MERE "MERCENARIES" TO EQUAL CITIZENS:

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL NEGOTIATIONS BY GURKHAS IN THE UK

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the Gurkha soldiers hailing originally from Nepal who were treated in the British Army in the early nineteenth century as mere "mercenaries" have successfully re-embodied themselves as the new deserving British citizens after nearly 200 years of service. Because of their martial legacy, they are held much higher than the migrants seeking work or refuge in the UK. They are the characterization of the commonly held migrant-soldier dichotomy in one and portray the tension between "heroes" and "aliens." The thesis uses ethnographic methods and secondary research to highlight that although the Gurkhas have had substantial amount of success at the political level through campaigning and litigation, they and their families continue to struggle in everyday social interactions in the British neighborhoods. The language related problems are the most prominent among others. As the elderly Gurkhas are visible in the UK societies because of their race and wardrobe, some of them try to perform like the locals to lessen their presence. The mobility of Gurkhas is highly gendered as the wives generally tag along with their husbands and have very little say about the place they want to live in or work they want to do.

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Disclaimer

Although the Nepal Government and the Brigade of Gurkhas of the British Army strictly mentions that the term "mercenary" is "not a valid" description of the Gurkhas, I nevertheless use the term for the purposes of the thesis after a careful review of the texts written by the British writers and officials in the early nineteenth century. I am, in no means, using this term here to portray the Gurkhas, but to show the deep contrast between the motivation of the nineteenth century British officials of hiring the Gurkhas and the equal and respectful position that they have received in the contemporary British society. I sincerely apologize if the use of the term hurts the sentiments of any particular group or individual.

To the elderly Gurkha soldiers and their wives.

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List of abbreviations

BoG	Brigade of Gurkhas
BNC	Basingstoke Nepalese Community
BNP	British Nationalist Party
CGJ	Campaign for Gurkha Justice
CNSUK	Centre for Nepal Studies United Kingdom
ECHR	European Commission on Human Rights
ESOL	English as a second or foreign language
GAESO	Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organization
GBA	Gurkha Brigade Association
GJC	Gurkha Justice Campaign
GPS	Gurkha Pension Scheme
GWT	Gurkha Welfare Trust
ILE	Indefinite Leave to Enter
ILR	Indefinite Leave to Remain
MP	Minister of Parliament
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PM	Prime Minister
TFBG	The Forgotten British Gurkhas
UK	United Kingdom
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency
WWI	World War One/First World War
WWII	World War Two/Second World War

Chapter 1 – Introduction

"Bainiko maya laagera runchhu herera turlukka,
London janchhu eh meri baini bairiko muluka."
"For the love of my sister, I wonder and cry,
I'm off to London, oh my sister, the place of the enemy."
– Magar 2016, 71.

There exists a complete dichotomy between migrants and soldiers where the former are in general considered disadvantageous to the host society while the former are mostly hailed for their sacrifices to the "protection" of the state and its citizens. While the soldiers deserve citizenship status for their contribution to the country, the migrants who have to earn such privilege and still considered as outsiders. The embodiment of this contradiction in one, however, as Ware (2010, 316) puts it, poses tension in citizenship-related provisions. This thesis tries to answer some of the questions raised by the evolution of once merely considered "mercenaries" into full citizens of the UK by taking the case of ex-Gurkha soldiers who originally hail from Nepal and have been "serving" the British for more than 200 years now. The thesis explores how these migrant-soldiers and their families have established their political right of equal citizenship and how there are negotiating their integration in the daily social spheres in the UK.

Britain has hosted and integrated a number of cultural groups who migrated there because of the colonial past. As there were a lot of religious and racial groups living in the UK, it was declared a multicultural state in 1966. But because of the labor migrant flow primarily from Eastern and Central Europe and after some terrorism-related cases, the British Prime Minister in 2011 declared that multiculturalism had "failed" in the country (Gilroy 2012, 385). With such change in state policies, "there has been increasing public as well as political resistance towards immigration" (Choudhary 2016, 6). The migration and citizenship literature suggests that those who conform and integrate or

assimilate with the "host" population fair better than those who do not (Vora 2013). However, when someone looks different in appearance or just the idea that they are not "native" makes it harder for them to integrate (Isin 2002).

While the Gurkhas were initially recruited into the then British-Indian Army in early nineteenth century as cheaply available but immensely war-skilled "mercenaries," they soon "proved" their "bravery" in the major wars that the Britain was involved in (Caplan 1991). Because they earned a special status of war-heroes during their involvement in the British Army, they were regarded as deserving candidates entitled to equal payment, pension, and settlement and citizenship rights as opposed to the so-called "undeserving" asylum seekers and economic migrants (Ware 2012). When the Gurkhas started raising their voices through campaigning and filing court cases in early 2000s, they got a lot of public and media attention. Because there was startling differences between the pay and pension of a Gurkha and a British or a commonwealth military of officer of the same rank, when the cases reached the High Court, it decided in favor of the Gurkhas and they were able to receive substantial equality (Kochhar-George 2010). In 2009, even the House of Commons voted in allowing them and their families to settle in the UK and apply for British citizenship if they wanted to do so (Kochhar-George 2010). In these political struggles that the Gurkhas had, their portrayal as "loyal friends" of the British assisted in generating positive popular sentiments. This thesis will attempt to highlight the discriminatory past that the Gurkhas have had and the struggles that they did to make legislative changes in their favor. Their struggle still continues through lobbying and campaigning. To understand this better, this thesis will borrow information primarily through secondary research.

Despite they have political success in getting equal rights on papers, the daily struggles of the ex-Gurkhas and their families began only when they started coming to the UK primarily since 2004

onwards (Gellner 2014). There have not been many studies to highlight their everyday realities and their social struggles, and this thesis aims to fill in that gap in literature. The thesis aims to figure out these nuances in the lives of the Gurkha family members through primary research in the UK. Towards this end, I, as a researcher, lived in the city of Reading for a month in a Gurkha neighborhood and used ethnographic tools. Additionally, I have borrowed some literature to make the claims for substantial. To further understand the political and social struggles of the Gurkha families, the thesis seeks to answer the following questions:

- How did their soldier-past help the ex-Gurkha soldiers in gaining equal citizenship rights in the UK?
- After securing equal citizenship rights in the UK for themselves and their families, how are they negotiating these rights in their everyday realities?

Coming to a new host country that is completely different from their native country Nepal, many Gurkha family members, especially the elderly, are not fully able to assimilate and integrate with the British primarily because of the language barrier (Choudhary 2016), their sense of dressing, and the difficulty in abiding by the complicated civic rules (Hollingshead 2011). While on the one hand the Gurkha families are "British" on papers, they are still "foreigners" because they look "different" and can easily be "othered." Moreover, the unplanned settlement of the Gurkha families by the government has also triggered some anger among some locals. In the town of Aldershot in 2011, for instance, it was reported that a sudden rise in the number of Gurkha families had created problems in the public services like hospitals, which triggered some controversies (Ware 2012, 260; Della-Ragione 2011; The Daily Mail 2011). Being one of the most recent group of migrants whose number is increasing gradually, the Gurkhas are still struggling to become "full" citizens of the UK (Adhikari 2012).

For the purposes of the study, the term *Gurkhas* does not just mean the soldiers who fought for the British Army, but also their families. In some special cases, phrases like "ex-Gurkhas" or "Gurkha soldiers" or "Gurkha wives," etc. are used to denote the specific group of Gurkha family members. The thesis is divided into five chapters including the Introduction and Conclusion chapters. The introduction chapter gives a general picture of the Gurkhas and discuss the research methodology at length. The second chapter aims to discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the research. The third chapter highlights the first half of the findings about the political struggles of the Gurkhas. The fourth chapter then discusses their social struggles in everyday lives.

1.1 The Gurkha soldiers

"THE GURKHA SOLDIER: Bravest of the brave, most generous of the generous, never had country more faithful friends than you."
– Sir Ralph Lilley Turner, Military Cross, 1931.

The word *Gurkha* is a British distortion of the name Gorkha, a district in western Nepal from where the process of "unification" of modern day Nepal started by annexing the nearby principalities. The word *Gorkha* in itself is derived from the Sanskrit phrase *gau rakhshak*—meaning "cow protectors" (Jacob 2015, 2). Hailing originally from various parts of Nepal, the Gurkhas are composed of specific ethnic groups belonging mainly to the mongoloid race.[1] The traditional notion of Gurkhas in the British mindset is highly stereotypical and fallacious where they consider Gurkhas to belong to one homogenous ethnic group (Kochhar-George 2010, 46; Boivin 2013). James Baillie Fraser (1820, 223), a Scottish traveler who was involved in the recruitment of the Gurkhas, described a Gurkha's appearance as: "The features and figure of the true Ghoorkha [*sic*.] are always singular and remarkable,

[1] The major race in East and Central Asia.

from his broad Chinese or Tartar-like physiognomy, the small eyes, flat nose, and meagre whiskers, as well as his stout square make and sturdy limbs." Similarly, in his August 1814 report to the British Government Captain Hyder Hearsey wrote:

> "[The Gurkha] commanders are ignorant, subtle, treacherous, faithless, and avaricious to an extreme…little or no clothing, and very ill paid…They are hard, endure privations, and are very obedient…Under our Government and officers they would make excellent soldiers and numbers would, on the event of a rupture, join our standards for the sake of six rupees per month." (Cited in Des Chene 1991, 13)

The British preferred having these "hill men" in their armies, and therefore, recruited many from specific hill districts of Nepal. Among others, there is a predominance of Gurung, Magar, Rai, Limbu, and Tamang ethnic groups in the Brigade of Gurkhas (BoG) (Kochhar-George 2010, 46). Historically, many others could not join the BoG just because they were born in a different ethnicity and region of Nepal. The British racial bias of such ethnicities and regions was so profound that the Nepali Prime Minister Bir Shamsher in 1886 "begged the [British] Indian army not to insist so exclusively on enlisting only Magars and Gurungs" (Husain 1970, 246). Gradually the term *Gurkha* evolved as a "martial race" serving particularly in the British Army.

1.2 History of recruitment into the British Army

Impressed with their war-skills primarily during the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-1816, the British started recruiting the Gurkhas in their British-Indian army since 1815 (Husain 1970). During that War, the British were able to raise four battalions of dissatisfied locals in the then Nepal-captured areas of Kumaon-Garhwal hills of contemporary north-western India. In 1815 when Nepal was at the verge of losing the War, Major-General David Octerlony signed a treaty with Kaji Amar Singh Thapa, and officially started recruiting the Gurkhas (Mojumdar 1973). The British Resident to Nepal Brian Houghton Hodgson (in office 1833-44) is known for pressing the British government for continuing recruiting the Gurkhas, also against the will and consent of the Nepal government and a brief

skepticism of the British officials in hiring soldiers from an enemy state (Husain 1970). When the British left the Indian subcontinent in 1947, four of the ten Gurkha battalions went with the British and the rest six stayed with the Indian army (Mojumdar 1973). Among others, their martial skills and loyalty were highly praised during the Indian Mutiny of 1857, Indo-Afghan War (Jacob 2015), the two World Wars, the Falklands War (Ware 2009), and more recently in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Strachan 2015). There are about 3000 serving Gurkhas in the British Army and around 200 get enrolled every year from a total of 17,000 aspirants (Ware 2012, 128). During the great wars, the number of recruits used to be as high as 200,000 (Des Chene 1991, 135). Like the British, the Indian Army and the Singapore Police also still hire Nepalis into their forces.

1.3 Gurkhas in the UK

Because of the regimental status of the Gurkhas, their presence in the UK as a diaspora is different from other groups of South Asians like the Sindhis, the Sri Lankan Tamils, or the Indians in South Africa who reached there because of labor migratory circumstances (Low 2015, 843). Before being stationed in the UK in 1997, the Gurkha troops were positioned in Hong Kong since 1948 when the British moved out of South Asia (Rai 2009). But when the British gradually withdrew from various countries of East and South-East Asia, primarily after "handing over" Hong Kong to China in 1997, they didn't see any "strategic rationale" in keeping the Gurkhas as a separate regiment (Strachan 2015). Soon, the retired Gurkhas started raising their voices seeking "returns" for their service to the British. After successful lawsuits and campaigning, that are highlighted under the section "3.4 The struggle for equality," many Gurkhas started moving with their family members into the UK as the government adopted policies to accommodate them with settlement visas and citizenship rights (ECHR 2016). The Gurkha families from Nepal, Hong Kong, Singapore, Brunei, and other parts of the world started moving to the UK (Low 2015). The number of Gurkha families in the UK has increased multifold

over the past decade or so (Adhikari 2012; ONS 2015), although the number of the Gurkhas in the British Army is going down because of the end of the "strategic rationale" of keeping them.

1.3.1 Population in the UK

There is no exact data as to how many Gurkha family members (and Nepalis) are in the UK, but researchers estimate that they constitute the majority of Nepalis there (Adhikari 2012; Gellner 2014; Pariyar et al. 2014). A Gurkha-welfare organization, the Gurkha Welfare Trust, claims that there were about 12,598 Gurkha *families* in the UK in 2015 (GWT 2016). The number of Nepalis rose significantly following the settlement rights for the Gurkha families in 2004 and 2009 (Pariyar et al. 2014, 136). While the 2001 UK census enumerated only about 6000 Nepalis in the UK (Sims 2008), the 2011 census identified nearly 60,000 of them (CNSUK 2012); and the 2015 data of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated the number of Nepal-born British residents to be around 67,000, including about 34,000 men and more than 32,000 women (ONS 2015). Of these, roughly 26,000 have the British citizenship while about 40,000 were still holding the citizenship of Nepal (ONS 2015). Pariyar et al. (2014, 136) believe that there are between 100,000 and 150,000 Nepalis in the UK and about two-thirds of them (66,000-100,000) belong to the Gurkha families.

Table 1: Statistical estimates of Nepalis in the UK

Categories	Total	Subcategories		
Overseas born	67,000	Male: ~34,000		Female: ~32,000
		British Nationals: ~26,000		Nepali Nationals: ~40,000
Non-British	47,000	Male: ~25,000		Female: ~21,000
		Born in the UK: 3000	Born in Nepal: 40,000	Born elsewhere: 4000

Source: ONS 2015

1.3.2 Existing literature on Gurkhas in the UK

As the Gurkhas are one of the newest category of migrants in the UK, they have attracted substantial scholarly attention recently. There exists an extensive amount of literature about their war-skills, martial life and legal battles, and some have examined their and their families' social side. Among them, Choudhary (2016) looks at the lives of Gurkha wives in the UK and mentions that these immigrants face troubles in integrating with the locals primarily because of language barriers, racial inequalities, and limited interactions in the public spheres, among others. The research highlights that compared to the younger Gurkha wives, the older ones are struggling to find a space in the British society. Pariyar et al. (2014, 135) gaze into the sense of belonging of the ex-Gurkhas and mention: "[I]n diaspora too ritual (whether one can freely perform it or not; how one performs it) becomes a crucial part of generating belonging (or failing to do so)." Pariyar (2016) highlights that because performing their regular rituals is a problem in the UK, the Gurkhas are not able to feel at home despite having good employment, income, education, and language proficiency. The book *Nepalis in the United Kingdom: An Overview* edited by Krishna P. Adhikari (2012) covers a number of issues related to the Nepali and Gurkhas diaspora in the UK and borrows data primarily from the 2008 survey that the Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNSUK) conducted. Boivin (2013)'s PhD dissertation is about language, literacy and identity of Nepalis in the UK where she also includes a case study of two Gurkha families and highlights that the newer generations tend to acculturate more as they are more receptive about languages and cultures and can learn faster. Low (2015) looks into the Gurkha family members, especially the Gurkha children who migrated from Singapore and Hong Kong to the UK, and portrays their transnational citizenship related dilemmas. Sims (2008)'s report dates before the settlement rights were granted to all the Gurkha family members and therefore she deals with their struggles for equality and everyday problems because of the unequal status. Uesugi (2007) deals with the Gurkhas' life strategies and employment policies.

Lee (2012) underscores the differences and discriminations faced by the Gurkhas compared to the other British Army personnel and highlights that despite all the fight they have had against the British government, the Gurkhas are still "separate and unequal." According to the author, the Gurkhas are still treated as "mercenaries" by the British government and not as citizens of the country. Lee (2012) suggests that the battle for equal identity is still a far cry for the Gurkhas. On a different note, Pariyar (2011) looks at the rifts within the Gurkha families based on different Nepali castes and ethnicities they belong to and highlights the segregation within. In his article, Gellner (2014) gives an overview about the Nepali population in the UK with an emphasis on the Gurkhas' case. He highlights the associational practices of Nepalis in general in his 2015 publication. Uesugi (2015) examines Hinduism in the Gurkha regiment. Ware (2010; 2012)'s research with the Gurkha and British soldiers of commonwealth nations and highlights a number of nuances among which she criticizes the white supremacy that the British carried not just during the colonial times but also at present. She deals mostly with the serving Gurkha soldiers living in the military camps with their families and devotes some sections of her book (2012) towards understanding the integration of Gurkha wives in and near military camps. CNSUK (2013) and Kochhar-George (2010) highlight the legal aspects attached to the Gurkha Justice Campaign (GJC) in detail and map out court cases related primarily to pension rights. The important works in understanding the making of Gurkhas as "martial races" are by Des Chene (1991) and Caplan (1991; 1995). There is a long list of authors who have written exclusively about the Gurkha soldiers and their lives of which Bellamy (2011), Bullock (2009), Carroll (2012), Coleman (1999), Gould (1999), Khanduri (1992; 1997), Kirke (2007), Leathart (1996), Limbu (2015), Rai (2009), Rathaur (2000), and Smith (1982 [1973]) are the most notable ones.

1.4 Methodology

This research is partly based on secondary research where I review literature written about the Gurkhas and their families, and partly based on ethnographic methods with the Gurkhas in the UK. For the latter, I lived with a Gurkha family in Reading (Berkshire) for a month between April and May 2017. In an estimated population of 600 Gurkha families in Reading (GWT 2016), in addition to doing participant-observation of them "performing" in their daily lives both within and outside their homes, I took unstructured interviews with the Gurkha family members too. Rather than asking them a set of questions that I had prepared, I listened to their stories of their lives in UK, Nepal, and elsewhere. In the case of the ex-Gurkha soldiers, for example, most of these stories were about wars and unequal treatment by the British. I also participated in two different programs organized to celebrate the Nepali New Year 2074 organized by the Nepali community in the UK and went to gatherings those were organized in the towns of Basingstoke and Aldershot (both in Hampshire). As the Gurkhas spoke my mother-tongue—the Nepali language—and were culturally similar to the one I was born and raised in, it was easier for me to quickly grasp their interactions. The major sites where I talked, interacted and did participant-observation with the Gurkhas were a community park, the city center, public buses, a Nepali restaurant, the town halls where the New Year celebration programs were organized, and in a welfare community established for the Gurkhas named *The Forgotten British Gurkhas* (TFBG).

In December 2016, I had done a small pilot study in Aldershot and talked to a few individuals about the feasibility of the study. The initial plan was to go back to Aldershot in April for the fieldwork. But as I could not find a host family that would accommodate me just for a month, I had to look for alternatives. A friend's friend whose father was a Gurkha and was settled in Reading then asked her parents to host me and that's the primary reason I reached there. But compared to Aldershot where there are more than 1000 Gurkha households, Reading provided me a smaller community of 600

Gurkha families where introducing myself and building rapport was easier and faster. The host family of four (as the daughter was away) also provided me with a lot of information that was important for the research. In the house I lived in, there were three bedrooms in the first floor: one for the parents, one for the son and his wife, and one for the daughter, which was then empty and I was using it for a month. On the ground floor, there was a kitchen and living space. They had their meals in the living space, mostly while watching sports on TV as the father was very much interested in sports. It was a Gurung family with a Buddhist inclination as I could tell from the way they had decorated the house with Buddhist sculptures and paintings. The son, Jeevan, 27, was a serving British Gurkha. It had been two years that he had been married to Preeti, 25, who studied and worked part time. The in-laws had given her ample space to study as it was the mother who took care of the household chores. It was only occasionally that Preeti, Jeevan or the father were seen in the kitchen. The mother, Meena, 48, was a housewife and was a practicing Buddhist. Although there was another Gurkha family one house apart and several in the neighborhood, she was home all day and mostly spent the days doing household chores, talking in the phone with relatives back in Nepal and in the UK, and watching Indian serials on TV. She cooked both the meals. The father, Ram, 54, was an ex-British Gurkha, who retired in Hong Kong in 1995 and came to the UK in 2005, and was then working as a security guard and serving in a 12-hours-a-day shift from six to six. He had off-days during the weekends and mostly spent these hours watching sports on TV or doing some minor household chores. The daughter, Deepa, 23, was studying at a university in the UK itself and did not stay with the family.

Although I had started talking to my host family at dinner after I reached Reading in the evening, I officially started my "fieldwork" one day later. The son (Jeevan) and daughter-in-law (Preeti) drove me to Palmer Park where I saw a number of elderly Gurkhas doing their "morning walk." I started going to the Park every morning and introduced myself to some of the elderlies and explained them

about the research. As the women were always accompanied by their husbands, I used to approach them first greeting "*Namasté*." Some days, I just sat on park benches and observed them while some of them approached me to ask about my progress with the research, as I was a familiar face to them by then. As the number of those who came here was limited, I was a familiar face to them very quickly. During the daytime, I sometimes went to *The Forgotten British Gurkhas* (TFBG) recreation center and talk to the elderlies sometimes or just stay with them in the hall watching TV. While most of the elderly women would be at the hall watching TV, the men would stay in the large meeting room and talked about a number of issues, particularly about home and politics in Nepal. As there was a reception at the TFBG, it was easier for me to introduce about myself and about the research there. Finding me interested to hear about the war stories and all other kind of things they wanted to talk about, most of the ex-Gurkhas gave me a warm welcome whenever I approached them.

Given the nature of the research and the methods I chose to adopt, one month is a particularly small time, and limited time duration is one of the key challenges I faced. However, the ethnographic methods helped reveal a number of interesting issues as the research looked at the day-to-day performances of the Gurkhas. In addition to doing participant observation, as what Schatz (2009, 5) terms "immersion," I aimed "to glean the meaning that the people under study attribute to their social and political reality." Using multiple tools of inquiry and not just in a formal setting where there is a hierarchy or distinction between the researcher and the researched, I took active part in the conversations even if they were remotely connected to my thesis, helped set stage for the social gatherings, went shopping with the host family, or sometimes became just a guest at Gurkha and non-Gurkha households when I went there for lunches or dinners. Most of the individuals I talked to were somewhat acquainted with survey research or structured interviews as one PhD fellow had visited

them few days back in the course of his research and "filled forms." When I approached them without any of those, some of them gave me a very skeptical look.

The "insider-outsider" dichotomy was much blurred in my case because I wasn't from the mongoloid race that most of the Gurkhas belonged to; however, I was from the same country and even the same region of Nepal that they mostly hailed from, spoke the Nepali language, and understood many of their cultures. Sometimes they would get confused with me to be an Indian or a Pakistani and sometimes I mistook them with some East Asians.

In addition to these, I talked to three individuals of Nepali origin who have long worked with the Gurkhas. Two of them were researchers who did their PhD from the UK, and one was a local teacher who moved to the UK in 2005. I was also a participant in a discussion that was held with a local MP of Reading to discuss issues concerning Nepalis in the UK. Additionally, I also talked to a graduate from a UK university, who wrote her thesis on the Gurkha wives, and discussed with her particularly about the gendered mobility and integration.

A month long political ethnography is very short for building a strong relationship with the community, knowing their internal dynamics, and coming up with a good analysis based on such fieldwork. To substantiate my arguments and to fill the gap, I also borrow a number of studies that were conducted with the Gurkhas in the UK: Ware (2012), Choudhary (2016), Adhikari (2012), Des Chene (1991), Gellner (2014), Pariyar (2016) and Pariyar et al. (2014), Campbell (2014), Low (2015), and Boivin (2013).

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Discussion

This chapter aims to highlight some of the key theoretical understandings regarding migration and citizenship, the migrant-soldier dichotomy, multiculturalism, visibility, and performance citizenship. The sections in this chapter are presented so as to narrate the case towards making the findings chapter theoretically sound.

2.1 Migration and citizenship

The idea of citizenship raises questions about inclusiveness and exclusiveness and belonging and alienation, particularly in relation to minority and migration rights. It is inclusive to those that a community considers members, granting them basic rights accordingly, and exclusive to those considered outsiders, thus denying or limiting such rights (Brubaker 1992, 21). With this, citizenship is an important issue in every nation-state and to every individual in the modern world, and laws concerning it are of great importance to both territories and individuals. Given the rise of migrant numbers in the recent years, the issue of citizenship has been subjected to greater questions. Highlighting the relationship between migration and citizenship, Faist and Kivisto (2014, 22) write: "Migration is an especially salient theme in citizenship, as cross-border mobility raises questions about inclusion and exclusion in terms of citizenship and the overall meaning of partial and full membership in political communities." They (2014, 27) further ask how integration into a society leads into accessing full rights:

> "Should immigrants show some proof that they have become incorporated socially or culturally before being allowed to naturalise and thus have access to full rights? Or does full citizenship instead represent a beginning of the integration process, a sort of necessary prerequisite for full incorporation?"

While citizenship ensures the membership to a particular nation-state, growing migration numbers means that such membership is contested and made heterogeneous and blurred. This is largely because

ensuring citizenship rights is also ensuring property and political rights within the nation-state, and not every nation-state easily grants those rights to the migrants. The idea of citizenship comes in close connection with the idea of nation and state, and is both a contested and a normative concept (Walzer 1989). Building more on this contestation, Tilly (1995, 6) suggests that "[S]cholars have come to think of citizenship as a set of mutual, contested claims between agents of states and members of socially-constructed categories: genders, races, nationalities and others." These disputed claims concern a number of factors, among which is the idea of belongingness and membership to a particular state or constituency. Questioning more on who qualifies and who doesn't as citizens, Isin (2017 [forthcoming], 5) writes:

> "[T]he particular characteristics of a narrow social group, such as being perceived as propertied, adult, male, rational, white, Christian, heterosexual, and able-bodied became the dominant universal characteristics in the modern state. These characteristics created various other subaltern social groups as subjects without rights: the poor, young, women, irrational, black, non-Christian (Muslim, Indigenous, Jewish), ethnic minorities, queers (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex), and disabled people were deemed not capable of fulfilling the duties of citizenship and hence acting as citizens" (Isin 2017 [forthcoming], 4).

Although some migrants might acquire legal citizenship, they are still looked as someone who is not a full citizen because they look different or they do not perform in the same way as the natives. Often even those "strangers" who are already citizens on papers "are still considered strangers in the sense that they have not yet fulfilled requirements to act as citizens" (Isin 2017 [forthcoming], 4, emphasis by the author).

2.2 Migrant-soldier dichotomy

There exists a complete dichotomy between the embodiment of a migrant and a soldier. While migrants are considered "alien" and some migrant groups as threats to the host society, soldiers are regarded as national heroes. However, these two completely different expressions become paradoxical when the same individual possesses both the characteristics. Interestingly, as Ware (2010, 316) puts it:

> "The combination of these polar identities in the body of the soldier who is also, and at the same time, a migrant exposes the tension between the underlying principles of citizenship: on the one hand, a right that is deserved and, on the other, a privilege yet to be earned. Exploring the conditions in which the migrant-soldier is employed is likely to provide rich insights into the conflicts and contradictions at the heart of citizenship studies."

Similarly, participatory citizenship is one of the key features that emphasizes on the fulfilling of duties by the citizens to support and protect the nation. The wartime contribution of the African American immigrants in the US was built predominantly based on the sacrifices they made in the battles for the protection of the American state (Krebs 2009). Krebs (2004) argues that when different cultural groups come together to share a common goal, like during in the battlefield, helps in making a nation. (See also, the section "3.5 Gurkhas as 'deserving' migrants").

2.3 Multiculturalism

In his seminal work *Multicultural Citizenship*, Will Kymlicka (1995) explains that not just do most immigrants want to integrate and participate in multicultural societies, but they are also not expected to assimilate and inculcate the majority culture. Rather, they are encouraged to maintain their ethnic and cultural ethos. The host society's policies and its citizens' attitudes towards the multicultural groups also determines such integration and participation. And "only when that process is recognized to be distinct for each group; when it is realized that it is a matter of 'pluralistic integration', the distinctiveness of different cultures forbidding any single integrative template" does "true" multiculturalism emerge (Modood, cited in Brighton 2007, 5). Mere legal recognition of "equal" citizenship does not help immigrants integrate unless there is an "enabling condition" towards such integration (Sassen 2002, 6). In such enabling conditions even the most neutral subjects such as "housewives" or "elderly" may emerge as influential political agents (Sassen 2002, 6).

The attacks of 9/11 have created fears of migrants, particularly Muslims, and has increased the rate of racial profiling (Baker and Shryock 2009, 13). In the case of UK, this exacerbated after the 2001 riots, the 2005 London bombings (Brighton 2007), and 2011 riots (Gilroy 2012). While the Home Secretary Roy Jenkins in 1966 declared that the UK had multiculturalist model of integration rather than an assimilationist one (Brighton 2007, 5), in 2011, a turn in such policies came with Prime Minister David Cameron's deposition that multiculturalism was "failed" in the UK (Gilroy 2012, 385). This marked a shift in policies where the immigrants had to comply by the British norms, not be guided by their cultural values, and learn the English language. Gilroy (2012) criticizes Cameron's speech for placing all blames for Britain's social segregation on state multiculturalism. He further writes:

> "It is these values rather than access to formal citizenship that are fundamental. People who do not practice them actively have no place in our integrated and integral national community" (Gilroy 2012, 388).

2.4 Visibility

Societies use indicators like place of birth, descent, class, ethnicity, race, gender, and religion, among others, to grant or deny full membership (Baker and Shryock 2009, 9). Because of the differential cultures, races, languages and geography, immigrants are most likely to stand out in the host society, are the most visible ones, and therefore are liable to marginalization and racism (Mata 2002, 192). In a research done in Canada, Weerasinghe (2012) found out that differential treatments were given to immigrants because of four personal features: excess body weight, thick non-English accent, lack of English literacy, and skin complexion. These factors also led into racism, lack of respect, and verbal ill-treatment, among others. In addition to the four personal features, mostly in multicultural societies, some immigrants wearing traditional and/or religious wardrobe also were more visible and therefore vulnerable (Weerasinghe 2012). Apart from the aforementioned features of visibility, there could be various group-based visibilities too. One of those is through the organization of social events. Pariyar et al. (2014, 143) mention that in multicultural and diverse societies where there are "widespread

diversity of personal preferences and caste/ethnic traditions," making the presence felt might not always be a good idea and instead using "the most neutral and banal symbolism that could offend no one" would be the safest option to avoid being visible.

2.5 Performance citizenship

As opposed to being visible and vulnerable, the struggles for similarities and differences by performing and celebrating multiculturalism makes citizenship a further unstable entity and helps the minorities negotiate their admission into the host society. Isin (2017 [forthcoming], 2) highlights that citizenship constitutes of rights and "because who can exercise and claim these rights is itself contestable, citizenship is practiced not only by exercising these rights but also by claiming them." Performative citizenship, towards this end, contributes in "creative and transformative possibilities" (Isin 2017 [forthcoming], 2] and helps broadening the meaning of citizenship, especially for those who are not easily granted citizenship rights—migrants and minorities. Isin (2017 [forthcoming], 2) uses the concept of "performative citizenship," which involves:

> "(a)…political and social struggles over who may and may not act as a subject of rights; (b) these struggles feature not only citizens but also non-citizens as relational actors; (c) citizens and non-citizens include different social groups making rights claims; (d) people enact citizenship by exercising, claiming, and performing rights and duties, and; (e) when people enact citizenship they creatively transform its meanings and functions."

Chapter 3 – Politics of Recruitment and Integration

"We fight for the UK, and feel proud…We made our choice. Even though we were not born in this country, we made a choice for Britain. [I have] no regret for fight for other country."
– A Gurkha soldier quoted in Ware 2012, 239.

One of the first persons I met in Reading was Purna Gurung (name changed), 72, ex-Gurkha and PhD, one of the most prominent figures in the Gurkha struggle for equal rights in the UK. While I was waiting for him to come in central Reading in front of *Marks & Spencer*, I could see people of diverse ethnicities from various parts of the world walking past me reflecting a rich multicultural flavor. Among them, the most visible were some *hijabi* women and the elderly ex-Gurkha soldiers and their wives because of their traditional and religious attires. When Purna arrived, he came wearing a traditional Nepali cap (*topi*) on top of his western clothes. He was accompanied by his wife, who was also dressed in western clothes, but had gold jewelries on her ears and nose that stood her out. Purna wanted to sit in a coffee shop and talk, and led the way towards a nearby café while his wife and I followed him from about three meters behind.

About the question related to the Gurkhas and citizenship, Purna sounded very skeptical and said, "They are not concerned about living it the way the British do. Their gain is like a 'windfall gain.' They got in somehow, and came here without a preparation![2] All of them are here for money. They learnt that they will get house, allowances and welfare services here, and their children (above 30 years of age) just sent them away to this foreign country. The council drops allowances in their houses in a weekly or bi-weekly basis, and they remit the savings back to Nepal to their children." Purna rather stressed more about the rights of the Gurkhas, their struggles, the way they were discriminated for ages, the reason why Nepal government was so helpless and was still sending their youths to fight for

[2] "*Kaso kaso paayo, hawaamaa aayo*."

foreigners. He reiterated, "There is nothing about citizenship here. They are not here for citizenship rights. The elderly Gurkhas are uneducated. They can't go to the council or do the grocery alone. They are not concerned about benefits of getting the 'red passport' [the British passport]. Just by sitting here, they earn more money than what their sons earn after working hard in the 'Arab.' Everything you see is for economic reasons."

Two days after meeting Purna, I went to a social gathering at *The Forgotten British Gurkhas* (TFBG), an organization that works for Gurkha welfare and resettlement. While sipping a cup of coffee that Min Bahadur Gurung (name changed), 69, ex-Gurkha, offered me, I was listening to Min and two of his friends who were talking amongst themselves about the Gurkha retirees prior to 1997 who still were fighting for equal pension rights. One of them said that rather than having all the Gurkhas come into the UK and providing them with allowances and other welfare benefits, it would have been economical for the British government to provide them with equal pension in Nepal itself. "No one would have come here and it would have been easier for them (British) too," he said. The other interfered: "But their idea is to make sure that we spend almost all the money here itself and nothing goes away from their country." The third one added to this saying, "They also want cheap labor force to work for them. They knew that the Gurkhas and their families would come here and work for very little money. Now with the Brexit, that plan seems more successful as no other person from the EU can come here that easily." My landlord in Reading, Ram Gurung (name changed) also had told me a few days earlier: "Give them equal pension rights, all of them will go back to Nepal immediately. Why would they want to stay here?" While the popular narrative suggests that migration as soldiers previously and as rightful citizens or permanent settlers now is for economic causes, I wanted to dig more into this.

In an attempt to do so, this and the next chapters give an elaboration of the findings that I made during the one month in Reading and a review of the literature. In this section, I highlight the politics behind Gurkha recruitment and the political struggles for integration in the UK. Here, I will highlight how the recruitment was part of the British imperialist policies and how Nepal (and the Gurkhas themselves) had no other viable option than to "export" its men to the foreign army. I will also highlight how the Gurkhas were discriminated in payment and welfare provisions by the British and finally elaborate on how they successfully launched their struggle for political equality. At the end of this section, I will write about some inter-organizational and inter-ethnic rifts between and within the Gurkhas and other Nepalis in the UK.

3.1 The British fantasy of "brave warrior races"

The military leaders during the nineteenth century believed that "mercenaries" performed better during wars compared to the natives (Avant 2000, 45-6). Relating this fantasy with imperialism, Ware (2012, 283) writes: "Throughout the history of slavery and imperialism to the present day, Britain's military recruiters have been guided by all manner of contingencies in their unceasing quest to fill their global armies." Among a very few countries in the world that still hires foreigners as soldiers, Britain has continued to recruit the Gurkhas and interested individuals from the commonwealth countries. The British were engrossed by the idea of military orientalism and had the "fetish" of assimilating various martial races into their armies (Porter 2009). Considering this as "martial racism," Ware (2012, 283) criticizes the British belief of some men being racially more martial than others and the continuation of the colonial mindset of building a culturally diverse army.

Based on his review of literature on the Gurkha soldiers, Caplan (1991; 1995) categorizes three key characteristics in the texts representing them as: martial, brave, and loyal. Because of such portrayal,

"they are held in deep affection and high esteem in Britain" (Strachan 2001, 110, cited in Ware 2012, 25). Their fighting skills was then complimented by their aptitudes and affinities and was garnered by the tag of "bravery" attached to them (Ware 2012, 128). The narrative was thus built that "the cool and bracing climate of the Nepalese hills produces a robust and sturdy character, physically as well as morally superior to any of the Hindus of the plains, which breeds a 'hopeless slave mentality'" (Forbes 1964, 54, cited in Caplan 1991, 582). The Gurkhas were also considered "hardy, stoical, self-disciplined but cheerful" (Edwards 1979, 222, cited in Caplan 1991, 582). With these, the Gurkhas were portrayed as significant organs in the victories that the British have had. The 13 Victoria Crosses that the Gurkhas have received since the WWI is one such measure of their bravery. However, Caplan (1991, 586) believes that with this and similar indoctrination of bravery, even the Gurkhas are "made to appear larger than life." Similar conviction is indoctrinated in the Gurkhas too. Ram Gurung (name changed), 54, my landlord at Reading and an ex-Gurkha, repeatedly mentioned that the Gurkhas, unlike other migrants, are living in the UK because they have earned it and the British trust them the most. Unhappy with this mindset, Manohari Adhikari (name changed), a non-Gurkha teacher in the UK, criticized: "They [the Gurkhas] do not count others [Nepalis] as humans."[3]

In describing the British fantasy of martial races, Cynthia Enloe (1980, 26 cited in Des Chene 1991, 67) uses the phrase "Gurkha syndrome" which involves fostering the ethnic identity to make the military service a key feature of such identity, and creating a dependent relationship between the "martial races" and the army. Des Chene talks about the British "turning" the Gurkhas into loyal "servants" and writes: "Since they were not considered to be very intelligent or to have a complex mental life, the British believed they had grasped 'Gurkha psychology' and could therefore turn them into devoted and willing servants of the Raj" (Des Chene 1991, 84-5).

[3] *"Ooniharu le arulai ta manchhe gandainan*."

3.2 Rationale of Gurkha recruitment

"[T]hose who die in battle are still represented as proudly serving Queen and Country, despite plenty of evidence to show that this might not be why they joined up."
– Ware 2009, 61.

There is a variety of literature that can be found in justifying the cause of Gurkha recruitment. In general, there can be seen a kind of synergy between British need, love and gratitude for the Gurkhas and the Gurkhas' need for security and money. From the side of the British, it is popularly understood that they were impressed with the war skills of the Nepalis and started hiring them during the 1814-16 Anglo-Nepal War (Mojumdar 1973). Even in the House of Commons, regular debates were held in retaining the Gurkhas and to make use of their military skills in the lowest positions not very famous among the British youths (Ware 2012, 47). There also is another historical school of thought that argues that for the British-India, draining these youth men was a strategic move to make Nepal weaker and peaceful (Mojumdar 1973, 160). Caplan (1991, 581) asserts that this was one of the key reasons Nepal was skeptical about the recruitment for a very long time even after it signed the treaty agreeing to such recruitment, but later "traded" the Gurkhas for wealth and political autonomy and to loosen the grip of direct colonialism. At one point in the WWI the British Army was badly ill-equipped and was running out of men who fought for them in the trenches in northern France and Belgium and as a result extracted soldiers including the Gurkhas from the British-Indian force (Ware 2012, 9-10). The necessity was so dire that one of their officials, Sir Arthur Hirtzel, Under-Secretary of State for India's 1922 statement wrote to the British Government that "it is after all, mainly because of the Gurkha element in the army that we value the friendship of Nepal" (Husain 1970, 205). Soon, in 1923, Nepal and Britain signed a "friendship" treaty where the latter officially recognized the former's sovereignty.

Because of the historical notion attached with the recruitment of the Gurkhas and the "pseudo-colonial" feature of the Nepali state with the British India, the Gurkhas exhibit "the surviving embodiment" (Ware 2012, 25) of both the "mercenaries" and colonial soldiers. The aspiring Gurkha recruits did not have much options and joining the British Army would mean better income for the family and social security after retirement. Des Chene (1991, 10) believes that originally for the Gurkhas, it was trading their labor for wages, commodities and knowledge and working in foreign lands. "These young men, and countless others, had decided to join the British Army in the hope of a better life for themselves and their families," Ware (2012, 26) continues, "[b]ut as migrants they would be caught up in another dimension of war where battles over belonging, citizenship and national identity were being fought on more familiar terrain."

3.3 Decades of discrimination

> *"The enemy's bullet doesn't say if it is a Gorā* [the white] *or a Gurkha. If the Gurkha had thick skin and the bullet would not get inside their body, then treating them differently would have made sense. But we fought for them for peanuts."*
> – Shyam Gurung, 70, ex-British Gurkha.

A six-feet tall Shyam Gurung (name changed), 70, had a lot to say about his life as a military soldier and now as an elderly migrant in the UK. I met him right outside Palmer Park where he was going for his "morning walk." Walking with a crutch, Shyam was somewhat limping and told me that he had a bad knee from the time he was a stationed in Malaysia in the late 1960s. Throughout my talk with him, one thing that he reiterated the most was: "they have given us a lot of trouble (*yiniharu le hamilai dinu dukkha diyeko chha*)," and told me how Gurkhas were given less wages and are discriminated against in the pension scheme. Like many other individuals I talked to, Shyam stressed that had Nepal's political and economic climate been better none of the Gurkhas had to come to the UK. "No one likes to live in this cold place. There is no sun and it is cold throughout the year," Shyam shuddered. A lot of

Nepalis had to migrate because of the poor economic conditions back home and an aspiration to earn, albeit just the allowances in the case of the elderly, made them come to the UK.

Further, every time I asked about the *dukkha* (sorrow) they faced as Gurkhas in the UK, Shyam would go back to the pay and pension related differences that they had in comparison to other British soldiers and would say: "We fought them for peanuts." When the British were withdrawing from India in 1947, the Indian administration feared that an increased pay as per the British standards would attract more Gurkhas towards the British Army, India insisted the British to keep pay and pensions for the Gurkhas as per the "Indian standards" (Des Chene 1991, 195). The rates were reviewed in 1955, 1981, and 1996 and in 1999, the pension rates increased by 100 percent but was still substantially lower than their British counterparts (CNSUK 2013). CNSUK (2013) reports that in 1989, a Gurkha Warrant Officer Class One received nearly £500 annual pension while his British counterpart received more than £5200. The same for a Gurkha Captain was about £600 while his British counterpart received more than £6300. In 2013, the British and Commonwealth Pensioners received annual pension more than three times higher than Gurkha officers who received £4000 annually (CNSUK 2013, 28). This is still the case for the Gurkhas who retired before 1997. The ones who retired or got enrolled after 1997 have equal terms and conditions after the successful campaign for equal rights.

The British imperialistic and white supremacist stereotypes have treated all their colonial subjects in subordination. Lord Roberts, Commander-Chief of the Madras Army, as quoted in Mason (1974, 347) mentions: "Native officers can never take the place of British officers…Eastern races, however brave and accustomed to war, do not possess the qualities that go to make good leaders of men." The Gurkhas too were discriminated on a variety of grounds, including an alleged "lack of communication and reasoning skills" (Boivin 2013, 98) and were considered unintelligent as compared to their British

counterparts (Boivin 2013, 27; Des Chene 1991, 84-5). Furthermore, the discrimination "on issues such as pay, pensions, mobility within the chain of command and restrictions on their settlement rights to persist well into the twenty-first century" (Kochhar-George 2010, 44) until the Gurkhas started the "Gurkha Justice Campaign" and filing and subsequently winning the court cases.

Moreover, there was an institutional will in the British Army to make sure that the Gurkhas remained "pure" in their cultural ethos and martial skills. They tried their best not to make the Brigade of Gurkhas "contaminated" and for this separated them from other group of soldiers, including those who were enrolled from the commonwealth countries (Ware 2012, 121-5). Ware (2012, 215) further writes in this regard: "The statement that the British Army did not want the Gurkhas to become 'brown Brits' was a reflection of the fact that they were valued precisely for the ethnic traits that distinguished them from their UK counterparts." Even the Gurkha trainings were done, until 2010, only in the Nepali language (Ware 2012; Jacob 2015). Additionally, regarding the harsh training period, Ware (2012, 125) cites a new Gurkha recruit:

> "Sometimes I even felt that I made a great mistake by joining the army. We didn't get any respect. The Gurujis [Gurkha instructors] were very furious and I felt that we were animal and not human. I found myself very lonely."

While this could be the case in any other professional army, Boivin (2013, 99) asserts that because of the cultural factors, the cases of institutionalized racism and structural inequality from the British Army against the Gurkhas never emerged into the surface until the late twentieth century, when the Gurkhas started raising their voices against historical injustices and unequal pension and welfare services. In the case of the Gurkhas, the colonial construction of "martiality, bravery and loyalty" (Caplan 1991) has been so profound racial stereotype even to this day that it continues "to occupy the subtext of decisions of the courts and government in their law and policy making" (Kochhar-George 2010, 45).

3.4 The struggle for equality

"Bravest of the brave reward: poorest of the poor."
– Slogan at the GJC.

With an active support of renowned British actress, model, activist Joanna Lumley, the Gurkha Justice Campaign (GJC) did not just bring into the limelight the decades of discrimination that the Gurkhas were subjected to, but also to a very large extent successfully fought for the Gurkhas' cause of equal payment, pension, welfare and settlement rights. A detailed analysis of the court rulings in Kochhar-George (2010) suggests the High Court the case *Limbu & Others versus Secretary of State for the Home Department & Others* granted settlement rights to the Gurkhas and paved the path towards equal citizenship citing that not giving them such rights was "irrational" (p. 44). Further, the litigations and campaigns under Lumley's "charismatic leadership" was backed by a unanimous public support. The Gurkhas' cause brought leaders David Cameron and Nick Clegg together for the first time while voting in the parliament to give them settlement rights in 2009 (Campbell 2014, 12). The public support that the Gurkhas received, not just from the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives but also from far-right British Nationalist Party (BNP), media, and the general public seems to be guided by the fact of "repaying" them for the "sacrifices" they made for the UK (Ware 2009, 59). This way, the same British fascination with the martial races and their "larger than life" portrayal of the Gurkhas and the consequent loss of many Gurkha lives while proving their bravery in the battlefield seems to have assisted their movement for equality.

After more than two hundred years of association with the British, the Gurkhas are only beginning to be recognized for their services even as their numbers in the Army continue to decline. CNSUK (2013) report highlights that in 2002, the Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organization (GAESO) won a case in the court and got £10,000 per person for *Prisoners of War* from the Japan Government. In 2004, all

the Gurkhas who retired after 1997 were given the right to settle in the UK, and in 2009, any Gurkha with minimum four years of service in between 1948-97 were also given the right to settle in the UK. All the serving and new recruits started getting equal pay and welfare since 2007 and the segregation of the Gurkha Brigade was discontinued in 2010. Along with the ex-Gurkhas, their dependent families including children under 30 years of age are allowed to come to the UK with an *Indefinite Leave to Enter* and then get an *Indefinite Leave to Remain* can apply for the British passport after fulfilling the necessary criteria (CNSUK 2013; Kochhar-George 2010). Since 2007, the serving Gurkhas started getting equal pay, pension and welfare services to their British counterparts.

As of now, they have got most of their demands met, but there are still significant improvements to be made for the pension provisions of those who retired before 1997 and in their living conditions. Similarly, there are demands related to welfare and integration in the UK that are yet to be met (CNSUK 2013, 13). The European Court on 15 September 2016 rejected such demands (ECHR 2016). A number of organizations, most prominently Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Association (GAESO), have been lobbying with the UK government to have these demands met. Until very recently, the Gurkhas were migrating wherever the British government and the Army wanted them to go. However, the Gurkha Justice Campaign (GJC) has challenged the one-directional "master-servant" relationship, and the Gurkhas have "rightfully" won their demands to settle in the UK and are in the process of receiving all equal welfare and benefits that their counterparts received.

3.5 Gurkhas as "deserving" migrants

The popular narrative among the ex-Gurkha soldiers is that they have "rightfully" earned equal status in the UK. This narrative is used particularly in relation to other economic migrants and asylum seekers. My landlord at Reading, Ram Gurung (name changed), 54, stressed: "We have fought for

them, and we are not hiding here (*Hami yiniharuko lagi ladeko ho, aru jasto lukera, darayera, bhagera aayeko hoina*)." Similarly, Krishna Rai (name changed), 56, ex-Gurkha, highlighted that many Eastern Europeans have flooded the UK and the "Brexit" was one of the ways to control such flow of migrants. According to him: "They are here to offer cheap labor and the British do not like them."

In contrast to the "wrong claimants" who were viewed as "scroungers" (Adhikari and Gellner 2012, 159), the Gurkhas were considered individuals willing to die for their country and also because of their connection with the Army or because of their bonding during the wars in various parts of the world (Campbell 2014, 212). The Gurkhas were "the very foreigner that we the British Public want to invite and embrace an allow into our country rather than the illegals and criminals who have not paid a penny, don't want to lift a finger and only want to exploit our easy going benefit system" (Gaunt 2008, 105, cited in Adhikari and Gellner 2012, 159). Furthermore, reflecting on the current migrant crisis and the representation of the Gurkhas in a subtle racist remarks by British Nationalist Party (BNP) officials, Ware (2012, 19) elaborates this soldier-migrant dichotomy with the public construction of migrants as "good" and "bad" ones:

> "The BNP, for example, caught between the logic of loyalty to soldiers and an agenda that favours only citizens of 'ancestral stock', dodged the contradiction by announcing: 'We would actually be happy to have the Gurkhas if we can swap them, for instance, for the very significant number from the Muslim population in this country who identify with al Qaida and who are not loyal to this country'."

After the successful campaigning for justice, the "conventional wisdom" of treating Gurkhas as mere "mercenaries" has "transformed" into taking them as citizens of the UK (Laksamba 2012, 103). The narrative thus grew that the Gurkhas "had earned their claims to citizenship rights, if not their entitlement to retire in dignity, in the country for which they had risked their lives" (Ware 2009, 59). Unlike the narratives of portraying some migrants and refugees, the Gurkhas were represented in the media as elderly men in wheelchairs and thereby in no way appeared to be as a threat to the society

(Campbell 2014). Former British PM David Cameron was quoted by Kochhar-George (2010, 49, emphasis by the author) saying: "I think everyone would like to say congratulations to Joanna Lumley for the incredible campaign that *she* has fought with all these brave Gurkhas some of them very old and very infirm coming to Parliament again and again." The Gurkhas were therefore successfully *reincarnated* as the new deserving citizens of the UK and because of the martial legacies were held much higher than any other group of migrants seeking work or refuge in the UK.

3.6 Nepali associations

"If two Nepalis find each other [in another country], there will be three organisations."
– Murari Raj Sharma, Nepali Ambassador to the UK, quoted in Campbell 2014, 224.

Shyam (the ex-Gurkha on a crutch whose name has been changed here) highlighted that the Gurkhas were divided a lot in a number of various organizations and that is one of the reason they were not able to bargain together with the British. "There are a number of different organizations and when they go individually to the British with different demands and argue based on conflicting provisions, the British get confused on what our demands are," he told me. There have been recent initiatives where the Gurkhas are finally coming together and arguing for their common benefits. He talked about a lot of politics that was within the Gurkhas and how there were involved in a number of different organizations and "societies." A person who generally came to Palmer Park, because of their internal rivalry with the organizers, would not go to *The Forgotten British Gurkha* programs that aim to do volunteering services centered around "housing, benefits, and form-filling" and also offer "meeting lounge" and "English classes" to the Gurkha servicemen and their families.

Gellner (2014) also notes that organizations established along the lines of ethnicity, religion, enrollment in the Army, home (village, district, region) in Nepal, home (town, county) in the UK, among others, have mushroomed throughout the UK. And these are highly exclusive to membership too: "Nepali community groups with a closed membership base are exclusionary by virtue of their caste/ethnicity, occupation, region, etc. These kinds of groups exist in good numbers" (Adhikari 2012, 137). CNSUK's 2011 directory of Nepali organizations in the UK enumerated a total of 303 organizations, 64 (21.1 percent) Gurkha-related, 54 (17.8 percent) ethnic, 52 (17.2 percent) related to various regions of Nepal, 45 (14.9 percent) related to various areas in the UK, and four (1.3 percent) women related, among others (Adhikari 2012, 129). These organizations try to symbolize *Nepaliness* and weave all the Nepalis together through various cultural and social events (Adhikari 2012, 136). Despite this, there are various kinds of rifts in these Nepali/Gurkha groups and that has highly divided their association and integration. Based on his fieldwork with the Nepali community in Manchester, Campbell (2014, 213) notes there is a *Bahun-Chhetri-Newar* (the most well-to-do ethnicities in Nepal) predominance in these organizations (except in the Gurkha related or exclusively ethnic organizations) and their representation of Nepal is biased by their own culture and is not representative of diversity. Because of the heterogeneous nature of many of these groups, the horizontal coordination between them is lacking, and therefore is counterproductive to the greater Gurkha/Nepali unity.

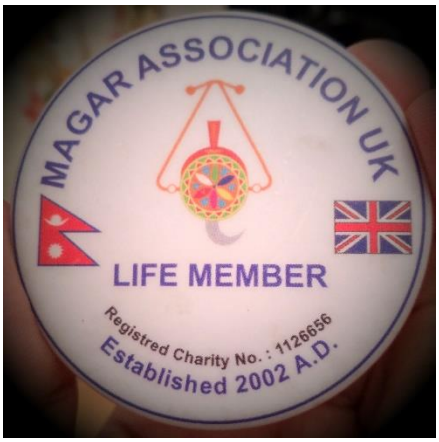

Figure 1: A lifetime membership batch of a Nepali ethnic association in the UK

3.7 Inter-ethnic rifts between Gurkhas and non-Gurkhas

As I belong to a non-mongoloid *Bahun* (Brahmin) ethnicity, Shyam (name changed) mentioned that the mostly mongoloid Gurkhas might not open up with me just because I look different than them.

He was critical of such people and said, "Upfront they would say '*babu* (son) this and *babu* that'. But as soon as you leave, they would say 'that Bahun is of no use'." While Shyam was explaining this to me, I could see a sharp ethnic divide not just within the Gurkhas, but also between the Gurkhas and non-Gurkhas. Showing similar contrast, my local landlord at Reading, Ram (name changed), believed that the non-Gurkhas should go back to Nepal and contribute from for the country's development. Arguing from the other side to this narrative, when I was visiting his home, Manohari (name changed), 52, a non-Gurkha non-mongoloid Nepali teacher, mentioned: "Gurkhas do not consider other Nepalis as humans." Also, hinting at the numerous organizations that claim to be working for Gurkha welfare, he remarked that the Gurkhas just run with any promising them to provide any benefits: "They are like sheep!"[4] On the part of the Gurkhas, their narrative is based on the popular discourse created in favor of Gurkha equality. Conversely, the non-Gurkhas do not have any such points to bargain and their creation of narrative is out of that void. In an exclusive meeting of the non-Gurkhas with the Conservative MP of East Reading, Rob Wilson, not even a single question concerning the Gurkhas was raised.

[4] "*Bheda ta bhedai hunn ni!*"

Chapter 4 – Everyday Struggles for Integration

"Angreji bolna aaudaina
Tesaile dukkha payeko chhu,
Bankbata paisa nikalna
Saathisangi lai layeko chhu."
"As I can't speak English
I face problems,
To withdraw money from bank,
I ask my friends."
– Aale 2016, 54.

This section demonstrates the constant negotiations and renegotiations that the Gurkhas make in their everyday social struggles while trying to integrate in the British society. The first part gives a broader picture of four different groups of Gurkhas in the UK. The second section onwards, it deals with the language and performance related struggles along gender and intergenerational lines.

4.1 Four categories of Gurkha family members

Based on a number of interactions I had with various groups of Gurkha family members I could see four broad age-groups living in the UK. But there surely will be exceptions to these.

The first generation was of the elderly Gurkhas generally more than 65-year-old who have crossed the retirement age, were no longer employed, and received government allowances. Many were living with their extended families, while some elderly couples were living on their own. A few in this group had already lost their spouse because of old age/disease and were living with their children. Their English proficiency was very low, for the elderly ex-Gurkha soldiers, and next to zilch, for their wives. However, I saw these women saying "thank you!" with a big smile to the bus drivers while getting off the public buses, and asking "how much?" to the street vendors selling vegetables near the St. Mary's Mall in Reading. Although they were struggling, they were learning "the British way" of doing things. There were some good exceptions, like Shyam (name changed), 70, who had remarkably good

command over English. He was working as a volunteer helping his Gurkha friends in accessing public services (more in the next Section "Negotiations of language").

The second generation was slightly younger than the first one and were mostly working, like Ramesh (name changed), my host for two days when I visited Basingstoke for a gathering of Nepalis. Ramesh, 53, ex-Gurkha, retired and settled in the UK in 2005 and received his British citizenship in 2010. The members in this generation were broadly between 35 and 65 years of age. Although retired from the British Army, these men had not crossed the retirement age and were working in a number of areas. Ramesh, as a British citizen, was working at the council. Ram (name changed), 54, my local host in Reading, retired in Hong Kong in 1995 and came to the UK in 2005 and was still holding the Nepali citizenship, and was working as a security guard. Their language proficiency ranged from working knowledge of English and making basic conversations to having good command over the language. Their wives may be both working and not. Dev Kumari Gurung (name changed), 44, for example, had her own grocery store and was managing both housework and business on her own with very little support from her only daughter. Her husband, ex-Gurkha, had a business in Nepal and kept visiting her time to time. Because the women in this category may not be very proficient in English and not professionally skilled, they might not be able to find well-paying jobs, and therefore, were mostly found working as cleaners. Some of them, like my landlady Meena (name changed), 48, choose to stay at home and take care of the household chores.

The third generation was roughly of 18-35 year olds, who were born in Nepal and came to the UK later, but at a very early age. The individuals who were below 18 while applying for the *Indefinite Leave to Enter* (ILE) were regarded as "dependents" and were easily allowed to come along with or immediately after their parents. Those who were above 18, a new provision was later made where the

age bar was extended up to 30 years. Recently, there are court cases that even those more than 30 years old are winning and opting to come to the UK. Most of these individuals completed their education and graduated from the UK, and unlike the older generation, had very high chances of finding "white collar" jobs. Many of these individuals who moved to the UK at an early age have good command over English with a thick British accent. But even in this group, people mostly hung out with the Gurkha/Nepali community itself. Subash Magar, 28, who came to the UK in 2008 and was married for two years to his matrilateral cross-cousin who was already in the UK, informed that Nepalis in general feel comfortable hanging out with fellow Nepalis: "With the British, there is some sort of cultural differences at some point of time. I always felt comfortable hanging out with Nepalis compared to the British. It does not however mean that I am not friends with them. I of course am."

Compared to them, the fourth and the youngest bunch of individuals had a very good time intermingling with the locals. These were mostly kids below 18, who were mostly born in the UK itself, or who came with their parents at a very small age and started their schooling here. This was also the bunch of kids who generally spoke in English not just with the British or other groups, but also with Gurkhas/Nepalis. This could be because during pre-adolescence, children are still constructing their social and ethnic identity (Hartner 2012, cited in Boivin 2013, 23) and therefore are highly likely to inculcate "the British way" the most compared to all the three previous groups.

4.2 Negotiations of language

"The more you interact, the better you integrate."

At *The Forgotten British Gurkhas* (TFBG)'s television hall, I met Man Kumari Subba (name changed), 68, an ex-Gurkha's wife who is living with her husband in Reading. When I asked her how much does

she interact with the *Gorā* [the whites], she told: "What do I talk to them about, they have a different language, we have a different one. But there is a black woman who greets *Namasté* every time she sees us."[5] Shyam (name changed), the ex-Gurkha on a crutch whom I met at Palmer Park, highlighted that language is the biggest difficulty for most of the elderly Gurkhas. Adding a few English words, phrases and sentences while speaking, he told me that he was working as an interpreter to help his elderly friends visit the doctor or the council. Not understanding the language, he stressed, would put them in difficulty: "*Bhāsai najāne pachhi ta sakki gayo ni!*" Although 94 percent (n=6683) individuals in the CNSUK's 2008 survey mentioned that they can have basic conversations in English, Adhikari (2012, 143) challenges this data based on his personal observations and mentions that language exists as a key barrier to integration. Similar was Choudhary (2013)'s observation in her research with the Gurkha wives.

During my morning stroll to Palmer Park one day, I was with a group of three retired Gurkha men. I talked to them about their life as a British soldier and asked them how were they finding life in the UK. One of them was Kulman Magar (named changed), 77, a "permanent resident" of Baglung district in Nepal. Like many other elderly Gurkhas, he hadn't applied for the "red passport." He was living with his wife and their children were in Nepal as they had already passed the 30-year-old benchmark to be eligible to come to the UK. Kulman mentioned that the elderly couple were managing their living in their own ways without any other family member in the UK. He could speak a little English and told me that it was not always necessary to speak the language. While going to the hospitals with prior appointment, Kulman mentioned:

> "If you know the names of the body organs in English, there is not much of a communication problem. Additionally, there are some doctors who speak Hindi and Urdu, and it is little easier for the elderly

[5] "*Aba ooniharu sanga k bolnu ni, ooni haru ko arkai bhasa, hamro arkai bhasa. Tara euta kali chhe, ani Namasté vanna aauchhe.*"

> Gurkhas to explain their health condition. The interpreters are not there in every public institution, but if someone asks, they come to assist."

Some of the grocery stores were run by Nepalis and some had Nepalis working for them to help curb the language-related gaps. In the weekly vegetable markets in Aldershot, the Britons were found talking to elderlies in broken Nepali asking them to purchase.

The process of integration and preservation of identity is particularly interesting in a contrast between the elderly and the children. While the elderly, for example at *The Forgotten British Gurkhas* (TFBG), were given English classes once a week and were "practically" demonstrated how to talk to the vendors when buying things from them, the small kids born in the UK were taught Nepali so that they do not forget the language. On the one hand, the elderly needed to integrate in the English society and learn their language to be able to "perform" in certain ways, and on the other hand, they were equally concerned that the young kids, primarily those who were born in the UK, learned to speak, read and write Nepali. As Low (2015, 850) mentions: "Learning the Nepali language is therefore an important aspect of their Nepalese identity, and this applies to the different Gurkha families that have resided in Singapore, Hong Kong and the UK." One of the elderly ex-Gurkhas I was talking to at TFBG told me that he was in a rush as he had to go to fetch his granddaughter from school. He said that although she understood most of the Nepali words, she mostly spoke in English and if she did not understand any Nepali word, her parents would explain that to her in English. In such a case, the chances of them speaking their ethnic languages is rare. As both my landlord's children, Deepa (23) and Jeevan (28) (both names changed) did not speak their ethnic Gurung language,[6] the lingua franca at my landlord's home in Reading was Nepali. This was because they grew up in urban cities in Nepal and mostly stayed surrounded by the Nepali-speaking community. Similar is applicable to the newest generation of kids

[6] The Gurung language is an ethnic language of the Gurungs and has the Tibeto-Burmese root. Nepali language, on the other hand, is the official language and lingua-franca of Nepal and belongs to the Indo-European language family.

in the UK who understand English better than Nepali as "[r]esearch indicates that the trajectory of immigrants' language maintenance over time usually becomes language loss" (Boivin 2013, 44).

4.3 Performative public spaces

"[I]t is worth noting that internally differentiated markings of presence and absence are produced by the public display of belonging."
– Campbell 2014, 213.

The four parts in this section demonstrate how the Gurkhas are making themselves visible and making their presence felt by performing in various ways in the UK societies.

Visibility through wardrobe

The elderly Gurkhas were the most visible among other group of migrants in the UK. This probably is because they came to the UK very recently and at a very later stage of their life for them to adopt new sense of dressing. Also, because they were old and rely mostly on government allowances to live and travel, they did not buy cars and rather make use of the free public transportation passes that the government had provided them with. As a result, they were seen more in the public spaces and public transportation. Compared to other group of individuals in the UK, they did not work but got allowances for sustenance. This was another reason they had a lot of spare time and to kill the time, strolled around in parks and were seen walking with their friends from very early in the morning to

Figure 2: Gurkha women in lungi at central Reading

late in the evening. A Nepali research fellow at a UK university who has been researching about the Gurkha and Nepali community in the UK told me: "The British have very peculiar sense of dressing, and although they might not say anything upfront, they do not like the elderly Gurkha women wearing *lungi*."

My landlady at Reading, Meena (name changed), 48, housewife, also mentioned that she disliked the way the elderly Gurkha women walk in *lungi* (wrapper), *pachheura* (shawl) and gold jewelry on their ears, nose, hands and neck, and men in Nepali cap (*topi*). She thought that rather than wearing the traditional Nepali dresses, the elderly should've started wearing things that were more common in the UK so as to get more acceptance. For some elderly women the *lungi* and *pachheura* were replaced by trousers and jackets; and for some elderly men, the only traditional piece of cloth they had, the *topi*, was replaced by European hats and caps. This is highly gendered as the married women ought to show some symbols, like jewelry or red colored clothes to make their marital status obvious, while the men did not have to do anything of that sort. Some younger generations, both men and women, have started wearing ring in their "ring finger," inspired by the western/Christian culture.

Even Meena when she went outside was seen wearing long skirts or *kurta-salwar*,[7] an attire worn especially by South Asian women, including those in the UK. This has probably been more acceptable as the latter group of migrants arrived in the UK before the Nepalis and had already made *kurta-salwar* common. Additionally, this also became a form of negotiation for most of the middle-aged and elderly women who did not want to completely change their attires from *lungi* to trousers, *kurta-salwar* proved to be the easiest alternative. However, there are some who have confirmed to a more acceptable way

[7] A type of suit, worn especially by Asian women, with loose trousers and a long shirt. http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/salwar-kameez. Accessed 2 June 2017.

of clothing despite it causing them great discomfort. Ramesh's (my host for my two-day visit to Basingstoke who name has been changed here) mother, 70, for instance, wore trousers and told me that she started wearing them because of her daughter's wishes despite it wasn't very comfortable initially. For someone who has always worn a *lungi* most their lives, switching over to trousers took a lot of challenge and discomfort.

Not just are the *lungi*s connected with the fashion statements of the Gurkha women, they are also valuable gifts that their military husbands, sons and fathers brought for them while returning home, and have a high sentiments attached to it. Des Chene (1991, 341-2) reports of a Hong Kong returnee in 1987 bringing Indonesian and Singaporean *lungi*s (wrapper/*kain-batik*/*sarong*/*longyi*), glass bead necklaces, Chinese quilted jackets, goose down vests, and sunglasses, among others as gifts.

Staying together to negotiate better

As public spaces in the UK are technologically very advanced from what even the most modern city like Kathmandu is, it is confusing for an immigrant to get used to these technologies in the UK. Even the simplest of things like using transportation cards to board buses, or sending "stop" signal to get off, or waiting for the signal to cross the street was very unusual to most of the Nepalis, let alone the elderly Gurkhas. As a coping mechanism to overcome these modern technologies, the elderly Gurkhas tried to familiarize each other with what they know. That was one of the reasons why the elderly Gurkhas generally stayed together in groups in public. Whenever a new member came in, generally a kin or friend from Nepal, they learned all the ways of performing at the public spaces from their peers. Furthermore, as the elderly Gurkha women couldn't speak English or other languages except their mother-tongue and/or Nepali, they couldn't interact much with people from other communities.

However, they were still seen making small gestures of gratitude saying "thank you" at grocery stores, with vegetable vendors and bus drivers. Regarding this, Boivin (2013, 108) notes:

> "The wives of the Gorkha soldiers had little access to other British military or local U.K. wives due to language proficiency, educational status, and the location of their homes. In order to obtain work or find living information to maintain friendships, wives of the Gorkha soldiers created social networks with other Gorkha community members."

There are some cultural and gendered notions of staying apart attached to the act of being together. The elderly couples did not sit together in buses and walked a little ahead of the other, just like the way Purna (name changed) and his wife did when I walking with them towards the café. One of the reasons of this could be as what the UK graduate who wrote her thesis on Gurkha women told me:

> "As Nepalis, we are culturally not used to showing intimacy in public spaces, and walking together and sitting together were therefore not performed publicly by the elderly Gurkhas. Additionally, it could also be because of power dynamics between the husband and the wife. Unlike their husbands who have experiences of travelling around the world during wartime, the UK is the first new place the women have been to after their parents' and in-laws' homes. Because they believe that the experienced husband knows better, they follow with the idea that the husband knows more, better, and therefore, leads."

Forming a neighborhood

As the immigrants are generally in the minority, living and staying together gives them a sense of security. Like most of the immigrant communities in the UK, the Gurkhas also formed and lived in a neighborhood they knew the most about. In Reading, for instance, most of the Gurkha households lived near the Cemetery Junction area. Most of the individuals came and joined their relatives and friends, and as a result, they rented or purchased houses in the same vicinity. As Megh Ale Magar (42, name changed), whom I met at the Nepali New Year celebration party mentioned:

> "One of them somehow came to Reading first and called the others too. Because the industrial area is nearby, it was easier for them to find jobs. Without working, you cannot imagine a life here. Slowly and gradually, people started coming to the places where they already had relatives and therefore formed their own communities in these cities and towns in the UK. There are similar pockets in many parts of the UK where one particular community is concentrated in one place. They might not go to places that are far away from the airport. Because they have to keep going back to Nepal, they choose places nearby. Many of the younger ones prefer living in London as they find better work there. Those who live with their families, they also commute to London every day."

Negotiating visibility through social events

The Nepalis in the UK in general time and again highlighted "performative public space to put across the attractiveness, tenacity and liveliness of Nepali culture for the new environment of belonging, [and it] requires putting together a staged version of what can be considered typical and appropriate elements of life in Nepal" (Campbell 2014, 210). Even while performing strictly private affairs, there is could be high degrees of public visibility. For instance, most of the cars of Gurkhas (and Nepalis) were easily identifiable even at the parking lot as they had a wrapping of holy shawls (*khādā*) on the rear view mirror and top of the seats, and some would put a sculpture of Lord Buddha or Ganesh or a battery-powered miniature Buddhist prayer wheel (*mānē*) under the windscreen. The cultural events organized particularly by the older generations had an overwhelming display of culturally significant symbols through dresses, dances and food. These events had limited presence of the younger generations but displayed not just their ethnic or Nepali cultural symbols, but also the ones they acculturated. The events that the younger generations organized were more westernized in, again, dresses, dances and food. Compared to the younger generations, very few women from the older generations consumed alcohol during public events.

Figure 3: Dance performance at a cultural event in traditional music

4.4 Between there (*tyāhā*) and here (*yāhā*)

"Everyone is there, what do we do here?"[8]
– Nirmāyā Gurung, 62, wife of an ex-Gurkha soldier.

The first generation and some second generation of Gurkhas generally wanted to have the option of returning back to Nepal open and therefore did not apply for the "red passport" (British citizenship). With the *Indefinite Leave to Remain* (ILR), the Gurkhas had settlement rights and welfare benefits and on their part, it was not necessary that they vied for the British citizenship. The ones applying for the "red passport" were mostly the younger generations and those who saw greater benefits compared to staying with the Nepali passport. My landlord at Reading, Ram (name changed), told:

> "There is no use for us to apply for the red passport. If we do that we have to pay heavy visa fee while visiting Nepal. But for the younger generation, like Deepa (his daughter whose name has been changed here), there is better opportunity if she gets the citizenship here. It will now be five years in September that she is here and she is eligible."

But as opposed to her, the mother, Meena (name changed), 48, who came together with Deepa, would not for the "red passport." Meena mentioned that Nepal is still dear to her because:

> "We lived more than half of our lives there [in Nepal]. We love Nepal no matter what and want to go back. Compared to me, my children would not miss [Nepal] more because they came here pretty early in their lives."

Furthermore, Ware (2012, 247) mentions that the heavy sum of money required to get the British citizenship also puts off the ones who are not easily able to maneuver with the system:

> "Although not all would want to stay in the UK, for those who did, and especially those with families, this was a complicated and expensive process. In order to qualify for settlement, they not only had to meet the UKBA criteria, whether in terms of residency and having no criminal convictions, but they also faced paying hundreds of pounds in fees."

At Basingstoke, while on the way to Aldershot, Ramesh (name changed) asked his *kākā* (uncle) why did he want to visit Nepal. And one of the answers was that he wanted to attend the inauguration of

[8] *"Sappai jana ootai chhan, hami yāhā k gari basnu?"*

a suspension bridge in their village that was built with some financial support from the Society back in the UK. On a similar note, Chandra Limbu, an ex-Gurkha in his late forties told Pariyar (2016, 279):

> "I have to not only keep visiting my place in Nepal but also do all I could to support it and my people. Even if I became very rich here and never went back, my atman or spirit will go back where it came from when I die."

Figure 4: A Buddhist monastery with Buddhist, Nepali and UK flags in Aldershot

Even they had their houses in the UK, they still did not feel like home as they were in Nepal. One of the reasons, Pariyar et al. (2014, 144-8) explain, is because some of his research participants felt that their spirits and deities still belonged to their ancestral homes in Nepal. For almost all well and western educated younger generations, this would not be the case.

The elderly who did not apply for the "red passport" but rather stayed with their Nepali passport and *Indefinite Leave to Remain* had an aspiration to returning back to Nepal because "everyone was there." However, for those who take the "red passport," although they were sentimentally connected to Nepal they had to find their *karma* here in the UK. There were individuals who were operating with the dual passport. Although Nepal doesn't recognize dual passports, the ones who had both the British and Nepali passports were maneuvering with the system. Ware (2009, 62) notes: "Many of these soldiers join with no particular intention of becoming British citizens, others aspire to dual nationality and some join in the hope of acquiring 'the red passport' for themselves and their extended families."

4.5 Gendered negotiations

My observations and interactions suggest that the migration process from Nepal to the UK is guided by the ex-Gurkha soldiers. For other Gurkha family members, their lives are shaped by the mobility of the "household head," especially husbands (for older women) and/or fathers (for younger ones). This way, the entire migration cycle of Gurkhas is gendered. The wives lived their entire lives as "invisible counterparts" (Ware 2012, 216) of the "warrior gentlemen" (Caplan 1995). As the UK graduate who wrote her thesis on Gurkha wives mentioned during the interview, their whole idea was to be with where the family was, and their notion of home was divided between "home is where the family is" against "home is where the root is." However, the elderly Gurkha women could play the role of an enabler in generating money (through allowances) to be remitted to their offspring who were still in Nepal.

Furthermore, as the Gurkha soldiers provided a secure earning in the past while in Nepal, their wives did not have to go outside and earn. Additionally, the social setup of Nepal did not easily allow/encourage the daughters to study and work. This further made them vulnerable when they came to the UK. Pariyar et al. (2014, 138-9) highlight: "A Gurkha wife in Nepal epitomises the life of luxury, of extravagance, and of prosperity without hard work – a lifestyle impossible for them to achieve once they are in the UK." Further stressing this, the UK graduate who wrote her thesis on Gurkha wives mentioned:

> "The remittance that was sent was more than enough. In fact, it afforded them (the family of Gurkha soldiers) a luxurious lifestyle in Nepal. A few my respondents in Aldershot mentioned they did not feel the need to work when they were in Nepal. Not only that but I guess having limited education, it afforded very little opportunity in Nepal where they were also largely responsible for raising the kids. For a few, working was prohibited by the family because of the obvious gender norms but also because 'it did not look good.' Marrying to a Gurkha was a matter of attaining a status as well as security for future especially in terms of the financial bit. Additionally, for a certain group, working was not only matter of need but also their way of coping and adjusting into the British society."

The situation in the UK is quite different from Nepal. Getting engaged in the labor market means that there would additional earning would make paying the bills easier. Because of the limited education and language skills, most of the Gurkha women would land up in low-skilled and menial jobs. Some young women, as Laksamba et al. (2012, 88) point out, worked as professional nurses in the health sector. There were young women whom Choudhary (2016) met who purposefully trained themselves to become nurses just to marry a Gurkha soldier and come to the UK. Also, the Gurkha becomes the most preferred spouse for girls is their fathers, brothers, or uncles were in the army too.

As the husband's income solely may not help the family sustain, the wife has to join the labor market too. Elaborating this, Pariyar et al. (2014, 138-9) write:

> "The lack of work experience coupled with the problem of English language skills means that most of the wives end up working as cleaners – the work that their maids used to do at home… Some of them hated having to work so hard to make a living and therefore lamented their migration. But others quite enjoyed the experience of working, despite the physical hardship, because they found it empowering in the sense that they no longer needed to depend fully on their husbands for money."

Pariyar et al. (2014) further mention that such work gave them opportunity to step out of the houses, learn English, work with and meet different people. Many immigrants do not get and are not given qualified jobs because they have language- and education-related limitations and because they are not trusted by their British employers for professional jobs (Carlisle 2006). However, for ex-Gurkha soldiers, because of their association with the Army and the notion of "bravery" and "loyalty" attached to them, they can readily get jobs in the security industry, primarily as security guards. "They do not let others go inside, I open all the doors"[9] said my landlord at Reading, Ram (name changed) exemplifying the trust that the employers have on him at his work at the diamond industry. For many middle-aged wives of the Gurkhas, however, such "trust-worthy" works are not available and therefore are limited to unskilled, "disrespectful" and menial jobs.

[9] "*Aru lai janai dinna tesma, sabbai maile nai kholne ho.*"

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

After decades of discrimination in payment and pension related services, the Gurkha soldiers hailing originally from Nepal started raising their voices against the British government mainly through campaigning and filing court cases. As the Gurkhas were initially treated merely as "mercenaries" by the British and discriminated for years, their cases were strongly presented at the courts, only to meet a great degree of success. Despite working on unequal remunerations from the nineteenth to the early twenty-first century, they generated the tag of being "brave, loyal and martial" with them. As a result, when they demanded equal payment and settlement and citizenship rights in the UK, most of the political parties, media, and the general public welcomed them as war heroes. They often were hailed as opposed to the asylum seekers and economic migrants who were mostly viewed as "wrong claimants", "scroungers", and even "criminals" and "illegals." This way, the same British fascination with the martial races and their "larger than life" portrayal of the Gurkhas and the consequent loss of many Gurkha lives while proving their "bravery" during wartime finally seems to have assisted their movement for equality. However, there still are some provisions to be met, like equal pensions for those who retired before 1997 and welfare- and integration-related services.

There have been studies with the ex-Gurkha soldiers and their family members at various levels that have either highlighted their political struggles or have dealt with their integration in the British society. As there exists a void in the literature that deals with both the political and social struggles that they had or are having in the daily lives, this thesis aimed to fill in that gap. One of the key arguments that the thesis made is that the Gurkhas have successfully *reincarnated* themselves as the new deserving citizens of the UK and because of the martial legacies are held much higher than any other group of migrants seeking work or refuge in the UK. They are the embodiment of the much commonly held

migrant-soldier dichotomy where the latter is hailed as national heroes while the former are treated as outsiders and "aliens."

While the British had started hiring the Gurkhas to fill in the required soldier quota for cheap remuneration and were greatly impressed by their "war skills," the Nepali political elites "exported" them for money and political autonomy. Des Chene (1991) regards the Gurkhas as a diplomatic tool of the Nepali state to bargain with the British-India. For the young Nepali men, joining the British army as Gurkhas was and is the most lucrative and attractive option. Because of the notion of bravery attached to it, joining the army for many is also a rite of passage to adulthood (Des Chene 1991; Ware 2012). Although the payment they got for equal amount of risk they took was very meagre compared to their British counterparts, they continued to do so because the payments were still attractive from the Nepali standards.

Although the Gurkhas have had substantial amount of success at the political level through campaigning and litigation, their and their families' everyday social struggles in the British neighborhoods continue to exist. Intergenerational differences in integrating and dealing with everyday struggles were contrastingly different where the elderlies faced numerous problems while the younger generations integrated better or even assimilated. The language related differences was the most prominent as the elderly Gurkha couples had very little or no knowledge of the English language. The youngest generation that was born in the UK or moved in at a very little age has very good command over the English language, but were not as proficient in Nepali. There existed a communication gap between the oldest and the youngest generation of the Gurkha family members themselves, let alone between them and the British. The process of integration and preservation of identity was particularly interesting in a contrast between the elderly and the children. While the

elderlies attended the English language classes and were given practical demonstrations of life in the UK, the youngest generation was taught the Nepali language in order to preserve their identity.

The Gurkha community in general, and the elderly Gurkhas in particular, were visible in the UK societies because of their race and wardrobe, among others. As ways to deal with various forms of discrimination that accompany the visible minorities and migrants, the Gurkhas generally stayed in groups and formed close neighborhoods. In a group, they also performed various programs and festivals to make sure that they continued to retain their identity or pass it on to the younger generations. Because they spent a substantial amount of their time in Nepal and despite they were entitled to receiving the British citizenship, the elderly Gurkhas chose to stick with their Nepali citizenship in a hope to return back to Nepal someday. The option of receiving allowances that they remitted to their adult children in Nepal and better healthcare facilities were among the primary reasons why the elderly Gurkhas remained in the UK. Some also did not apply for the British passport because of the bureaucratic hassles. Also because they kept going back to Nepal and rather than paying heavy visa fees, staying with the Nepali passport was cost-efficient.

The migration of Gurkhas is a highly gendered concept. The Gurkha wives generally tagged along with their husbands and had very little say over the country they wanted to live in. While the younger women moved to the UK in order to live with their husbands, the older women did that to remit back the saving from the elderly allowances provided by the UK government to their adult children back in Nepal. There needs to be an intensive study related to the Gurkha wives' migration dynamics, although Choudhary (2016) and Ware (2012) have highlighted some of the stories.

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