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The European Bulletin of Himalayan Research is planning a special issue:

The Nepalese Diaspora in the making in European Countries.

Contributions should be sent to the editors as email attachments, both as Word and PDF files. If you are unable to make PDF files, please send a hard copy of your article by regular mail. The final date by which articles may be submitted is 30 June 2007. Style guidelines are provided in the inside back cover of this journal.

The first Nepalese to have left their country to work abroad, the Gurkha soldiers, are relatively well known, notably through numerous studies of them by historians and anthropologists, but the emigration of ordinary Nepalese workers has been much less studied. This has taken place on a larger scale in recent years. Even if the number of workers abroad is difficult to confirm, due to the often informal character of their journeys, analysts have concurred that the remittances sent by expatriates to their families in Nepal represent nearly a quarter of gross national product.

In his seminal book on imagined communities, Benedict Anderson developed the hypothesis that exile enhances national sentiment. Not only does exile develop a nostalgic attachment for one's country of birth, but separation also encourages the exile to imagine his or her nation in a new way by contrast to the image held of it when previously inside its borders. The democratic revolution that has taken place since 1990 and which was recently expressed again in the popular uprising of April 2006 needs to be included in this context of the extended process of national emergence. We suggest that the Nepalese migrants are not unconnected to the ongoing development of this process.

Parallel to the exploration of this general hypothesis, we will attend to the diverse forms in which Nepalese integrate in Europe, and particularly in France, the UK, and Germany. These three countries offer models of integration that are often presented as traditionally quite distinct, but we need to know more about the institutions that underpin these three cases and the usages that the Nepalese migrants make of them.

The questions under consideration concern two orders of linked preoccupations. The first covers the transformations entailed by emigration at the level of the individual on the one hand and the nation of origin on the other, while the second deals with the organization of migrants in the host countries.

Transformations of the individual and belonging to the nation.

- A Nepalese citizen in his/her country will express belonging in terms of his/her natal village or district of origin, while abroad she/he will present her/himself more willingly as Nepalese. Onto these coordinates of identity is grafted the issue of the ethnic minorities, who are currently reclaiming their autonomy. They find a certain sympathy from the part of Europeans, or at least some sections of them, ready to espouse the cause of the oppressed, in an extension of solidarity, which serves to reinforce the idea of the validity of Western democracy. In what ways do exiles remake their identity in this context? How does this "work" of identity influence their conception of the nation? In what ways (financial support, political activism etc...) do they participate in their community of origin?
- Distance favours written forms of expression. It is significant from this point of view that one of the first modern Nepali novels, published by the famous Nepali writer Lainsingh Bangdel in 1947, *Muluk Bahira* ("Outside the Kingdom"), focuses on the problem of exile. This author especially explores the motivations of Nepali travelers to Darjeeling and introduces a reflection of a moral and political dimension on their hard conditions of living. This literary work deserves taking the time to ask how it might have influenced the understanding that Nepalese had of their own country. For all that it provided an expression of the nostalgia they could have for it.
- Beyond literary expression, a phenomenon that has recently expanded and well deserves attention is Internet correspondence. This means of communication is available to almost everyone, even those without a high level of education. Chat sites are on the increase and encourage daily exchanges between expatriates and those close to them back home. New links are also made across ever more numerous personal sites. Telephone has become sufficiently cheap to allow long and frequent conversations. As access to telecommunications has become so normal, individuals are not only exchanging news and information, they are also inscribing themselves into narratives, which can be thought of as sketches of autobiography.

Individual journeys and organization of Nepalese migrants in Europe.

- How do new arrivals proceed? Do they always have a point of contact, a network of Nepalese connections ready to welcome them? What is the role of the various European contacts who are

often necessary to obtaining a letter of introduction prior to receiving a visa?

- What are the criteria in the formation of groups: ethnic membership, geographical origin, professional occupation, kinship relationships?
- As the Nepalese migrants are relatively few, do they ally with other more numerous immigrant communities, or on the contrary keep themselves distinct?



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