

Frozen in Time—Nepal in My Mind

The Shangri-La Nation: Memory, Identity, and Nepal

Edited by Deepak Shimkhada, Iswari Pandey, Santosh Khadka, and
Tika Lamsal

Nepal is the oldest nation-state in South Asia. The Himalayan nation was never directly colonized. It is the birthplace of Gautama Buddha, and the land of the Himalayas, actually, the only country with eight of the ten highest mountains in the world.

Nepal is also a country with a remarkable diversity of flora and fauna, peoples, traditions, and temples at virtually every step of the way. It is the place of origin of the Gurkha soldiers whose stories of bravery are told and re-told around the world. Untouched by outside influences until recently, it is the Shangri-la that we know of. These are some of the attributes most used to construct a grand narrative about the nation of Nepal, often with the phrase *sundar, shanta, bishal* (beautiful, peaceful, great). However, how was the lived experience of that Nepal for those of us who grew up in Nepal and those who went to Nepal from outside for travel, work, or studies? What can that experience tell us about life, culture, citizenship, labor, education, history, memory, mobility, and (post-) modernity in the 21st century of global interconnectedness?

We seek non-fictional accounts (stories/narratives) of about 1,000-3,000 words on what Nepal is or was as experienced and perceived at a particular time or place in Nepal. For this volume, we think of a nation in the sense of an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1990) but also realize the danger of a single story (Adichie, 2009), as it is very much contested space.

Our target contributors are Nepalis currently living and working abroad as well as Nepalis who have had significant experience in Nepal. Rather than offer another all-encompassing grand essay about what Nepal is or not, we ask our contributors to zoom in on a particular action, event, experience, object, place, or person that has significant meaning to them and describe it in detail. Ideally, they would then link the story to the broader context of culture, politics, or history, so the narrative blends micro-stories of individual experiences or observations with the macro world at the given time. Potential contributors can address one or more of the following prompts:

1. What are the first things that you think of when you think of Nepal? What do they suggest to you?
2. Is there any particular image, event, experience, object, or issue that represents Nepal for you? How so?
3. How do your experiences build on, expand, interrogate local or indigenous knowledge systems?
4. How do those experiences shed light on the many lines of differences in Nepali society, such as caste, class, ethnicity, language, region, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc. and/or ways to address them?
5. What kind of your current cultural, religious, or ritualistic practices shape your identity as emotionally invested in the “homeland”?
6. Are there particular works of art that symbolize your community identity in Nepal or abroad? How do they function to bring the community together or even indicate fissures?
7. What particular aspect of society, nature/environment, education, people, place, and/or politics of Nepal inform your ‘self’, community, and/or worldview? First Draft will be due on Jan. 31, 2020.

Please send your draft and inquiries to dshimkhada@gmail.com, iswari.pandey@csun.edu, tlamsal@usfc.a.edu, or santosh.khadka@csun.edu

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The article should be typed in Times New Roman.

Font size 12

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