technique that frequently emphasizes words over limitations in data collecting and analysis. In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research is concerned with words rather than statistics. It is commonly inductivist as a strategy. However, qualitative researchers do not always agree on three of these characteristics (Bryman, 2012). The purpose of the methodology is to demonstrate how the research questions are contemplated for my research. The accepted definition of methodology is a theoretical study of methods used in a field of study. The next section of my study gives a descriptive overview of the data-gathering process, research ethics, and the data analysis procedure. The authors' Miller and Dingwall claim that the qualitative approach explains and examines the social relationships

that bind people together as well as the process by which social conditions are created (Miller & Dingwall, 2011). The best approach, in my opinion, is qualitative research to comprehend how Nepalese are assimilated into Norwegian society and therefore what elements contribute to the close ties with both Norwegian and Nepalese cultures.

Qualitative method

Quantitative research is the method used to collect and analyse statistical information. It is capable of recognizing patterns and averages, developing theories, examining cause and effect, and extrapolating results to a wider population. Quantitative research is a comparison study that gathers and analyses non-numerical data (e.g., texts, video, or audio). Quantitative studies are commonly used in the natural and social sciences, including biology, chemistry, psychology, economics, sociology, and commercial purpose (Bhandari, 2020).

Since quantitative research acquires actual factual data for research which was not available for the research as this research is done per the various secondary sources i.e., different articles, journals, news, and information that we got through social media, and various sites. Since this study is conducted using a variety of secondary sources, such as different publications, journals, news, and information obtained through social media and numerous websites, quantitative research obtains genuine factual data for research that was not accessible for the re-research. There are no replies since my study relies solely on participant observation and I haven't conducted any extra interviews. This raises concerns about the research's methodological and moral standards. In the lack of other context or details, it is difficult to fully understand the remark or its intended meaning. This calls into question the research's methodology and ethical considerations. It is challenging to comprehend the statement or its intended meaning completely in the absence of additional context or information. The choice of method is influenced by the research question, the characteristics of the phenomenon being studied, and other contextual factors. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods having their own advantages and disadvantages.

Participant observation (PO), a type of qualitative research, involves the researcher continually taking part in the respondents' everyday routines. Generally, the aim is to record actions in a wide range of environments (Sharpe, 2020). Participant observation is a qualitative research approach that enables the researcher to investigate a team by engaging in its activities as well as observing them. To record the activities across as many multiple circumstances as potential, this qualitative method of collecting data requires the researcher to fully integrate into the daily

activities of the survey participants. Participant observation has indeed been widely used in a variety of academic disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, communications technology, political science, cognitive science, and even market research (QuestionPro, 2023).

A thorough understanding of the social life of the field is necessary. I have assessed differences in celebration of different festivals, religious and cultural differences, differences in customs, and a sense of belonging that appears through festival celebrations. The best method for examining intangible factors that can't be measured quantitatively is qualitative methodology. Descriptive research seeks to provide an overview of the variables included in the study. We investigate the relationships between the variables we're going to study in the research method. In exploratory studies, we look for a cause-and-effect relationship between variables in a systematic way. Both observational and experimental studies both benefit from the formal testing of hypotheses and estimates using statistics. The results may be extended to larger populations relying on the survey strategy in use.

By analysing and comprehending text, interviews, and findings, qualitative research aims to find trends and conclusions that are instructive about a particular trait. The description compares qualitative and quantitative research in two different ways. Quantitative research is initially concerned with actual figures or numeric data, as opposed to qualitative research, which tends to focus on structures or stories. Second, so even though analysing quantitative data calls for calculation, assessing qualitative data calls for understanding. In contrast to a study of the patients' life experience as cancer victims, which would fall into the category of qualitative research, a survey of the character traits that anticipate PTSD in cancer victims would be classified as quantitative research (ISTSS, 2023).

Since in this research, I want to research phenomena in a society about which little is known, qualitative research is more beneficial and efficient in this case. Since we are hardly ever in a position to formulate an insightful hypothesis for cultures other than our own, hypothesis-generating studies, here became especially more important as I am looking forward to cultural and diversification research. Additionally, not all immigrants share the same backgrounds and experiences. Likewise, they might view and comprehend the enabling and limiting factors of social integration differently. Meanwhile, asserts that qualitative methodology enables a researcher to comprehend the issue's interpretation from the viewpoints of the research participants.

The most populous and multicultural city in Norway is Oslo. People from all over the world have collected here for a variety of reasons, including business, education, travel, employment, and the pursuit of decent human rights. The city with the highest concentration of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo. The Nepalese Student Community in Oslo (NESCO), Norway, is a cohesive group of immigrant students from Nepal that is very involved actively in organizing cultural events and festival celebrations.

Chapter 6 (Findings)

Observation

In this comprehensive exploration, the theoretical foundation is laid, drawing from Culture, Migration, and Identification Theories, with a primary focus on Culture Theory. According to Kawulich (2012), observation becomes a crucial method for understanding the experiences of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo, allowing systematic descriptions of events, behavioral patterns, and artifacts in their social context. I have gained insights into non-verbal cues, communication styles, and time allocation through indirect observation, where information is gathered from various sources rather than relying solely on direct interactions (Musante et al., 2010). This method provides a unique lens for examining the daily lives of Nepalese families in Oslo, shedding light on their adaptation processes.

Hindus in Nepal exhibit an optimistic outlook regarding opportunities, challenges, and religious diversity in multicultural metropolises. The practice of Hinduism without a physical temple is highlighted, emphasizing the importance of strong belief, dedication, assurance, hope, and a connection to an ethereal power. Some individuals define their Hindu identity through rituals, while others claim Hinduism despite not engaging in traditional practices, showcasing the diverse ways in which religion is perceived. Despite their smaller numbers, the Nepalese Hindu population in Oslo remains united through shared ethnicity, language, and Hinduism. This context raises questions about potential challenges and benefits associated with maintaining cultural and religious identities within a multicultural society.

Cultural assimilation takes center stage among Nepalese immigrants in Oslo. The research reveals that the community tends to converge during festivals and celebrations, fostering a sense of togetherness. Applying culture theory, it becomes evident that a small group of Nepalese individuals in Oslo shares similar ideas, belief systems, values, and understanding. This cohesive community, although in a multicultural setting, finds strength in their shared cultural practices. The absence of a caste hierarchy in Oslo further contributes to the closeness among Nepalese people, emphasizing the importance of shared interests in cultural preservation.

The Nepalese students in Oslo take cultural cohesion a step further by establishing organizations like NESCO. This exemplifies not only their shared interests but also their commitment to maintaining a sense of community. While cultural assimilation might be a

natural outcome in multicultural societies, the formation of such organized groups demonstrates a deliberate effort to preserve and celebrate their cultural identity in a foreign land. It prompts a critical evaluation of the motivations behind these initiatives and their impact on the overall immigrant experience.

Observational data gathering, as described by Urban (2023), encompasses more than just behavioral patterns. It offers a lens into the setting, respondent interactions, and conversations, providing a holistic understanding of the research context. However, a critical evaluation of the limitations of observation as a method is necessary. The subjective nature of interpretation and potential biases could influence the researcher's observations. Additionally, the inability to capture the full spectrum of participants' perspectives through indirect observation calls for supplementary methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding.

Furthermore, an exploration of Nepalese festivals' celebration in Norway warrants a nominal perspective. How do the participants perceive these festivals in a foreign land? What challenges do they encounter, and what value do they derive from these celebrations? Including a customer perspective adds depth to the analysis, offering insights into the lived experiences of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo. It becomes crucial to evaluate not only the observable behaviours but also the subjective experiences and perceptions that shape the immigrant journey.

In conclusion, the theoretical foundation, observational insights, and cultural assimilation dynamics presented in this chapter offer a rich understanding of the experiences of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo. Critical evaluation emphasizes the need for a nuanced exploration, incorporating diverse perspectives and considering the limitations of observational methods. The chapter sets the stage for further investigation into the motivations, challenges, and benefits associated with the celebration of Nepalese festivals in Norway, encouraging a more comprehensive and inclusive examination of the immigrant experience.

Material from the participation observation

In the following, I will give an account of the participatory observation I carried out at some of the festivals celebrated in Norway in 2022. As I was myself partaking in the celebrations as a Nepali immigrant, it was a challenge to keep the role as researcher solely, so sometimes my own emotions may overflow. However, I have been aware throughout the account to maintain the researcher perspective. Sometimes, I have deliberately left some more subjective observations, as I think they almost become descriptive to the atmosphere at the festivals.

Dashain in Norway

This festival is usually celebrated in the month of September/October depending on Nepalese calendar. I am going to describe my research experiences of celebration of the biggest festival Dashain in Norway. The celebration of Dashain in Norway recounted through the lens of a participant observer, provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Nepalese immigrants in maintaining cultural traditions while adapting to a foreign environment. My dual role as a celebrant and an observer sheds light on the intricacies of the festival's adaptation in a multicultural context, prompting critical reflections on authenticity, cultural assimilation, and emotional dimensions.

The Dashain celebration in Oslo, a collaborative effort among Nepalese community organizations such as NRNA, NESCO, and NEPOS, stands as a testament to the community's dedication to preserving their cultural heritage. My excitement about being both a celebrant and an observer raises questions about the impact of such observations on the authenticity of the celebration. This prompts critical evaluations of the festival's evolution in a foreign setting and the delicate balance between preserving traditions and adapting to the limitations imposed by the new cultural context.

Preparations for Dashain in Norway, as detailed in my paper, reveal the unique challenges faced by Nepalese families living abroad. The cultural tradition of cleaning and decorating the house takes on a different dimension, with my wife expressing difficulty in finding traditional Nepali decorative items in Norway. This prompts a critical evaluation of how the diaspora grapples with the absence of familiar cultural elements and adapts to the limitations imposed by the new cultural context. The challenges in replicating the authentic Dashain experience abroad invite considerations of the impact on cultural continuity and identity.

My role as a participant observer during the puja and celebration at Rolf E. Stenersens alle provides a rich description of the event and in 2022 it was celebrated on October 5. The detailed account of the venue, the rituals, and the cultural attire worn by participants contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the cultural assimilation process. The observation of Nepalese participants explaining the significance of traditional dishes to Norwegian and Indian friends adds another layer to the analysis, showcasing the community's efforts to share their cultural practices with the wider society. However, critical reflections on the potential commodification of cultural practices for the benefit of outsiders also arise, prompting considerations of authenticity in cultural exchange.

It was my sixth year of Dashain celebration away from home. However, it was my first celebration as a participant observer. And first together with my wife in Norway, at least one member from my family. It was my sixth year of as well. The preparations for biggest Nepalese festival 'Dashain' in Norway were quite different from those back home. As a culture to clean all the house, backyards, and gate of the house, on the day of Dashain, I and my wife woke up early in the morning. She started the day by cleaning all over our apartment and decorating our apartment with flowers. However, I was preparing myself as a researcher. I looked for a note copy and pen to note down the peculiar things, a camera to capture some moments for future description and on top of that try being more vigilant. I overheard my wife saying it was challenging for her to find traditional Nepali decorative things in Norway. I took a bath and wore traditional Nepali attire called "Daura-Suruwal" headed to the puja room (room for god and goddess) to offer my prayers to goddess Durga. My wife already started Pooja and used the ingredients whatever were available in Norway and also managed to offer a prayer.

After the puja in the home, I had my bags on and accompanied by my wife went for the Dashain program at Rolf E. Stenersens alle. The Dashain vibes were on and the enthusiasm as a researcher made me more vibrant. I reached at 13:00 at the place of the event. Water and flowers were placed in urns on both sides of the outer door of the event venue, which made it look almost like in Nepal. The event hall had the capacity of 200 people but there were more 240 people including Childs. I saw almost all the boys wore Daura-Suruwal, Dhaka Topi on the head, all the girls wore red colour saree, and the children wore different attires. The presence of Nepalese people and the Nepali clothes worn by everyone was remarkable. The event hall was well managed and decorated by colourful lights, garland of marigold flower and Cardboards with Dashain greetings and various depicting Dashain were hung in the wall of the event hall. Some of our Nepalese friend had invited their colleagues and classmates on this auspicious occasion. They (Norwegian and Indian friends) looked quite fascinated by the ambience. They said they were very eager to know more about our customs and practices. They asked many questions regarding these things. One of the participants was busy answering their queries and seem happy and proud to share his own knowledge and experience with them.

In the beginning of the program, I went inside the event and walked around. Had I not been a researcher, I would have taken a chair and sat down. But, as a researcher, I was quite vigilant about what was going around, taking notes and taking photographs as well. I saw there were lots of things on the stage in the plates such as Tikka, Jamara, Dakshina and two candles, two diyos and many other materials for puja. I could not resist that and clicked one. They played

Nepalese music which is related to Dashain festival. In the last corner of the hall, there were sel roti, Pulchow, pickle of cucumber, meat of goat (khasi ko masu), potato and cauliflower, Chicken curry, curd, and Jeri. One of the organisers of the program explained to the international guests the significance of each dish and how it is prepared.

The celebrations continued and I made sure to reach every corner, to have an overview of what everyone was doing. I greeted everyone with Namaste. Everyone looked so cheerful and smiling. They were greeting each other, hugging, and wishing Happy Dashain to each other. It was the first time ever; I saw so many Nepalese coming together at a venue. Various tunes related to Dashain were echoing in the program hall which added flavour to the Dashain vibes. Everyone's eye was on the priest. As he is the one to start the prayer and thus, begins the celebration of biggest festival 'Dashain'. The day of the celebration is known as 'Vijayadashami'.

The priest and the eldest member of the Nepalese community started puja to goddess Durga at 14:00. It took one hour to complete the puja and prayer where all the Nepalese people were involved. The priest and the eldest member of our Nepalese community then applied "Tika" on our foreheads and put on "Jamara" on our ears, which is the symbol of blessings from our elders and is believed to bring good luck and prosperity. Everyone was interested in group photos. They requested me to take group photos with the tika and Jamara. I took several group photos.

After the puja, the celebrations continued with a cultural dance ceremony where six Nepalese girls danced to Nepalese folk songs. Among them, three girls were young children under eighteen and three girls' adults who appeared to be in their late twenties They tuned six folk songs. They danced very beautifully. Upon asking they said that they have been practising for one week for this day.

After the dance ceremony, the celebrations continued with a grand feast (started at 18:00) The traditional dishes prepared for this day was served. I sat together on the same table with our international guests. I enjoyed eating together with them and talking feedback about the taste. They said it was toothsome. The spice was too much as compared to their traditional food. There were soft drinks available as well to drink. There was four types (Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola zero, Sprite and Fanta). In the corner of the event hall, there were availability of hot drinks like black coffee and black tea. I pondered on how everyone would have managed their time despite their busy schedule. I assume that many of the participants had to organise their work and study

life to participate, as the celebration was during regular work hours. I over-heard some people had taken egen-melding (Norwegian facility to declare self-sick) to come to this event.

In the last session of the program (started at 20:00), there were games. There were three different games (Jhandi-burja, lucky draw and playing cards). I saw that the people with small children had left. One of the organizers explained about game rules and who could participate in the different games. It was well managed and organized. In this session, there were around 150 people in the hall. There were lots of participants (nearly 40 persons) in the Jhandi-burja game. I was also a participant of one of the games (lucky draw), I tried four times, but I did not win the prize. I liked this game. There was music still playing on the background of the hall. Everyone spent the day feasting, playing games, and catching up with each other. Although the celebrations were different from what we do back home, the festive atmosphere was contagious, and everyone was in high spirits. In the lucky draw game, one of participants (around 7 years) won the prize (combo pack). Everyone in the hall seemed happy as they were spending time together and shared experiences with each other. The gaming event ended at 22:00. The organizer informed that the hall was booked until 23:00. Finally, every participant who was present helped with cleaning. The organizer ended the program at 22:50. I overheard many participants saying they were quite impressed with the festival, and I heard them express their desire to celebrate it another time. I also overheard people congratulating the organizers for well managed program.

Looking back, celebrating Dashain in Norway was a unique and memorable experience. It was challenging as well to be present as a researcher because I had to be more vigilant, keeping notes and taking photographs rather than just going to the event and celebrating. It was more peculiar than previous year because of the presence of people from different cultures and backgrounds. The festival was successful enough to bring everyone together.

After participating as a researcher, it seems that when celebrating Dashain in Norway it seems that different Nepali cultures and traditions are not limited to a specific place or region. As a Nepali living in Norway, celebrating Dashain away from home was a bittersweet experience. I missed my maternal parents, aunts, cousins, and priest a lot. Furthermore, I missed the kite flying and “Ping”- Swing a lot. I further missed the money we used to get from the parents. The varieties of food and sweets in Nepal are tremendous during Dashain, but in Norway we manage in only few of them. On one hand, it was a chance to introduce my culture and traditions to my Norwegian friends and acquaintances, but on the other hand, it made me miss

my family and home even more. However, the warmth and love that I received from my friends and acquaintances made me feel at home, and I realized that home is not a place but a feeling.

They can be celebrated and shared with people from all over the world, and it is up to us to preserve and promote our heritage. Celebrating Dashain away from home was a reminder that our culture is something that we carry with us wherever we go, and it is our responsibility to pass it on to the next generation. Although the celebrations were different from what we do back home, the spirit of the festival remained the same. It was a time to come together, celebrate our culture and traditions, and reaffirm our bonds of love and friendship. The festival also served as a reminder of the importance of family, community, and faith, and how they play a vital role in our lives.

The celebration's diverse activities, including a cultural dance ceremony and a traditional feast, highlight the vibrant cultural exchange within the Nepalese community. My critical evaluation of the feast, including the spice levels and the availability of traditional and non-traditional drinks, provides insights into the challenges of replicating the authentic Dashain experience in a foreign setting. My reflections on the participants' time management, with some taking advantage of Norwegian facilities like "egen-melding" to attend the event, raise questions about the intersection of cultural celebrations and daily life responsibilities. These considerations prompt critical reflections on the dynamics of cultural adaptation and negotiation within the immigrant community.

The incorporation of games into the celebration, such as Jhandi-burja and lucky draw, introduces an element of entertainment and community engagement. However, my participation as a player and the subsequent observations of participants' reactions to the games add a layer of reflexivity. My lack of success in the lucky draw prompts reflection on the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within the community and the role of luck in cultural festivities. Critical evaluations of the inclusivity of such events in a multicultural context and their potential impact on community cohesion emerge, adding complexity to the understanding of cultural celebrations in diasporic settings.

My narrative about missing traditional aspects of Dashain, such as kite flying and "Ping" - Swing, adds an emotional dimension to the critical evaluation. This emotional landscape prompts reflections on the challenges of maintaining a sense of cultural continuity and the impact of homesickness. The critical question emerges: to what extent can cultural celebrations serve as a remedy for the emotional struggles of immigrants? This introspection contributes to

a deeper understanding of the emotional complexities faced by Nepalese immigrants, emphasizing the importance of cultural celebrations in fostering a sense of belonging.

In conclusion, my critical evaluation of the Dashain celebration in Norway unveils layers of complexity inherent in the adaptation of cultural practices in a foreign setting. The dynamics of authenticity, performative aspects, unintentional commodification, and the emotional dimensions of cultural celebrations offer a comprehensive perspective on the challenges and contributions of such events for Nepalese immigrants in Oslo. This critical lens enriches the ongoing exploration into the immigrant experience and the role of cultural celebrations in navigating the complexities of cultural adaptation.

I hope that in the years to come, more people from different cultures and backgrounds will come together to celebrate festivals like Dashain and promote cultural diversity and understanding. In addition to this, they will help this tradition to pass to the coming generation as well.

Tihar in Norway

I am going to share my observation for the festival 'Tihar'. This festival is usually celebrated in the month of October/November depending on Nepalese calendar. Tihar is one of the most important festivals in Nepal, and participating as an observer of the festival was new to me. However, I had my own experience of being participate as a researcher from last Dashain. The participation being a researcher had some different meaning for me. It was just not celebrating rather observing the celebration closely as well. In 2022, this festival, Deusi-Bhailo was organized by JSS Norway, two days on Monday October 24 at Lindeberg and Tuesday October 25 at Romsås.

I got invitation from organizer nearly three weeks before the celebration. On October 24, 2022, the program (Deusi-Bhailo) started at Lindeberg at 18:00. I and my wife did puja of goddess Laxmi at 17:00 at home because I need to go for Deusi-Bhailo program. Tihar is the festival of lights. It is also known as Deepawali. On that day, I wake up early in the morning and fixed up Deepawali lights in every corner and in the rooms. As, Deepawali is also known as the festival of light, I also put candles and diyo for lightening in the night. As a tradition, I also made rangoli at the entrance of my apartment and at the place under the temple in my room. I made Sel roti and laddu to offer goddess Laxmi in the evening time. At 16:00, we started our puja and ended at 17:30. I was in hurry to reach for Deusi-Bhailo program because I wanted to

observe everything from the beginning. I did not want to miss the start as well. So, I packed my bag where I had my pen, note and camera and took the T-bane.

I wore Nepali attire 'Daura and Suruwal' and 'Dhak Topi' on the head. I and my wife reached at the program venue at 18:10. I observed that even the outer side of the program hall was decorated with lights. There were lights all around the hall, and everywhere. There were bunches of flowers in the main door of the hall. The organizer made a beautiful rangoli in the front of the hall which was praise mentioning. It was an art-piece. I heard the Deusi-Bhailo bhajan while I was outside the hall and it made me feel like I am celebrating this festival with my family and friends in Nepal.

I entered in the program hall, there were around 90 peoples including children. The hall was fully decorated by lights and candles. I had never imagined that so many people would participate. I was agape seeing Nepalese people in Norway coming together to celebrate 'Deusi-Bhailo' because I have not expected so many people would come. Everyone seemed cheerful. They met each other and were doing 'Namaste' as greeting. Various tunes related to 'Deusi-Bhailo' were echoing in the program hall. The stage had a big space with beautiful 'rangoli' and a big plate was placed on the side of the stage with sel roti, Akshatha, lamp (Diyo), candle and Dakshina (money). Most of the men present wore Nepali dress 'Daura-Suruwal', some 'Sherwani' and girls wore 'Saree', some 'Kurta-Suruwal' and dancing brothers and sisters dressed in the clothes reflecting Nepali culture. I thought it would not had been that easy organizing this event.

At the corner of the venue, one of the representatives of the program introduced the and celebration procedure of the 'Deusi-Bhailo', explained its importance, and shared their own experiences of celebrating such type of events outside the home country to the guests who were not Nepalese. The international guests (Norwegian and Indian friends) asked many questions about our customs and practices.

The program started when the anchor of the program at 18:50 called a little girl's name- 'Kristina' for a welcome dance. Everyone seemed to enjoy dance of Kristina. She got an ovation after her dance. Now it was time for the main program of Deusi-Bhailo. The master of ceremonies handed over the mike to my colleague Hari Pandey, who was the coordinator of Deusi-Bhailo program to keep the program going. Hari Pandey and seven others took to the stage to carry on with the show, with other friends cheering them on. Calling the participants

from the Deusi-Bhailo song, they came on the stage and placed their desired Dakshina on the plate, thanking the helper through the song. The sequence lasted for an hour, where 12 families were given Dakshina. The highest Dakshina (2500 Kroner) was given by JSS president Jitendra Shahi. After that, he gave the stage for a dance performance.

After short break Hari announced name of two girls for musical dances. They both were in their late early twenties. The Deusi-Bhailo program was resumed. As a tradition to give money in the form of 'Dakshina' (money willingly given to the Deusi-Bhailo team), everyone started putting Dakshina on the plate. Some were asking if there was any facility to give Dakshina through vipps. That was a new thing I saw people doing here in Norway. Hari gave his vipps number and later announced that people can give Dakshina via vipps as well. The duet song between the players was being carried out. They thanked the donors via the song as well. As in Dashain program many Nepalese people had invited their colleagues and classmates. Upon interaction, I came to know that most of them were Norwegian and Indian. Indian said that it was a great time being there, and they had the same culture too. However, Norwegian seem quite surprised when they saw people giving Dakshina voluntarily. They even asked what the organisers would do with the collected money. I replied that, last year they send it to remote place in Nepal to buy an ambulance and not quite sure about this time. The formal program came to an end around 22:00.

Later, the organizer of the Deusi-Bhailo program informed that the amount of support received from the program will be used to support the poor and needy families in Nepal. I saw the Norwegian and Indian friends looked very happy and I overheard them asking more about how and why this festival was celebrated.

At the end of the program, there were sel roti, Achar, vegetable of potato and cauliflower, juices at the corner of the hall and the side of the food, there were plates, spoon. Everyone could serve the food self and I heard them talking about and evaluating the program. It was a great opportunity to educate new generation people about Nepali culture and to share our traditions with others. Finally, every participant who was present there took responsibility for cleaning. The organizer ended the program at 22:50.

Looking back, celebrating Tihar in Norway was a unique and memorable experience. It was undoubtedly a challenge for me to be present as a researcher because I had to be more vigilant, keeping notes and taking photographs rather than just going to the event and celebrating. It was

more peculiar than previous year because of the presence of people from different cultures and backgrounds. The festival was successful enough to elaborate the zest of the festival.

After participating as a researcher, it seems that celebrating Tihar in Norway seems to be different from that in Nepal. The main part of the program where man puts Tika from the sisters went missing. As a tradition, last day of this festival is marked by worshipping for the longevity of ages of the brothers by sisters. Most of the people I talked on the program had the plan to video chat with their sisters in Nepal on that day. Some jokingly said that they are going to celebrate it online. I too had the same situation. I had also the same plans with my sisters. However, the children present there seem excited about the next day. Some even complained their parents that their brothers have not bought sweets for them. Other important aspect of this festival was playing cards on the next day after Tika. The parents were busy talking about the venue for that. My friend Ramesh invited me over his house to play card. But as I had different plans, I said I could not attend the program. Some of the Norwegian seem surprised to know playing cards was a part of the culture. They said playing for money is illegal in Norway. His Nepalese friend requested him to join the next day, but he didn't seem so interested.

On one hand, it was an opportunity to introduce my culture and traditions to my Norwegian friends and to the new coming generations. The children had begun to understand that brother and sisters had a different bond, and they celebrate that day once a year on bhai tika. They seemed much excited for tomorrow. But on the other hand, they were not aware of why they do so. It was just because their parents want them to do, or it was a part of their indispensable culture. A small girl said she would put Tika to her brother only if her pappa would buy her an ice cream. Everybody laughed a lot hearing this.

Another aspect of this celebration was that if we all come together, we can easily preserve our culture and tradition even if we live abroad. It is only a matter of will power. However, I felt that the main challenge was to organize such program. Everybody would like to participate but not everyone would love to take initiation. At the end of the program, I heard somebody saying that because he was carrying the chairs back down the hall.

This festival was again a gentle reminder that life is to laugh, be happy and enjoy. It also reminded me the importance of family, community, and faith, and how they play a vital role in our lives. I hope that in the years to come, people would not only celebrate Bhailo but also the whole 5-day long program in a more appropriate way like they do in Nepal.

Participating in the Tihar festival in Norway as both a celebrant and a researcher offered me a unique vantage point into the adaptation of Nepalese cultural traditions in a foreign setting. The dual role allowed for a critical evaluation of the festival's dynamics, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities faced by the Nepalese immigrant community in Oslo.

The meticulous preparation for Tihar, marked by the traditional puja at home, illuminated the effort invested by Nepalese families in preserving cultural practices. My role in capturing these moments underscored the significance of the festival in maintaining a sense of identity and continuity in a foreign land. The festive decorations and rituals carried out in the absence of familiar surroundings prompted critical reflections on the adaptability and resilience of cultural practices in a diasporic context.

The Deusi-Bhailo program organized by JSS Norway showcased the community's commitment to sharing their cultural traditions with a wider audience. My surprise at the substantial turnout raised questions about the collective willpower within the community to organize such events, highlighting the potential for cultural preservation in a foreign environment. The festive ambiance, marked by lights, rangoli, and traditional attire, provided a backdrop for critical reflections on the performative aspects of cultural celebrations and their role in fostering a sense of community.

My observation of the Deusi-Bhailo program's structure, including musical performances, dakshina offerings, and dance sequences, offered insights into the festival's adaptation to a multicultural audience. The introduction of modern elements, such as the use of Vipps for dakshina, prompted critical considerations of the evolving nature of cultural traditions in a globalized context. The engagement of Norwegian and Indian friends inquiring about Nepalese customs initiated a cross-cultural dialogue, highlighting the potential of festivals as platforms for cultural exchange and understanding.

The absence of specific Tihar rituals, such as the Tikka ceremony, raised questions about the selective incorporation of cultural elements in the diasporic celebration. My interaction with participants revealed plans for virtual celebrations with sisters in Nepal, showcasing the creative adaptation of traditions in the face of geographical separation. Critical reflections on the changing dynamics of familial bonds and the use of technology in cultural practices added depth to the exploration of the festival's role in overcoming the challenges of diaspora life.

My insight into children's excitement and complaints about the lack of sweets reflected the generational transmission of cultural practices. However, the lack of awareness among some children about the deeper significance of the rituals prompted critical considerations of the need for educational initiatives within the community to foster a holistic understanding of cultural traditions. The importance of collective effort in organizing cultural events emerged as a central theme in my evaluation. The challenges of initiation and the commitment required to preserve cultural heritage abroad became evident through participants' discussions. The critical perspective emphasized the role of willpower and community engagement in overcoming the challenges of organizing cultural celebrations, contributing to the ongoing discourse on cultural preservation in diasporic settings.

In conclusion, my critical evaluation of the Tihar festival in Norway provides valuable insights into the complexities of cultural adaptation and preservation within the Nepalese immigrant community. The observations offer a nuanced understanding of the performative, cross-cultural, and generational aspects of festival celebrations, contributing to the broader exploration of how cultural festivities contribute to the resilience and identity formation of immigrants in Oslo.

This festival was again a gentle reminder that life is to laugh, be happy and enjoy. It also reminded me the importance of family, community, and faith, and how they play a vital role in our lives. I hope that in the years to come, people would not only celebrate Bhailo but also the whole 5-day long program in a more appropriate way like they do in Nepal.

Holi in Norway

Holi is the festival of color that takes place in late February or early March. Holi, is a vibrant and colorful festival that is celebrated by Nepalis around the world, including Norway. It is a time of joy, laughter, and celebrations that brings people together. This festival was organized by NRNA and NESCO on March 6 2022 at Rolf E. Stenersens alle 24, Oslo. As an active participant and keen observer in the Holi festival among the Nepalese community in Oslo, my dual role provided valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of cultural celebrations within the immigrant context. My immersive experience shed light on the multifaceted ways in which these festivities contribute to the lives of Nepalese immigrants, particularly in the context of overcoming the challenges associated with relocation to Oslo.

The festivities leading up to Holi were marked by a collective effort within the community to preserve and share traditional Nepali customs. My involvement in preparations, such as purchasing colored powders and choosing to wear a white T-shirt for better visibility, highlighted the intentional blending of traditional practices with the constraints and opportunities presented by the host country. This adaptability is a testament to our community's resilience in maintaining cultural continuity despite being far from our homeland.

The visit to the Sanatan temple further emphasized the intertwining of religious rituals with cultural celebrations, showcasing a harmonious fusion of spiritual and cultural practices. My active participation in the temple rituals underscored the profound significance of such events in not only preserving cultural ties but also in establishing a sense of identity and belonging among the immigrant community.

Upon arrival at the venue, my observations of the community's enthusiastic engagement with the festival revealed a palpable sense of joy, camaraderie, and shared identity. The intentional use of colors to bring vibrancy to the celebration, despite the challenges posed by the cold Norwegian weather, showcased our community's determination to adapt and maintain the essence of Holi. The absence of traditional elements like pichkari and thandai was noted, offering valuable insights into the pragmatic adjustments made to accommodate climatic differences.

As the Holi celebrations unfolded, I seamlessly transitioned from active participation to a keen observer, capturing the nuances of the community's interactions. Stories shared within small groups provided a glimpse into the nostalgic recollections of Holi celebrations in Nepal, emphasizing the emotional connection these festivals offer, bridging the geographical and cultural gap for immigrants. The absence of forced color-throwing, as mentioned by one participant's wife, reflected a conscious effort to evolve traditions for a more inclusive and respectful celebration.

The celebrations started a few days before the main day of Holi (Fagu Parwa). Many people whom I know started preparing for the festival by making traditional food and sweets such as gujiya, mathri, and papdi, which are traditional sweets in Nepal made during Fagu Parwa. Dishes like selroti and pakodas are also common to make, as they are popular snacks during the festival.

As a participant alone, I would have not so much bothered about carrying colours with me to play with. So, early that day I wake up at 8:00 am and cleaned my room as a cultural routine. I took a shower and went to Veitvet centre to buy colour which I heard from other Nepalese family, was the only place where different powdered colours were available. As, a participant I would have worn the oldest dress I had because the colour would ruin it. But as a researcher I thought every colour should be visible and I wanted it to be more colourful. So, I decided to get dressed in white color T-shirt. we (I and my wife) went to the Sanatan temple located at Nyveien, Slemmestad. We could hear dhol and other traditional musical instruments. The air was filled with the sweet aroma of flowers and the scent of incense. As we entered the temple, we were greeted by the sight of people dancing and singing. People had already different colours on their faces. It was harder to really see their real face. We worshipped God and the priest put colour on both of our faces and we too rubbed the powder colour in the priests' face and asked for his blessings. We greeted happy Holi to everybody and left the temple after 1 hour, as we have to prepare to go to our venue as well.

I with my wife reached the venue around 14:30. I saw there were lots of people were waiting outside the hall. As the event hall opened, and we entered inside the hall. I saw it was beautifully s decorated by the organizers. Everyone took off their jacket and I saw most of them wearing the old and short t-shirt they had. But some of them were wearing white t-shirt with painting of Holi festival. There were around 110 people inside the hall. The loud Holi music was tuned at the background. I saw that everyone had packets of powder colours in their hand and there was a big plate with different colors on the stage.

My previous colleague at work, Arvind, was the anchor of the program. I wished him happy Holi and informed that we had been waiting outside. He let me know that they were preparing inside. At the beginning of the program (at 15:30), he announced two names and ages, Kristina (around 12 years old) and Aakriti (around 18 years old) to dance in the Holi song. Everyone was cheering for them while they were dancing. They were so engaged that they requested Arvind to play the song once more. He nodded this head cheerfully and announced Gyanu (a girl in her mid-twenties) would come on the stage to join those two girls in the song again, and everyone else could dance at their own place.

There were no formal programs on this festival said Arvind. The dance was just to warm us up. So, One of the eldest members of Nepalese community (father of Jitendra Shahi) put Abir (red color) on the forehead of the participant and the celebration started. Now, everyone was free to

rub the colour on anyone's face. The ambience brushed into loud noise and was covered with colours everywhere. All participants put Abir to each other on the face and said, 'Holi re' (which means it's Holi). Arvind was heard saying to be aware that the colour should be carefully handled so that it does not spoil the floor. This celebration continued for an hour and it was difficult to recognize people because of color in their face. Everyone danced to the background Holi music and seemed to express joy and happiness. The organizer then announced for the food. I saw that there were Pullo, chicken curry, potato and cauliflower, Achar, and Nepali traditional Holi sweets (Puwa, Gujiya). Everyone said that the program was well managed, and the food was delicious. There was availability of Coca-Cola, Fanta, Sprite as cold drinks. We met many Nepali families living in Norway and made new friends. We shared stories and memories of our childhood days back in Nepal, and it was spectacular how Holi brought us all together. However hard had everyone tried to prevent the colour falling on the ground, it was not possible. The program ended at 22:00. There were lot of color on the floor which was not possible to clean at the same time.

As a participator, I tried to rub everyone with colour and say Holi re and exchange my wishes with them. After that I was more switched to a observer role and sat at the corner to have a maximum view of what was going around. Some were still playing with colours and trying to rub in the teeth. Some were seen running to escape that. Some were dancing in groups in the song playing in the background. Some were talking in small group. I joined a small group. I heard people telling stories about back days, how they celebrated in Nepal.

They said it was not only powder colour they played but they would pour some permanent colour in water and throw the coloured water on others hiding from the roof top on strangers passing by. He continued, many times he got scolded by them because some had expensive dresses, while other said 'Holi re' to him. He further added that he did not feel the same energy as he did back in home. His wife added that it was okay to celebrate in a more systematic way like this because only who wants to play can join and not forcedly thrown colours. She added, its high time we should made improvements in our tradition. I felt one missing thing in this whole celebration process was pichkari-, a water gun that is used to squirt coloured water on people. I recall, filling up the pichkaris with coloured water and go out on the streets to celebrate with our neighbours and friends. However, due to the cold weather in Norway, it was not possible to play with water outside. Instead, we played with dry colors, which for me was equally fun.

As a researcher I observed another missing thing that was the traditional thandai, a sweet drink made with milk, almonds, and spices. Thandai is a popular drink during Holi in Nepal, and it is served cold. However, due to the cold weather in Norway, we had to skip the thandai and settle for hot tea and coffee.

Despite the cultural adaptations made in Norway, the festivities succeeded in fostering a sense of togetherness and brotherhood. The shared joy, laughter, and the creation of new friendships among Nepali families in Oslo echoed the festival's universal ability to bring people together. The critical evaluation of the celebration's conclusion acknowledged the challenges posed by the colored floor and reflected on the importance of such communal gatherings, particularly in a foreign land.

In conclusion, my perspective on the Holi festival in Oslo unraveled the intricate ways in which Nepalese immigrants navigate cultural celebrations to overcome the challenges of displacement. The fusion of tradition with adaptation, the blending of religious and cultural elements, and the intentional efforts to create a sense of community all underscore the vital role these festivals play in fostering resilience, unity, and a shared cultural identity among Nepalese immigrants in Oslo.

Despite these differences, in the celebration in Norway were just as friendly and enjoyable as in Nepal. I met many Nepali families living in Norway for the first time and we became friends. Had not I been there, I would have missed so much Nepalese people who had come to Norway. This celebration brought us together far away from home. The zest of brotherhood and love was once again established by this celebration.

Buddha Jayanti in Norway

Buddha Jayanti is usually celebrated in the month of May/June as per Buddhist calendar. Both Hindus and Buddhists show equal respect and gratitude for the day. In Norway there are few Nepalese people who are Buddhist are rare. As the researcher, immersing myself in the celebration of Buddha Jayanti among the Nepalese community in Oslo provided a unique vantage point to explore the intersection of cultural practices, spirituality, and the immigrant experience. The event, spearheaded by Ram Kumar Shrestha, illuminated the resilience of cultural traditions within the diaspora and underscored the role of such celebrations in overcoming the challenges faced by Nepalese immigrants in Norway.

In Norway there are few Nepalese people who are Buddhist are rare. They could be counted in hands. Ram Kumar Shrestha is one of them. He is also the coordinator of one of the Nepali Buddhist communities. So he took the initiation and on that day and planned a gathering. He called me and asked if there was a hall available on May 16, 2022. I suggested him to request for the NRNA hall as it would be available without any cost and could accommodate around 60 people easily. So, he asked for the hall he managed to get that for free.

It was my first experience ever in Norway to celebrate this day because I had never heard any gathering on this day before. Ram along with his other Buddhists friends were already there as I reached the hall around 3 pm. Ram was shining in yellow and maroon attire. There were six more people who were wearing the same dress as Ram's. Rest of the guests, we were in Daura Suruwal the traditional Nepali dress with Dhak Topi on our head. He told that since there was not a Buddhist monastery in Norway, they were already at the venue at 10 am. Pointing to a big photo frame of Buddha (which they had carefully transported in a car) he said, they had already established Buddhist monastery in the hall for that day. As I was among the Hindu guests and invited at 3 pm, one of the guests was eager and asked him if it was possible to join the prayers next time. He was really kind and said he would love to see me early next year (2023). I was enthusiastic about his dress and if I could wear that too next year. He smiled and replied-if I am planning to be a monk too.

By then I realised I have already missed the first part of the program and promised to be there next year. The second part where everyone could voluntarily come was about to start in couple of minutes. The lightning of the candles near Buddha's photo and the led lights around his heads were really mesmerising. I observed that there were coloured clothes tied around the wall near the photo. The ambiance was more soothing with the background music playing 'om mane pembe hom' which is one of the main chants for Buddhists.

As soon as the chief guest of the program, Professor from NMBU had arrived the second part started. Between the holy chants from the attractive yellow and maroon gown wearing people, the chief guest lit up the 'diyo' (main candle) and started the formal program. Then came the national anthem where everybody on the hall stood up and brought the right hand near heart as a sign of respect and nationalism. Then everybody was allowed to sit on the cotton-pillow that laid on the floor. There were no chairs in the hall, it was just pillow and mats on the floor.

Then everybody could go one by one near the photo and offer their prayers and flowers to Buddha. I too went and wished for the world peace to prevail forever and offered a yellow tulip to the photo. Then, the distinguished guest from all the organizations shared their short thoughts on Buddha and his teachings. Most of them emphasized that the love and peace should be the takeaway message from Gautam Buddha. This can help the world grow in a better place. Another distinguished guest from cultural department from Uio shared his views on how they have perceived Buddha so far and glad that he was invited to the event.

Professor, Sitaula as the chief guest made his remarks at the end of the program. He emphasized that despite Buddha was born in Nepal he belongs to the world. The world should be smart enough to take his teachings and the way to keep griefs away to experience a happy living way. Moreover, he focused that real tribute to Buddha is when we can be at peace and happiness with our thoughts and way of living. Everyone in the hall clapped and agreed to his remarks made.

As it was 17:50 it was time to take prasad. Contrary, to the dishes in other programs, it was simple. There was no meat item. It was just rice porridge and achar. Everybody stood in queue to take prasad in the plate and came back and sat on their respective pillow to eat. The Buddhists friend had gathered in Ram's house and prepared this 'kheer' and 'achar' by themselves. In the corner of the kitchen in event hall, it was possible to operate the coffee machine.

It was well managed and organized program where almost 50 people participated. People began to talk to each other and in small groups after that took prasad. Some were complaining that Nepalese government have not been able to develop birthplace of Gautam Buddha as a prime tourist attraction, while others were complaining about not being able to preach his teachings in a more organised way. However, Ram and his other fellow Buddhists friends were busy asking if everyone has had their prasad and feeling ease and happy. He winked me and said I would have to do the same next year if I dressed like him. Everyone was happy in the hall by spending their time and shared their insights with each other. The program was finished around 19.30 with everyone shouting 'Om Shanti' together at the end.

Ram thanked the NRNA president for providing the hall for the day and me for the idea. He thanked every guest who were there and had a favour to ask for. Next year too, he would like to arrange a program and would like to invite more international friends. So, he requested

everyone if they could inform about the program to their international friends next year and everyone was positive.

Wallowing to the event, makes me feel very happy. That was a unique and memorable experience. I personally had never imagined that Ram would have been so enthusiast to arrange a program on Buddha Jayanti. It would have been very challenging to him as it was his first time. At the same time it was also an opportunity to share feelings, hymns, prayers with people from different cultures and backgrounds.

To conclude this event, I would like to say I was in peace with life in that particular day. It made me contemplate on the journey inwards-self exploration and made me wait for next year where I will join the first session too. Particularly, it was a spiritual experience for me.

Being away from Nepal, I missed the vibrancy and energy of the Buddha Jayanti celebrations. It is a time for community building and sharing, and people from all walks of life come together to celebrate and honor Lord Buddha. While I miss the grandeur and excitement of the Buddha Jayanti celebrations in Nepal, I have come to appreciate the simplicity and serenity of the celebrations here in Norway. The focus is on the teachings of Lord Buddha, and there is a sense of introspection and reflection that is hard to find in the hustle and bustle of the festivities in Nepal. In conclusion, Buddha Jayanti is a significant event in the Buddhist calendar, and it is celebrated with great enthusiasm and fervour all over the world. While the celebrations may differ from one place to another, the underlying message of peace, compassion, and enlightenment remains the same. Whether in Nepal or Norway, the teachings of Lord Buddha continue to inspire and guide people on their spiritual journeys.

The rarity of Buddhist Nepalese in Norway, as noted in the introductory passage, sets the stage for an exploration of how individuals like Ram Kumar Shrestha, as a cultural ambassador, actively engage in preserving and sharing their traditions. The initiation of the event showcases the proactive steps taken by community members to create a cultural space, even in the absence of a dedicated Buddhist monastery. The researcher's participation in the planning phase, suggesting the use of the NRNA hall, reflects an understanding of the pragmatic considerations and resource-sharing within the community.

Upon arrival at the celebration, the researcher's observations of the cultural nuances, such as the attire worn by Ram Kumar Shrestha and his companions, contribute to an understanding of the symbolic importance attached to clothing in religious and cultural contexts. The

establishment of a makeshift Buddhist monastery within the event hall exemplifies the community's adaptability and creativity in maintaining sacred traditions in a foreign setting. These observations set the stage for a deeper exploration of how cultural and religious practices serve as anchors for Nepalese immigrants in Oslo.

The researcher's dialogues with participants, including the inquiry about joining prayers in the future, offer insights into the inclusivity and openness of the community. The mention of potential participation in the following year and the exchange about monk attire provides a personal touch to the narrative, showcasing the researcher's willingness to integrate into the cultural fabric of the community. This willingness to engage and learn becomes a crucial aspect of understanding the social dynamics and potential avenues for overcoming challenges.

The detailed account of the formal program, including the lighting of candles, national anthem, and individual offerings to Buddha, offers a rich description of the ritualistic aspects of the celebration. The absence of chairs in the hall, replaced by pillows and mats, becomes a noteworthy detail, emphasizing the cultural authenticity of the event. The critical perspective here lies in understanding how such adaptations to the physical setting contribute to a sense of cultural continuity and communal participation among immigrants.

The researcher's reflections on the participants' discussions after the formal program, touching upon concerns about the development of Buddha's birthplace and the organization of teachings, provide a window into the collective aspirations and challenges faced by the community. Ram Kumar Shrestha's gratitude towards the NRNA president and the researcher, coupled with his forward-looking request for international participation in the next year's event, underscores the community's aspirations for inclusivity and cross-cultural exchange.

In conclusion, the researcher's active participation and observation during the Buddha Jayanti celebration unravel the intricate layers of cultural preservation, spiritual expression, and community building among Nepalese immigrants in Oslo. The critical evaluation, from the researcher's perspective, becomes a lens through which the significance of such celebrations in overcoming the challenges of cultural displacement and fostering a sense of belonging can be thoroughly explored and understood.

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Jayanti celebrations in Nepal, I have come to appreciate the simplicity and serenity of the celebrations here in Norway. The focus is on the teachings of Lord Buddha, and there is a sense of introspection and reflection that is hard to find in the hustle and bustle of the festivities in Nepal. In conclusion, Buddha Jayanti is a significant event in the Buddhist calendar, and it is celebrated with great enthusiasm and fervour all over the world. While the celebrations may differ from one place to another, the underlying message of peace, compassion, and enlightenment remains the same. Whether in Nepal or Norway, the teachings of Lord Buddha continue to inspire and guide people on their spiritual journeys.

Gai Jatra in Norway

Gai Jatra is a lively and colourful event that takes place in late August or early September and is one of the most significant cultural festivals in the country. This festival is organized by one of group of Newari families on August 12, 2022, near Sognsvann lake. Nevertheless, I have fond memories of celebrating it with colleague's family of my wife. If it was not for her friend's family, I would have never come across this celebration in Norway till date.

My wife's colleague belongs to a Newar community who had two schoolboys. She had a great expectation that her children would at least know or better practice Newari culture apart from Nepalese and Norwegian culture. But the problem was there were not any events before on this day among Nepalese society and being in Nepal during August was not possible for her sons because of their school schedule they had never got opportunity to observe the festival. Anu Sthapit, therefore decided to talk to 6 other Newari couples and two non- Newari couple for a get together at Sognsvann lake at 16:00. Her intentions were that she could demonstrate her own children how it is normally observed and other children and parents to know more about it. I went there at 16:30 with my wife. I wore summer dress, and my wife wore kurta Suruwal. I saw there were together eight couples and seven children. Anu started greetings in Newari language. I heard that she started with a little background on being gathered and about Gai - Jatra to all the participants. I knew that she made sure all the children are understanding what she said, and she tried to explain in Norwegian as well so that the children could better understand. I saw that all the Newari couples wore Newari dresses, children with Nepali attire and other two couples with summer dresses.

At the beginning, I got an opportunity to introduce each other. After introduction, she explained to all participant that Gai Jatra is a festival that celebrates life, death, and the cycle of rebirth. We lit candles in remembrance of the loved ones who were dead. The children were shown

photos of their grandparents and great grandfathers and asked to light the candle in their memory.

I saw that she further explained that two other important aspects of Gai Jatra are the "lake and Dyohla" dance, which are performed by men dressed in lion's masks and women's clothing respectively. She took out the dress from her bag and she and her husband wore that dress and demonstrated a bit of Dyohla dance while my wife played the music in her phone. It is believed that the cows help guide the souls of the departed to the afterlife, so she took out the toy cows and we all held them such as they seem to be in a row and push by hands. The children enjoyed rubbing them against the ground.

Before we would share and eat the self-made dishes that every couple have brought from home, the most important part of the celebration is the creation of small shrines or memorials for the deceased. She urged that we would make that of sand in the lake while we take a bath. Everybody took bath in the lake and the children on one bank deposited sand and made shrine like structure in remembrance of their loved ones. They seemed enjoying while in water, as the day was sunny.

After that, they shared our food and started to grill the marinated meat. They had made Newari dishes like chata mari and baara, while we had made mo: mos (dumplings) and Dal Bhat (lentil soup and rice). The children seemed to enjoy the Mo: Mo most. I enjoyed the grill meat. Anu further added, Aila (Newari drink) is a common tradition in this festival. Anu said it was illegal for homemade alcohol in Norway, or else she would have brewed it at home it and had it here. Nevertheless, children enjoyed drinking cola and called it Aila. I drank coffee while Giri Shrestha drank Aila. They talked about culture, tradition, and our parental expectations. At the end of the day, the children demanded ice-cream and they all had it from a nearby shop and took t-bane home. On the way home me and my wife talked about the whole day and how hard Anu has put all her efforts together for being a good role model for her family and to the society. The program ended at 22:00 and all of us forwarded to home. Needless to say, it was an amazing cultural teaching through participatory and spectacular approach.

One thing that was missing in the celebrations in Norway was the traditional cow procession. In Nepal, we have a procession where people dress up in cow costumes and walk through the streets. It is a way of celebrating the lives of those who have passed away and to honor them

in a unique way. However, due to the lack of cows in Norway, it was not possible to have a cow procession.

Another thing that I missed was the sense of community that we have in Nepal during Gai Jatra. In Nepal, the entire neighbourhoods come together to celebrate Gai Jatra. We would visit our neighbours and offer our condolences and prayers for their loved ones who had passed away. It was a time to strengthen our bonds with our community and to support each other during difficult times. However, in Norway, the celebrations were limited to the Nepali community, and it was not as inclusive as it is in Nepal. Nevertheless, it was remarkable to see how the Nepali community in Norway came together to celebrate the festival and to support each other during difficult times. The participation in the Gai Jatra celebration among the Nepalese community in Oslo provided a rich tapestry of cultural immersion and community bonding. As the researcher, my involvement in this vibrant festival allowed for a nuanced understanding of how Nepalese immigrants in Oslo navigate the challenges of cultural preservation, community building, and the amalgamation of diverse traditions.

The researcher's introduction to Gai Jatra through the initiative of a Newar colleague's family emphasizes the role of interpersonal relationships and community networks in maintaining cultural practices in a foreign land. The festival's rarity in Norway, as highlighted in the narrative, underlines the importance of individual efforts within the community to organize and celebrate cultural events. This sets the stage for a deeper exploration of how such initiatives contribute to a sense of belonging and resilience among Nepalese immigrants facing cultural displacement.

The researcher's detailed description of the event, including attire, rituals, and the symbolic elements of Gai Jatra, adds depth to the narrative. The demonstration of the "Dyohla" dance and the use of toy cows as symbolic elements connects the celebration to its roots in Nepal, providing a visual representation of cultural continuity. The researcher's involvement in these activities illustrates a willingness to actively engage in and understand the intricacies of cultural practices, reflecting a participatory approach to research.

However, the narrative also highlights certain elements missing from the celebrations in Norway, such as the traditional cow procession and the sense of community found in Nepal during Gai Jatra. These omissions become crucial points for critical evaluation. While the absence of certain elements can be attributed to practical constraints, it prompts a reflection on

the adaptations and modifications made by the community to maintain the essence of the festival in a foreign setting. This offers insights into the resilience and creativity of the Nepalese diaspora in Oslo in the face of cultural challenges.

The researcher's mention of the discussions about homemade alcohol (Aila) and the substitution with cola in Norway sheds light on the adaptive strategies employed by the community to adhere to cultural practices within legal and cultural constraints. This aspect invites a critical examination of how immigrants navigate the intersection of cultural traditions and the regulations of their host country, showcasing a pragmatic approach to preserving cultural identity.

The researcher's reflections on the sense of community and cultural teaching underscore the potential social and psychological benefits of celebrating festivals in a diasporic context. The creation of small shrines and the communal sharing of food become symbolic acts of remembrance, fostering a collective memory and shared cultural experiences among the participants. This social cohesion becomes a crucial factor in overcoming the challenges of cultural assimilation and homesickness faced by Nepalese immigrants in Oslo.

In conclusion, the researcher's participation in the Gai Jaitra celebration offers a holistic perspective on the cultural practices of the Nepalese community in Oslo. The critical evaluation, from the researcher's standpoint, illuminates both the strengths and limitations of cultural preservation efforts in a foreign land. The adaptability, creativity, and resilience displayed by the community in celebrating Gai Jaitra become integral components of the broader narrative of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo and contribute to the ongoing dialogue on the intersection of culture, migration, and community building.

The study's findings emphasize the significance of comprehending cultural identity in the framework of migration and the necessity of cultural awareness in facilitating the integration of immigrants into fresh cultural contexts.

Ethical Reflection

Researchers may make sure that their research is carried out in a responsible and respectful manner that safeguards the rights and dignity of the participants by taking these ethical factors into account. When researching Nepalese immigrants in Norway, the following ethical issues were considered:

- **Informed Consent:** Getting informed consent is crucial to ensuring that participants are aware of the research's goals, methods, risks, and advantages before deciding to participate. Consent was taken from everyone whose name or picture are used as a study material. They were also informed about my study program and research objective.
- **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** To protect participant privacy and avert any harm, researchers must guarantee participant confidentiality and anonymity. To maintain the confidentiality and anonymity those who did not wanted to participate or being mentioned in the thesis has been respected.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** When planning and carrying out research, researchers should be conscious of potential cultural differences and sensitive to them, and that has been tried to do that in every possible way.
- **Power Imbalance:** Especially if the researcher is from a dominant culture or has a superior socioeconomic standing, researchers should be aware of and resolve any power imbalances they may have with the participants.
- **Recruitment:** Participants should be chosen fairly, without taking advantage of weaker persons or groups. In this regard, efforts have been made to include from various groups as far as possible.
- **Data gathering:** Data gathering should be done with sensitivity and respect, and participants ought to be provided with the option to leave the study at any time.
- **Data analysis:** When analysing or presenting participant perspectives or experiences, researchers should take precautions to avoid any alteration or misinterpretation of data. No manipulation has been done during data analysis.
- **Dissemination:** Researchers must make sure that the results of their studies are communicated in a way that is sensitive to the participants and the communities in which they live.

The study's subject is Norwegian immigrants from Nepal and their cultural identity, especially as it relates to the holidays they observe. Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Buddha Jayanti, and Gai Jatra are among the five festivals that Nepalese immigrants to Norway celebrate, and they are all examined in this study. The main inquiry is: to what extent have Nepalese immigrants in Norway transformed, negotiated, or embraced their native cultural and religious signifiers?

Chapter 7 (Discussion and Analysis)

The Nepalese minority in Oslo has been successful in preserving their culinary customs, but there are obstacles to their cultural identity. To practice and celebrate their religion, the Nepalese minority has developed religious institutions. A study on Nepalese immigrants' festival observation in Oslo suggests that their customs have grown more prevalent in the city and enriched its multiculturalism. Nepalese students also strive to maintain their cultural identity while integrating into Danish society. This exemplifies the challenging processes people go through when adjusting to a new country's cultural identity.

Analysis

I had the opportunity to watch and learn about the ways that immigrants from Nepal have maintained their cultural traditions in a distant country while taking part in the Dashain festival celebration in Norway. It was amazing to witness how the community of Norwegian Nepalis got together to plan the celebration and how they included their cultural practises and traditions. I saw the hoisting of the kalasha, a sacred pot containing holy water and embellished with flowers and leaves, at the festival's opening ritual, Ghatasthavana. It is adored throughout the festival and is a representation of the goddess Durga. The elders of the village led the ritual, which was a lovely sight to watch. Tika, the festival's closing event, played a major role in the festivities. The younger community members received blessings and Tika from the elders, signifying the rekindling of kinship and social bonds. I had the opportunity to witness the significance of elders in Nepalese culture and the value placed on preserving ties to one's family and customs. I learned about Nepal's rich cultural legacy via the festival's cultural exhibition and traditional dances. The residents of the town proudly presented their ethnic attire, jewellery, and musical instruments, exhibiting the elegance and variety of their culture. The extravagant feast, which featured typical Nepali fare like sel roti and daal-bhaat-tarkari, further highlighted how important food and hospitality are in Nepalese society. I was able to comprehend the traditions and practises of Nepalese immigrants better as a result of my involvement in the Dashain festival celebration in Norway as an observer and participant. I have seen how they have managed to adjust to a new environment while maintaining their cultural customs. It was nice to see how the festival gave a venue for the neighbourhood to unite and celebrate their shared cultural identity (Nepal Hiking Team, 2022). The traditional dances and music performed during the festival served as a method to preserve the nation's history in addition to celebrating Nepali culture. The Nepali immigrants in Norway have made

an effort to preserve their cultural identity through these performances, as well as to share it with the neighbourhood.

Given the difficulties immigrants have while attempting to integrate into a new society, this is especially crucial. Immigrants may establish a feeling of community in both their home and host nations by sharing their culture. A big part of the festival celebration also revolved around the food that was served. People from all cultural backgrounds had the chance to sample Nepali cuisine, which is renowned for its distinctive flavor profile and use of fragrant spices, at the event. Through this interchange of cuisine and culture, many cultures are encouraged to appreciate and understand one another. An important aspect of Dashain is receiving Tika from elders, which emphasizes the value of family and intergenerational bonds in Nepali culture. As a researcher, participating in this practice gave me the opportunity to see the event from the viewpoint of a local. I was able to have a better understanding of the Tika's symbolic significance as well as its function within the Nepali community. Understanding the complexity of cultural customs and practises was much enhanced by taking part in and seeing Dashain celebrations in Norway. It gave me the chance to observe directly how Nepalese immigrants are maintaining their cultural identity despite residing in a foreign nation. The event also showed how very vital cultural festivities can be in fostering respect and understanding across various populations. It emphasizes the necessity for researchers to take into account the significance of cultural practises in preserving immigrant communities' identities and the function of cultural festivals in fostering intercultural understanding.

Moreover, the theories mentioned in the discussion chapter offer many viewpoints to comprehend how immigrants from Nepal who have settled in Oslo have modified, bargained for, or accepted their home cultural and religious signifiers throughout the festival of Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Buddha Jayanti, and Gai Jatra. An in-depth understanding of how immigrants negotiate their cultural identity in a foreign setting and the effects of these negotiations on their sense of belonging and integration into Norwegian culture could be gained by using these theories. The ideas of Culture, Migration, and Identification Theory (CMIT) and Culture Theory are particularly pertinent to this subject. The theories of CMIT and Culture Theory offer insightful perspectives on the lived experiences of Nepalese immigrants in Norway and their negotiating and adjusting to the local culture. Culture Theory stresses the symbolic and meaning-making elements of cultural behaviors, whereas CMIT emphasizes the significance of cultural identity and negotiation. Both perspectives contribute to the understanding of the

importance of the festivals observed by immigrants from Nepal and their contribution to the preservation of cultural identity and community among immigrants in Norway. These theories on the five festivals mentioned in the paper from the discussion can be analyzed as the following:

Culture, Migration and Identification Theory:

According to the Culture, Migration, and Identification Theory (CMIT), migration is a form of cultural change that entails both cultural adaptation and preservation of the native culture. According to this idea, maintaining one's cultural identity is correlated with psychological health and cultural adjustment (Bhugra, 2005), which highlights the significance of cultural identification for immigrants. According to CMIT, immigrants go through a process of cultural negotiation in which they make an effort to balance their native cultural identity with the new cultural setting. Both the embrace of fresh cultural practices and the preservation of long-standing cultural practices may be a part of this process. CMIT can be used to examine how immigrants manage their cultural identity and keep ties to their home culture while adjusting to the Norwegian cultural environment in the context of Nepalese immigrants in Norway. In order to keep traditional Nepalese customs while adopting Norwegian cultural practices into their celebrations, Nepalese immigrants could participate in cultural negotiation.

According to this theory, cultural identity is continually changing and being influenced by interactions with other cultures and experiences of migration. This hypothesis is crucial to comprehending the festival celebrations of the Nepalese immigrants in Norway. Their awareness of and participation in these events may evolve throughout time as a result of living in a different cultural setting. For instance, they might modify their celebration to reflect Norwegian cultural customs or to accommodate the country's climate. In this way, their migration experience and interactions with many cultures have an impact on their sense of cultural identity.

Culture Theory

The symbolic and meaning-making elements of culture are highlighted by culture theory. According to this view, culture is a collection of signs, meanings, and customs that people use to interpret their surroundings and interact with others. According to Geertz (1973), culture theory emphasizes the significance of rituals and symbols in cultural activities and contends that these practices contribute to the formation and maintenance of cultural identities. Culture Theory can be utilized to examine the relevance of festivals observed by Nepalese immigrants

in the context of their presence in Norway. The Nepalese community celebrates these festivals through a variety of rituals and symbols that have significant cultural significance. The festivals facilitate socializing and communication among the Nepalese community and support the development and preservation of a feeling of cultural identity.

The intricacy of cultural adaptation and negotiation that takes place during migration is revealed by the evaluation of CMIT and Culture Theory on the study's topic of Nepalese immigrants in Norway. Immigrants negotiate their cultural identity while preserving ties to their home cultures and adjusting to the new cultural environment. The festivals that Nepalese immigrants observe are an important cultural activity that helps the community keep its cultural identity and share cultural meanings.

Understanding how immigrants negotiate their cultural identity in a new environment is vital since the idea of identity has many facets. Festivals provide immigrants a chance to exhibit their cultural identity and history, which is especially important for those who live abroad. Acculturation, however, may change how immigrants see their cultural identity. Acculturation is the process through which immigrants blend aspects of their original culture with those of the host culture. The acculturation process can alter how an immigrant group expresses its cultural identity in the host community and how they see the significance of their own culture. Five holidays are observed by Nepali immigrants who have made Oslo, Norway, their new home: Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Buddha Jayanti, and Gai Jatra. These celebrations are of great cultural and religious significance and aid the immigrants from Nepal in maintaining their cultural identity. The festivals provide immigrants a chance to commemorate their past and transmit it to the following generation. The analysis of culture and identity theory in relation to these festivals gives light on the challenges and chances that immigrants have while negotiating their cultural identities in a foreign environment.

Understanding the degree to which Nepalese immigrants in Oslo have integrated into Norwegian society while maintaining their cultural identity may be accomplished by studying acculturation theory in the context of these events. Acculturation may significantly affect an immigrant's sense of cultural identification, and it can also alter how they see their own culture. Researchers can ascertain the degree of acculturation and its effects on the immigrant community's sense of cultural identity by looking at how the immigrants have altered the celebrations of these festivals to match Norwegian culture. You may utilize the idea of hybridity theory to comprehend how immigrants have combined elements of Norwegian and

Nepalese culture to create new cultural forms. This idea emphasizes that, rather than being constant or necessary, cultural identities constantly change and evolve as a result of interactions between various cultures. The research might examine how these holidays are celebrated by immigrants and how they embrace Norwegian traditions and culture. This can reveal how immigrants reconcile their cultural identity and their openness to assimilating new cultural practises. Festivals provide immigrants a chance to express their cultural identity and heritage, which may be better understood through studying culture and identity theory. Festivals provide newcomers a chance to bond and share their culture in a new environment, creating a sense of community and kinship. The festivals provide a chance to share their culture with the local populace, fostering understanding and respect for the cultural legacy of the immigrant group. The study of culture and identity theory also emphasizes how crucial it is for the host community to be understanding and supportive of immigrants in order to help them preserve and respect their cultural traditions. Immigrants' sense of cultural identity and their capacity to manage their cultural identity in a foreign environment might benefit from the host community's acceptance and encouragement. The host community may help to create a friendly atmosphere that encourages cultural appreciation and exchange. It is possible to gain a thorough grasp of the challenges and possibilities immigrants encounter while negotiating their cultural identities in a foreign environment by looking at culture and identity theory in the context of festivals enjoyed by Nepalese immigrants in Oslo, Norway. Acculturation theory and hybridity theory research shed light on how immigrants combine elements of their new culture with those of the host culture to create new cultural forms. The study also emphasizes the significance of festivals in expressing cultural identity and heritage as well as the function of the host community in fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Understanding how Nepalese immigrants in Oslo negotiate and develop cultural identity during celebrations of holidays like Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Buddha Jayanti, and Gai Jatra is made easier with the help of cultural theory. According to culture theory, culture is constantly created and rebuilt through social relationships and practices rather than being a fixed or essential quality (Suárez, 2001). Immigrants may be asserting their cultural identity, forging ties with their home cultures, and negotiating their position in Norwegian society by participating in these festivals. Immigrants may encounter a variety of challenges as they endeavor to maintain their cultural identity and observe local holidays in a new country. Language obstacles, limited accessibility to cultural resources and materials, prejudice, and a host community's lack of knowledge and enthusiasm for their cultural traditions are just a few of the challenges that may arise.

Discussion

Dashain festival, is actively taking part in the numerous cultural practises and customs connected to the celebration in order to comprehend its importance and meaning. One of the most important cultural festivals in Nepal is the Dashain festival, which is observed by Nepali communities all over the world. It is a season of family get-togethers, eating, and gift-giving. The event is devoted to the worship of the goddess Durga and has a strong religious traditional foundation (Aleksynska & Peri, 2014). As a result, it is an excellent chance for scholars to investigate the social and cultural factors that influence the festival's customs and practises. I gained a special understanding of how Nepali diaspora groups retain their cultural traditions in a far-off nation by taking part in and watching the Dashain celebrations in Norway. The Nepali community in Norway showed remarkable perseverance in keeping their cultural customs and making sure that the holiday was celebrated in a way that was authentic to its cultural significance despite being thousands of miles away from their home country. One of the most striking things about the Dashain celebrations in Norway was the sense of community and togetherness that was evident throughout the festival. The Nepali community in Norway came together in joy and harmony to celebrate the festival, with people of all ages participating in the various cultural activities and traditions. There was a palpable sense of pride in their cultural heritage, and a shared commitment to passing on these traditions to future generations. I was able to obtain a greater awareness of the cultural practises and customs connected to the event, as well as the social and cultural factors that influence them, by actively observing the Dashain celebration in Norway. It also helped me understand the Nepali diaspora community's resiliency and perseverance, as well as their ability to uphold their cultural traditions in a foreign nation. Participatory observation is a crucial research method for learning about cultural customs and practises as well as for developing a more nuanced understanding of the social and cultural forces that influence them (Neupane, 2023). Researchers get the chance to personally witness the various rites, traditions, and customs that make up a cultural festival when they take part in it. This can help children comprehend the symbolic significance of the many celebration elements, such as the traditional music, dancing, and food. Researchers can gain a deeper understanding of these practices' significance to the community and how they fit into the larger cultural context by taking part in them. Participatory observation may help researchers obtain a deeper grasp of cultural customs and practises as well as establish rapport with the population they are researching. Researchers can build relationships and promote a feeling of respect and understanding as they participate in festival events and engage with

attendees. Researchers may be better able to comprehend how the community lives as a result of a franker exchange of ideas and perspectives (Jaimangal-Jones, 2014). Participatory observation has the added advantage of shedding light on the social and cultural influences that shape cultural customs and practises. Researchers can learn more about the elements that affect how the festival is seen and how it has changed over time by actively taking part in the event. This may involve elements like adjustments to the community's demographic make-up, the effects of globalization, and the influence of economic and political pressures. Participatory observation is a useful research technique that, in general, enables researchers to get a more complex understanding of cultural practises and traditions. Researchers can better understand the symbolic significance of various practises by actively taking part in the festival. They can also establish trust and rapport with the group they are researching. Participatory observation also enables academics to get a greater comprehension of how cultural practises and traditions change through time by illuminating the social and cultural variables that influence them (Jaimangal-Jones, 2014).

The celebration of Nepalese festivals in Norway unfolds as a multifaceted cultural experience, embodying the intricate negotiation between tradition and adaptation. Dashain, one of the most significant festivals, epitomizes this dynamic interaction. The core rituals, such as receiving tika and jamara (a mixture of grains) from elders, remain fundamental, signifying the blessings of goddess Durga. However, the setting in Norway prompts adaptations, such as a conscious effort to integrate Norwegian friends into the festivities, creating a cultural exchange. The traditional animal sacrifice, a central element in Nepal, undergoes modification due to legal restrictions and cultural variations in Norway. While maintaining the symbolic significance of Dashain, the community navigates the challenges of adhering to tradition in a different cultural landscape. This negotiation reflects not only the adaptability of the Nepalese community but also their commitment to preserving the essence of Dashain's cultural and spiritual significance.

Similarly, Tihar, the festival of lights, unfolds in Norway with a blend of traditional practices and adaptations necessitated by the local context. The worship of various animals and deities during Tihar, including crows, dogs, cows, and goddess Laxmi, takes on a distinctive character in the Norwegian setting. The festival becomes an occasion to celebrate and acknowledge the unique bond between humans and animals, emphasizing care and compassion. The use of electric lights, a nod to the festival's name, is augmented by innovative adaptations like lanterns and candles, creating a visually stunning celebration. The community, while upholding the core

values of Tihar, incorporates elements that resonate with the Norwegian landscape, offering a harmonious blend of tradition and adaptation. This negotiation allows the Nepalese community in Norway to infuse their cultural celebrations with local relevance, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

The vibrancy of Holi, the festival of colors, finds expression in the Norwegian context through a dynamic interplay of tradition and adaptation. The exuberant use of colored powders and water, a hallmark of Holi in Nepal, becomes a shared experience that transcends cultural boundaries in Norway. The celebration becomes an inclusive event, with both the Nepalese community and local friends joining in the colorful revelry. Adaptations include the use of dry colors to accommodate the cold weather in Norway, showcasing the community's flexibility and creative approaches to maintaining cultural practices in a foreign setting. The essence of joy, laughter, and unity central to Holi remains intact, illustrating how the celebration serves as a cultural bridge, connecting diverse communities through shared moments of festivity.

In the context of Buddha Jayanti, the celebration of Lord Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death takes on a unique form in Norway. The absence of a Buddhist monastery prompts the community to transform a conventional venue into a makeshift monastery, symbolizing their adaptability and commitment to cultural observance. The ceremonial aspects, such as lighting candles and offering prayers, remain pivotal, providing a sense of spiritual connection to their roots. The sharing of thoughts on Buddha's teachings and their relevance in a contemporary context becomes a platform for cross-cultural dialogue, showcasing the festival's role as a conduit for understanding and mutual respect. Despite the geographical distance, Buddha Jayanti becomes a spiritual anchor for the Nepalese community in Norway, highlighting the significance of adaptability in maintaining their cultural and religious practices.

Gai Jatra, a festival that blends cultural traditions and communal remembrance, unfolds uniquely in the Norwegian landscape. The Newari community's initiative to organize the festival near Sognsvann lake underscores their commitment to preserving cultural practices. The absence of a traditional cow procession, a hallmark of Gai Jatra in Nepal, prompts creative adaptations. The use of toy cows and symbolic rituals in water becomes a poignant expression of remembrance, showcasing the community's resilience in adapting to local constraints. The practice of creating small shrines or memorials in the sand, despite the absence of traditional materials, becomes a symbolic gesture of honoring the departed. The festival becomes a space for cultural transmission, with children actively participating in rituals and adapting them to

their Norwegian surroundings. This negotiation between tradition and adaptation allows Gai Jatra to transcend geographical boundaries, fostering a sense of community and cultural continuity in the Nepalese diaspora in Norway.

In conclusion, the celebration of Nepalese festivals in Norway is a vibrant tapestry of tradition and adaptation, reflecting the dynamic interplay between cultural heritage and the demands of a foreign context. The festivals, Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Buddha Jayanti, and Gai Jatra, serve as powerful conduits for the Nepalese community to maintain a connection with their roots while navigating the complexities of a new cultural landscape. These celebrations embody the resilience and creativity of the community as they negotiate traditional practices within the constraints of Norwegian society. The adaptations witnessed in these festivals underscore the community's commitment to preserving the essence of their cultural and religious traditions while fostering cross-cultural understanding and inclusivity. The festivals not only serve as occasions for communal rejoicing but also as platforms for cultural transmission, ensuring that the rich tapestry of Nepalese heritage continues to thrive in the diaspora. As the Nepalese community in Norway engages in this delicate dance between tradition and adaptation, they forge a unique cultural identity that resonates both with their ancestral heritage and the diverse tapestry of Norwegian society. The festivals become not just markers of cultural observance but vibrant expressions of the Nepalese diaspora's ability to navigate, integrate, and contribute to the cultural mosaic of their adopted homeland.

The complicated interaction between culture and identity for Nepalese immigrants in Norway can be better understood using frameworks from both Culture, Migration, and Identification Theory and Culture Theory. These ideas support the idea that cultural identity is a dynamic concept that is influenced by a wide range of social and cultural influences. These theories may be employed in the research paper to examine the research question include the following ones:

Culture, Migration and Identification Theory

A subfield of social science known as "culture, migration, and identification theory" looks at how cultural contrasts and similarities impact the migration patterns and identity development of both individuals and communities. It investigates how immigrants navigate and express numerous identities in a variety of settings, including social, emotional, and political spheres. It also examines the impact of immigration laws and policies on the procedures of identity creation and change (Lanati & Venturini, 2021).

The Culture, Migration, and Identification Theory provides an insightful framework for comprehending the influence of culture on immigrant life. According to this view, cultural identity is dynamic and constantly changing, influenced by experiences of migration and encounters with other cultures. The idea also emphasizes how crucial institutions and social structures are in determining cultural identity. This theory can be applied to the situation of Nepalese immigrants in Norway to comprehend how their cultural identity has been impacted by migration and their interactions in Norway (Adserà & Pytliková, 2015). Migration causes a substantial shift in the cultural background, which may alter how people perceive and identify with their cultural heritage. A mixing of Norwegian and Nepalese culture may have resulted from Nepalese immigrants' negotiations with new cultural norms and values.

Culture Theory

A subfield of anthropology, semiotics, and other related fields known as "culture theory" aims to operationalize and/or scientifically define heuristic conceptions of culture. It investigates the connections between culture and history, society, variety, difference, and nature. It also looks into the ways in which symbolic interpretations and expressions of human experience both influence and are influenced by culture (Serrat, 2008).

The importance of culture as an ensemble of shared values, beliefs, and practices that are handed down from one generation to the next is highlighted by culture theory. According to this notion, culture is a reliable and unifying force that molds people's identities and behaviors. The importance of institutions in maintaining and promoting cultural norms and values is also highlighted by culture theory. Culture Theory can be used to analyze how the social and cultural customs of Nepal have influenced the cultural identities of Nepalese immigrants in Norway. Immigrants from Nepal who currently reside in Norway could nevertheless uphold some cultural customs and beliefs that are connected to their ancestry. However, the acculturation and migration processes may cause some adjustments in how they see and engage with their culture (Scott & Marshall, 2009).

Culture theory can be applied to examine how Nepalese immigrants in Oslo utilize festivals to negotiate their cultural identity and build a feeling of community in a new country. For instance, immigrants may be asserting their cultural identity, forging ties with their home cultures, and negotiating their role in Norwegian society by participating in these festivals. The immigrants may encounter a variety of challenges as they work to maintain their cultural identity and observe their festivals in a strange country. Language obstacles, restricted access

to cultural materials and resources, discrimination, and a host community's lack of knowledge and enthusiasm for their cultural traditions are just a few of the challenges that could arise. These challenges might affect how immigrants spend their holidays and how well they are able to juggle maintaining their cultural identity in a foreign setting.

Additionally, in order to comprehend the lived experiences of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo, Norway, and their efforts at negotiating their cultural identity through the celebration of festivals, it is crucial to comprehend the idea of identity and its connection with culture theory. The challenges they confront in maintaining their cultural identity in a nation that is unfamiliar, however, underline the need for more assistance and tolerance from the host community. The concept of identity is intricate and varied, molded by a variety of elements such as historical, social, political, and cultural circumstances. The process of acculturation, which entails adopting features of the host culture while also maintaining aspects of the native culture, can have an impact on identities in the context of immigrant communities (Mirza, 2020). Through their celebrations of holidays like Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Buddha Jayanti, and Gai Jatra, Nepalese immigrants in Oslo negotiate and develop their cultural identity, which may be understood through the lens of cultural theory. According to culture theory, culture is continuously built and rebuilt through social relationships and practices rather than being a fixed or essential quality.

Chapter 8 (Conclusion)

In conclusion, it was a special and educational experience to participate in and observe the Dashain and Tihar celebrations in Norway. The celebrations brought together Norwegian friends and acquaintances as well as Nepalis from various parts of their country. The festivities served as a reminder of the value of multiculturalism and the function of festivals in preserving cultural traditions. The festivals of Dashain and Tihar are occasions for people to put aside differences and unite to celebrate their commonalities. These celebrations have a big influence on Nepali culture and represent the nation's unique culture. The difficulties of observing these holidays away from home, however, bring their own unique problems. Participating in these festivals allowed me to examine and comprehend the social and cultural dynamics of the Nepali community in Norway as a scholar. It also made it possible to comprehend the difficulties and chances that the community had in preserving its cultural identity while living in a foreign country. Through celebrations like Dashain and Tihar, the Nepali minority in Norway has managed to maintain its traditional traditions despite the obstacles. These celebrations provide a venue for introducing the neighborhood to Nepali culture while fostering intercultural harmony and integration.

In addressing the research question, "How do Nepalese immigrants celebrate their festivals in Oslo and in what ways may these celebrations contribute to overcoming their difficulties?" this thesis has delved into the rich tapestry of Nepalese cultural celebrations in Norway, uncovering the multifaceted ways in which these festivals are observed, adapted, and contribute to the lives of the immigrants. The festivals of Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Buddha Jayanti, and Gai Jatra have been examined not merely as cultural events but as dynamic expressions of the Nepalese diaspora's negotiation of identity, resilience, and integration into Norwegian society.

The celebration of Dashain in Norway reflects a commitment to preserving religious and cultural practices, serving as a bridge connecting generations and fostering a sense of continuity amidst the challenges of cultural displacement. Tihar, with its vibrant lights and worship of animals, showcases the adaptive resilience of the community, while Holi becomes a symbol of joy and togetherness, fostering social connections crucial for the well-being of the diaspora. Buddha Jayanti exemplifies dedication to religious roots, providing a grounding force and connection with heritage. Gai Jatra, though on a smaller scale, demonstrates the community's

efforts to sustain cultural practices, serving as a space for cultural teaching and community support.

The festivals, in their celebration and adaptation, contribute to overcoming difficulties faced by Nepalese immigrants in Oslo. They act as cultural anchors, providing a sense of belonging and identity in a foreign land. Through participatory observation, we witness the festivals serving as avenues for community building, cross-cultural understanding, and integration. These celebrations foster social connections, support networks, and a shared cultural space that aids in overcoming the challenges of cultural dislocation. The festivals, therefore, are not just traditional observances; they are powerful tools for navigating the complexities of migration, fostering resilience, and contributing to the immigrants' overall well-being.

In summarizing the thesis, the narrative of Nepalese festival celebrations in Norway unfolds as a story of cultural negotiation and resilience. The festivals become pathways for the Nepalese diaspora to uphold their cultural heritage while actively engaging with the Norwegian society. The celebration and adaptation of these festivals not only preserve tradition but also contribute to the diverse cultural landscape of Norway. The Nepalese community, through its dynamic engagement with these festivals, weaves a narrative of cultural enrichment, resilience, and meaningful integration into the social fabric of Oslo. The thesis, through its exploration of these celebrations, provides a nuanced understanding of how cultural traditions act as vital tools in overcoming the difficulties faced by immigrants, offering them a sense of continuity, community, and cultural identity in their adopted home.

Interpreting the lived experiences of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo with regard to their festival celebrations is made easier by the discussion of many ideas, such as acculturation, cultural identification, and culture theory. For instance, acculturation emphasizes the intricate and frequently difficult process of assimilating components of the host culture while preserving aspects of the local culture. Understanding how culture is created and reconstructed through social actions, such as festival celebration, is made possible by culture theory. On the other hand, the idea of cultural identity provides an understanding of the ways that immigrants negotiate their sense of cultural identity and belonging in a new setting.

A study might look at how much Nepalese immigrants in Oslo have assimilated Norwegian traditions and practices, and how this has changed how they observe the five festivals. For instance, have they kept the festivals' native Nepalese practices, or have they changed them to

include components of Norwegian culture? The study might also look at how the age groups within the Norwegian community of Nepalese differ in their levels of acculturation. The idea of hybridity, which refers to the blending of many cultural components to generate a new cultural form, is another theoretical paradigm that may be used. The study might investigate the extent to which Nepalese immigrants in Oslo have combined traditional practices from their home country with those of Norway to develop a distinctive hybrid culture. Have they included Norwegian music or cuisine to their festival celebrations, for instance, or have they invented new rituals that combine traditional Norwegian and Nepalese practices? The idea of cultural resilience might also be utilized as a theoretical framework to investigate the capacity of the Nepalese population to preserve its cultural practices and traditions in a foreign setting. The study's focus may be on how the community's participation in the five festivals has enabled them to stay connected to their Nepalese heritage and avoid assimilating into Norwegian culture. The study may also look at how the community's participation in these events has influenced their feeling of place in Norway and their capacity to deal with the difficulties of immigration. A theoretical framework for analyzing how the five festivals affect the Nepalese community's sense of self might also be based on the idea of cultural identity. The study might investigate how the community's participation in these events has aided them in resisting pressure to integrate into Norwegian society and in maintaining a strong sense of cultural identity. The study might also look at how the community's participation in these events has enhanced its feeling of cultural pride and its capacity to pass on its history to future generations.

The examination of the holidays observed by Nepalese immigrants in Oslo emphasizes the significant contribution these festivals make to the development of the cultural identities of communities of Nepalese exile. These celebrations offer a forum for confirming cultural identity, forging ties to indigenous cultures, and for negotiating a sense of inclusion in Norwegian society. Language problems, a lack of accessibility to cultural resources and materials, discrimination, and a lack of appreciation and comprehension for cultural customs by the host community are just a few of the challenges and difficulties that come with celebrating these holidays.

When it comes to assisting immigrants in preserving and celebrating their cultural traditions, more encouragement and comprehension from the host community are crucial. This is highlighted by the issue of cultural identity and the difficulties faced by Nepalese immigrants in Oslo. This assistance can include improved access to cultural information and resources,

raised understanding and respect for cultural customs, and chances for cross-cultural communication.

In a nutshell, the Nepalese immigrants' celebration of holidays like Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Buddha Jayanti, and Gai Jatra in Oslo provides a useful lens using which to comprehend the negotiation of cultural identity in a foreign setting. The data demonstrates that Nepalese immigrants in Oslo are actively negotiating and adapting their cultural practices while still making an effort to maintain their unique cultural identity. This report has offered a thorough analysis of the experiences of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo through the prisms of various theories, research questions, and empirical data, highlighting the opportunities and difficulties involved in navigating a sense of cultural identity as well as belonging in fresh and foreign surroundings. Moreover, the festival celebrations of Nepalese immigrants in Oslo are an expression of their cultural identity, sense of community, and adaptation of traditional norms in a foreign setting. This research emphasizes the value of festivals in forming the cultural identity of diaspora communities and the need of increased assistance as well as comprehension from the host community to ensure that immigrants protect and enjoy their customs of culture.

Comparatively speaking to other populations in Oslo or any other Norwegian city, there are fewer Nepalese students. Fear of losing their culture and identity has been stoked by their dispersal in many locations. The Nepalese pupils are likewise held together by this dread of failing. United Nepalese students reflect Nepal and the cultures of its various regions through their unique identities and cultures.

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