

MAKING IT IN THE UNITED STATES:  
A STUDY OF NEPALI REFUGEES AT AN APARTMENT  
COMPLEX IN LOUISVILLE, KY

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**Abstract:** This ethnography highlights the plight of Nepali refugees and their struggle for subsistence living at an apartment complex in Louisville, Kentucky. The author uses participant observation and ethnographic interviews to develop a biography of a typical refugee, conduct a case study of the apartment complex, and present a grounded theory identifying what it means to “make it” in the United States for a refugee. The grounded theory traces the worldview shift as refugees move from their rural animistic roots in Bhutan to a refugee camp in Nepal, and finally, to the apartment complex in Louisville, KY. The ethnography shows how anthropology can be used to better understand the dynamics of a refugee community in the United States.

Over one million people immigrated to the United States in 2009 and over one hundred thousand of those immigrants were refugees fleeing persecution, war, or natural disaster.<sup>1</sup> Refugees often do not have the choice of what country they will go to or where they will live once they arrive. Their lives have been marked by uncertainty in the past and the uncertainty continues in their new home. Refugees are unique among immigrants in that they often lack the education and language skills needed to prosper in the cities they are moved to. Life is a constant struggle and refugees can have difficulty assimilating into their new culture.

The Nepali<sup>2</sup> refugees residing in Louisville, Kentucky know this struggle well. They have been pushed from one country to another by forces they cannot control. They have been deprived of educational opportunities. They arrive in Louisville unsure of what the future will hold. Their lives have been in turmoil for decades; everything they knew has been stripped

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<sup>1</sup>United States Department of Homeland Security, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2009* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, 2010), 5, 52.

<sup>2</sup>There is much flexibility in word usage when referring to the Nepalese. Variant spellings include Nepali and Nepalese and both can function in the singular and plural and as nouns or adjectives.

away. Some see the United States as a place of hope while others see it as a place of strangers who speak an impossible language. One goal rises above the clutter, however. Nepali refugees will do whatever it takes to make it in the United States. This ethnography will present a brief overview of the immigration history of the Nepalese, a summary of research methodologies, and then present the findings of my six month study of Nepali refugee culture in Louisville, Kentucky.

### **Immigration History of Nepali Refugees Residing in Louisville, Kentucky**

The Nepalese have been a people struggling to survive for centuries.<sup>3</sup> Three main classes compose what are known as the Nepalese today. These classes are the Nalong, Sarsop, and Lochampa. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Nalong people raided the lands belonging to the Lochampa and took many Lochampa captive. The Nalong used the Lochampa people to populate their land and work the fields in what is today Western Bhutan. For five hundred years the Nalong ruled the Lochampa. In 1990 there was a war between Nepal and Bhutan. As a result of the war, all ethnic Lochampas were expelled from Bhutan. These people became refugees in northeast India and eastern Nepal.

The Nepalese that now live in Louisville were originally housed in seven refugee camps in Nepal. Most of the families living at my research site, the Village Manor apartments, are from the Shan Shuri Rom Patri camp. Any person older than twenty-one was born in Bhutan. Because of their status as refugees and their Bhutanese heritage, the Nepalese government does not recognize the Lochampa as citizens. They are literally sojourners and are unable to find employment in Nepal because they lack citizenship papers. The United Nations

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<sup>3</sup>Much of this historical background has been passed through the oral tradition of the Nepali people as they have interpreted history. I have compiled information from two different interviews.

Refugee Agency has provided food and shelter for the refugees in Nepal since 1990.

Beginning in 2008, Nepali refugees began arriving in Louisville, KY. Families are often split apart for a time as they cannot all secure visas to come to the U.S. The refugees are handled by the Kentucky Refugee Ministry (KRM) office based in Louisville. The KRM has distributed the refugees in several apartment complexes throughout the city. Approximately eighty Nepalese live in Village Manor, a low income apartment complex on the near east side of Louisville.

Upon arrival, the refugees are expected to find adequate employment as soon as possible. Several government services assist until the refugee is able to support him or herself. The U.S. government provides an interest free travel loan to each family flying to the U.S. The head of the household signs a promissory note to repay the loan. Three months after arrival in the U.S., the refugee family receives their first bill to begin repayment of the loan. Needy families with children receive a Temporary Assistance to Needy Families grant for ninety days. There are other grants available but all are temporary and end three to four months after the refugee arrives.<sup>4</sup>

Refugees struggle to find employment because of the high unemployment rate in Louisville and their lack of English ability. Six to ten family members often live together in one small apartment and the family relies on new refugee arrivals and their monetary grants to pay the bills and buy groceries. The Nepalese are enrolled in English as a Second Language classes in order to prepare them for life in the United States. Many Nepalese, especially the older ones, rarely leave their apartments and subsequently, learn little English. Several churches and social ministries in Louisville have begun providing additional language and cultural classes to help the

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<sup>4</sup>Refugee assistance data provided by the Kentucky Refugee Ministries office. See <http://kyrm.org> for more information.

Nepalese gain the skills needed to find jobs in town. I enter the study as one seeking to provide these language and cultural assimilation services to the refugees.

### **Research Background and Methodology**

I have been working with the Nepalese in Louisville for almost a year. My involvement includes participating in Nepali life through home visitations, celebrations, planting and harvesting at the local community garden, and organizing and teaching an onsite English club. My interaction has been with several Nepali families in general and with the Rai clan in particular.<sup>5</sup>

My research methodologies have primarily been participant observation and personal interviews with both the Nepalese and those who work with them. Data collected through these research means has been coded and analyzed and the results will be presented in this ethnography in three forms. The first is a personal biography of Raju, a twenty-four year old Nepali man. Next, a case study will be presented of Village Manor, the apartment complex where many Nepalese live. Finally, a grounded theory will be presented. My research has revealed that the Nepali worldview has shifted considerably through their transition from Bhutan to Nepal to Kentucky. The driving factor in a Nepali refugee's life is no longer religious but is now how to make it in the United States. Below is an overview of the research methods I employ in this study.

### **Personal Interviews**

I conducted a number of personal interviews, many of them informally, for this project. I began with several questions in mind concerning worldview issues such as the Nepali

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<sup>5</sup>I am told that each family name represents a caste, each with its own taboos, rituals, and oral history.

creation account but quickly discovered my informants viewed other topics as more important. Their responses shaped my interviews and alerted me to other topics to pursue.<sup>6</sup> I was able to build rapport over a period of several months, primarily by visiting the Nepalese in their homes and inviting them to my home. In addition to interviewing the Nepalese themselves, I conducted several interviews of others who work with the Nepalese. I quickly realized that many rituals, taboos, and historical perspectives varied depending on the family or caste of Nepali being interviewed. In addition to personal interviews, I gained much insight through participant observation as a research method.

### **Participant Observation**

There are various levels of participant observation including nonparticipation, passive, moderate, active, and complete participation.<sup>7</sup> I found myself moving between moderate and active participation during this project. There were occasions when I functioned more as a loiterer and others where I more fully participated in the activity. Through participant observation I discovered, for example, that Hindu Nepalese do in fact eat meat. Those I researched will even eat beef without issue. Participant observation helped me to generate scores of questions through my observations of clothing, jewelry, eating rituals, home décor, and gardening.

### **Biography**

Biography tells the story of a single individual within a culture in order to gain a better

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<sup>6</sup>Qualitative interviewing rarely proceeds according to the researcher's plan. I built my interview questions on prior observations and assumptions but remained open to new directions based on the responses of those I interviewed. For more on qualitative interviewing, see Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1995), 42-43.

<sup>7</sup>James Spradley, *Participant Observation* (Orlando: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1980), 58-62.

perspective of how an insider understands his or her own culture. Typically, a central theme or phenomenon arises in the life of the subject. The researcher is present in the biography, providing both the contextual background and also interpretation where necessary. One reading a biography should have a sense of empathy and relationship to the main character.<sup>8</sup> I chose to include a biography in this ethnography because the life and struggles of Raju are good representations of the larger struggles of Nepali refugees.

### **Case Study**

Case studies come in a variety of forms and can be used in several disciplines. For qualitative research, case studies typically involve data collection through interviews, personal observations, and collecting internal documents. Both a timeframe and physical setting provide boundaries for the case under study. Often, the case is situated within a larger context but studied as a microcosm.<sup>9</sup> Bennett describes case studies as an event that can be studied in order to develop a general theme or theory explaining why the event occurred.<sup>10</sup> Case studies are helpful for ethnographic research because they capture a moment in time and allow for detailed analysis. The researcher can isolate worldview issues by studying responses to a phenomenon such as a funeral or wedding ceremony.

I employ a case study of the Village Manor apartment complex in this ethnography because, as with biography, the reader can gain a better understanding of the Nepali refugee worldview through a familiarization with the refugee community. Village Manor houses

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<sup>8</sup>John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1998), 30-31.

<sup>9</sup>Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 36-37.

<sup>10</sup>Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 17.

hundreds of refugees, including over eighty Nepalese and is their primary place of socialization. My findings in the case study reinforce and build upon themes discovered in the biography of Raju. Through interviews, observations, the biography, and the case study, a grounded theory emerged regarding the Nepali worldview. Grounded theory is the final research method employed in this ethnography.

### **Grounded Theory**

Grounded Theory (GT) is useful for ethnographic research purposes because cultural themes are allowed to emerge without a preconceived hypothesis. GT helps the researcher avoid arriving to the field with categories already in place that only need to be filled with local expressions of universal traits. GT allows the very categories themselves to be determined by the local worldview. The end result is a theory that explains why and how the people themselves view life and find solutions.

I have chosen to use a grounded theory model to explain my research findings because the data revealed that the cultural themes that I had originally thought to be most important were in reality not very important. GT allows the Nepali refugees to speak for themselves and helps me as a researcher know how to best meet their needs because I can now address the problems they see as most crucial.

### **Findings**

The second segment of this paper will present the findings from my research. I begin with a biography of Raju, a young, working class refugee. Next, I present a brief case study of the Village Manor apartment complex where the majority of Nepali socialization occurs. Finally, I present a grounded theory revealing what is most important to the Nepali refugees –

making it in the United States.

## **Biography of Raju**

I have been meeting with Raju for several months now. We are in similar places in life, at least in some regards. He is twenty-four and I am twenty-eight. We each have one son about a year and a half old. We usually catch up after English club at Village Manor though sometimes Raju does not come until the end because his English ability is beyond what we cover. Raju lives in a small, dark apartment with his extended family. At any given time, his sister, wife, mom, dad, son, and any number of friends might be socializing. Even though he is young, Raju has been the main financial supporter of his family since he came to the United States a year ago. He works as a prep chef and dishwasher at a local upscale restaurant. He often tells me he will have a new job at a hotel soon, one that pays more and provides health insurance. I have heard this story for many months now and have concluded that there is no job waiting for him at the hotel. Instead, Raju will work six days a week in the kitchen and earn just enough to fall short of supporting his family.

Raju was born as the middle of three children on a farm in Bhutan in 1985. His father is a good man and a hard worker who had farmed his entire life prior to being expelled from Bhutan. Less than five years after his birth, in the midst of a civil war between Nepal and Bhutan, Raju and his family were forced off their land.<sup>11</sup> The next eighteen years of his life was spent in a refugee village in hot, dry lowlands of eastern Nepal. Life is difficult there. Raju has no citizenship. The Nepalese government shuns him because he came from Bhutan. The Bhutanese government shuns him because of his Nepali ethnicity. In the camp, there is not much

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<sup>11</sup>Obviously, Nepal and Bhutan are two different countries, thus rendering a civil war impossible. Raju, however, does not see the political distinction. He sees two classes of Nepalese fighting each other – the Nalong and the Lochampa.

to do except play in the nearby forest. The forest, however, is a dangerous place.

One day, about 8pm, Raju and three of his friends are coming back from the forest with the bundles of wood they just collected for the evening fires. Suddenly, a headless spirit appears and frightens the young men so badly they drop their wood and run home. As Raju goes to sleep at night, he begins to feel weak. He wakes up in the morning to learn that one of his friends who had seen the spirit has died in his sleep. The reason is because the ghost had stolen the soul of Raju's friend and the friend did not go see the village bidjua or necromancer to get it back.<sup>12</sup>

Raju identifies himself as a Hindu but practices little of the religion. His family never goes to the temple in their camp because only the Brahman caste can go there. Instead, Raju and his family pray to their family gods and perform simple ceremonies to gain their favor. Raju wants a life of prosperity. He knows his family gods can give it if he treats them properly. The problem is the village is plagued by the ghosts of departed ancestors that have not been shown the way to heaven. Raju and his family must summon the bidjua often to help them appease the ghosts and spirits. Life is mundane and boring.

Everything changed in 2009. Raju's family was selected to go to the United States as part of a refugee relocation program. Raju's parents and sister came first and a year and a half later, Raju himself arrived in Louisville, Kentucky. Life was a blur. Raju had learned some English in Nepal. His parents knew none. Government assistance had run out and the family was desperate for work. Raju's father could not get a job because of his lack of English ability. He had been going to the Kentucky Refugee Ministry ESL classes but had little chance to practice his English because of his isolation in his Village Manor apartment. The family heard

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<sup>12</sup>This phenomenon is known as soulfright and is common among animistic peoples.

about a conversational English club that was beginning at Village Manor and decided to go. It was at this club that I met Raju and his family.

Raju found a job working in the kitchen of a local cafe and saved a little money. He bought a used car from one of the Muslim refugees at Village Manor, a Nissan Maxima. Immediately, Raju posted pictures of the car on his Facebook page. He was so proud of the car. Now his family did not have to walk two miles to the grocery store and carry back the heavy bags in the freezing winter conditions. They could drive to Sam's Club and buy in bulk to save money. They could now purchase the ingredients to cook food like they ate in Nepal. The car was a turning point in Raju's life. He could help his family make a better life for themselves in Kentucky.

Raju has never been to the Hindu temple in Louisville. He did not even know it existed. He is learning stories from the Bible at English club. He had heard some of these stories before when missionaries visited his refugee camp in Nepal. He has not seen any ghosts since he has come to the United States. He knows the two bidjua that live in town but they only come when Raju or someone in his family is sick. Raju cannot appease the family gods anymore because the three stones he needs for the ceremony are still in Nepal. He does not seem so worried though. Nothing bad has happened to his family since their move. Life is better here in Kentucky.

The first time Raju and his family came to my house, they stood in amazement. My house is a small and modest house that I rent for a good price. Raju could hardly believe the amount of space I had. He was fascinated by the fish tank in my living room. He was amused when my tiny cat came out to greet everyone. Raju asked how many bedrooms the house had. He let out a whistle when I said, "Four." He then asked how much I pay for rent. His mouth

dropped when I said, “\$500 a month.” He told me his small apartment cost \$200 a month more than my house. I could tell he envied me, maybe he was even a little jealous.

He said that someday, maybe three years from now, he would have a good job and could live in a house like mine. Someday soon his brother would come. Not many years from now, his son would be an American. His English would be great. He would have a good job. Someday soon all this would happen. Raju and his family went home, all six of them packed into his car even though I offered to help drive them home. He went to bed. He woke up the next day. He went to work in the kitchen at the cafe. He could not focus at work. He could only daydream about tomorrow.

### **Case Study of Village Manor**

The Village Manor apartment complex has a storied history in Louisville. For years, it was owned by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and housed students. Some years ago, the seminary sold the complex but a large percentage of students still live there while they are in school. Recently, the complex received low income housing status. The complex sits adjacent to high traffic railroad tracks. There are about twenty buildings on the property, each housing ten or more individual apartments. Beginning about three years ago, the complex began receiving refugees from Nepal, Iraq, Iran, and several East African countries. Today, one is as likely to see a Bible study at a picnic table as a Hindu festival, Chinese New Year celebration, or a ritual to appease the spirits influencing crop growth at the onsite community garden. Village Manor is a complex place.

I have spoken with many residents and the ownership at the complex. All desire to see the grounds and apartments kept up and the residents happy. The owners are very happy to give access to Christians who want to do ministry in the complex because the owners believe such

activity can only improve the quality of resident. In return, the Christians help keep the grounds up, clean the community room, and thank the owners for their generosity.

Most of the tenants are low income, including the seminary students. The complex is about a mile from a Neighborhood Walmart grocery store. Many residents who do not have a car walk to the store for groceries, even in winter. Saving money is a priority. A general observation is that the majority of units are dark. Residents save money by not using electricity if possible. Cars that were in accidents but left unrepaired fill the parking lots. Many of the refugees wear the same clothing every day. The general feeling one gets when walking around is somewhat drab and “blah” but there are hints of cheeriness in the form of music emanating from open windows or children playing outside. The complex is somewhat isolated behind the tracks and functions almost as a true “village.”

There are two areas on the grounds that are prominent places of socialization and play keys roles in the cultural setting at Village Manor. The first is the Community Room. This room is near the entrance to the complex and houses the office, a meeting room, and a weight room. The meeting room is where the English Club I help run meets. Residents know that almost any time of the week, something is going on in the community room. There are parties on the major holidays, Bible studies, and sports games on the television. In addition, the community room is where flyers are hung listing upcoming events. Residents at Village Manor often live in relative isolation in their apartments except when they come to the community room.

The other main place of socialization is the community garden. The management began the garden about two years ago. They tilled a large rectangle of land and put a fence around it. Residents can rent a small plot in the garden for a small fee each year. In order to save money, many residents, especially refugees grow vegetables in the garden. One can walk

through the garden any night of the week during the growing season and find refugees tending their plots and talking about the latest news. One friend of mine said that if you ever need to find a large concentration of Nepalese, go to the garden.

The garden and community room represent larger realities for Village Manor residents. They are places to socialize and share information about job opportunities, English classes, parties, and religious festivals. The refugee community finds its identity in these two locations. Here they have much in common. The Nepalese use the garden as a way to save money but also to connect with their old way of life. One man talked about how he used to work the gardens all the time in Nepal and that it was nothing to spend a day in the fields. Others grew up as farmers and were used to open spaces. These same farmers have not been out of Louisville for over two years. They miss the forests and fields. The garden offers a glimpse into their old life, a life that was familiar and comfortable to them. In the face of a busy and foreign city, there is the garden retreat.

The community room is a place of hope. Bible studies speak of life. Christians are there to help the refugees learn English so they can find a job. Resume workshops help equip refugees for the job interview. Information is posted regarding celebrations, cultural festivals, and jobs. Coming to the community room is akin to checking the mailbox every day, hoping to find that letter of good news.

The garden and the community room are both places of comfort. The first provides an intensification of cultural identity. The second is a portal to the new world. Both are key shapers of life for the refugees in the United States. Data collected for both the biography and the case study point to a theory for what is most important for a Nepali living in Louisville, Kentucky. The final section will present that theory in grounded form, showing an evolution in

worldview from Bhutan to Nepal to the United States. Priorities changed but so did the Nepali's relationship to their religion and ancestors. What drives a Nepali now is how to make it in the United States.

### **Grounded Theory: Making it in the United States**

The final form of analysis will be a short grounded theory concerning how the Nepali worldview has shifted over time and geographical transition. There has been a marked decrease of animistic and religious tendencies and an increase of secular drive to work hard and make a life in the United States. I will trace this worldview shift through each of the three locations the Nepali refugees have lived their lives.

**Worldview elements prominent in Bhutan.** Any Nepali refugee over twenty-one years of age was born in Bhutan. The people were mainly farmers and pastoralists, though a few worked in small towns as print shop owners or other more technical jobs. Families lived together in large clans and the cultural family structure was enforced. Elders consulted bidjua and ancestors, known as the "Old Fathers" for guidance concerning future decisions. The Nepali had little contact with the outside world, apart from occasional visits to nearby communities.

The Nepali had lived in Bhutan since the 16<sup>th</sup> century so many ancestors had died and required appeasement. The bidjua occupied a prominent place in society because of the constant need for mediation between the spirit world and the Nepali. Sickness was common and since the people were agrarian, successful crops were crucial. Stories and legends were told around the fires at night reinforcing cultural identity. For example, the Nepali creation story begins with the earth totally covered in water. The gods caused earthquakes and volcanoes and land arose from the water. The gods created the first man out of gold so that he would live forever. However,

the gold man was not able to speak to the gods so the gods scolded the man and set him aside. The gods then created another man out of ash from a fire and “chicken stool.”<sup>13</sup> This new man was able to speak with the gods but would also die. Now that death and sickness had entered the world, powerful spirits were necessary to bring health.

The first shaman was called bonjacree. Bonjacree was a good and powerful spirit god that was married to an evil witch. Bonjacree wanted to help the Nepali so he looked down and choose a special child to teach the ways of the spirit world to. The progression has been in place ever since. The shamans are called bidjua and are selected as a child. They are removed from their families for five to seven years to receive training. Many Nepali view the bidjua as gods. In Bhutan, the bidjua received special treatment and performed ceremonies to ensure health, crop success, fertility, and passage of the dead to heaven.

In summary, the Nepali worldview in Bhutan focused on family life and farming and was heavily animistic. The reason for the animism was the presence of centuries of departed ancestors that needed constant appeasement otherwise they would inflict sickness and other calamities on the living. Animism influenced every aspect of life because the spirits were seen to have control over all of life.

**Worldview elements prominent in the Nepali refugee camp.** Life changed dramatically once the refugees arrived in their camps in Nepal. Because the refugees lacked citizenship, they were unable to find employment. They maintained small gardens but were unable to farm and shepherd like they did in Bhutan. Without work, there was little to do. The Nepalese had access to television and were much more influenced by the outside world, particularly the Western world. Family structure was largely left intact since entire clans were

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<sup>13</sup>Chicken stool is the exact phrase used by my informant.

assigned to a camp.

Animistic peoples are greatly affected by geographic displacement. During times of transition, animists are much more open to change and explanations for what is happening.<sup>14</sup> Many spirits are tied to the geographic regions they inhabit. Informants told me that their ancestors were not able to travel from Bhutan to Nepal. Consequently, the repercussions for not appeasing the ancestors diminished for a time. The Nepali occupied the refugee camps for about twenty years, however – enough time for many people to die. Once the deaths began, the appeasement rituals increased. The role of the bidjua was still needed to ensure the passage of the dead to heaven.

Cultural legends became less important as evidenced by Nepalese aged twenty to thirty years having difficulty recounting the legends. Parents and grandparents I interviewed were still able to recount the creation story and other cultural legends. Animism was still prominent but less so than in Bhutan because of the geographical separation from the ancestral spirits. Physical needs were provided for by the United Nations so the Nepali were less dependent on the spirit world to ensure crop success. Hinduism played a small role as the fall festival, naming ceremony, and certain prayer and blessing rituals were carried out. Otherwise, with little to do concerning work or farming, entertainment became more important than survival.

**Worldview elements prominent among the Village Manor refugees.** If there was major transition for the refugees moving from Bhutan to Nepal, the change was cataclysmic upon moving to the United States. Everything is new here. In the camp in Nepal everyone spoke the same language. At Village Manor, a small handful speak Nepali. The refugees are in

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<sup>14</sup>Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1991), 70.

a new environment, have no English language ability, and no job. Families are broken up because siblings were unable to secure a visa to come to the U.S. Nepalese that are able to find a job often work at minimum wage in restaurant kitchens, car washes, or as janitors. The Nepalese are heavily influenced by Western culture, television, movies, ect. Materialism is increasing and cars have replaced quality land or animals as symbols of status.

Animism plays little role in the lives of Nepalese at Village Manor. There are two bidjua in town but they are only consulted upon major sickness or when someone dies. The bidjua does not play a role in ensuring crop success in the community garden, fertility, or finding a job. Cultural legends are dying out as older Nepalese die. The Nepali creation story is blurring because of the naturalistic teaching in public schools. Additionally, many Nepali attend the English club and are exposed to the biblical creation account. My informants have not seen any departed spirits since arriving in the United States. Nearly all of the ancestors remain in Nepal or Bhutan. There is now little to no consequence for failing to appease ancestors so animism is not a prominent feature in the lives of the refugees.

Hinduism plays little role as well. The only evidence of a Hindu identification is the fall Dashara and Dipowali festival and the baby naming ceremony. The artifacts required to carry out Hindu rituals were left in Nepal so the ceremonies cannot be done. The Nepali refugees do not attend the Hindu temple in town and do not observe the dietary restrictions common among other Hindus. The most important thing to a Nepali today is finding a way to make it in the United States. "Making it" means finding a good job that pays the bills and provides health insurance and finding a way for remaining family members to come to the U.S. from Nepal.

## Conclusion

The Nepali refugees in Louisville, KY have been through much struggle and turmoil. Cultural traditions have been challenged and stripped away while new traditions are added. Typically, cultural change takes place slowly but the Nepalese have been forced to face new realities at an unparalleled pace.

Village Manor is a place where two worlds come together. There are enough refugees to maintain a certain amount of cultural heritage. The community garden represents a link to life in Bhutan. Familiar sounds and smells are found in the Nepali apartments. The older generation of refugees remain more Nepali than American, refusing to learn English and remaining isolated in their apartments. The younger generation are facing new realities, however. The community room represents a place of hope and a window to America. There they can learn English, have a resume made, and practice interviewing skills. Jobs and skills classes are posted. The two worlds meet as Nepali and American come together, eat each other's food, and form relationships.

This study has shown a distinct progression in worldview as the Nepalese moved from Bhutan to Nepal to Kentucky. Geographic changes stripped animism away as the ancestral spirits remained in the former locations. Cultural changes have made farming obsolete. New skills must be added to secure a job. Formerly, the most important things in life were appeasing the spirits in order to ensure healthy, fertility, and crop success. Currently, the most important things in life are gaining the skills needed to find a good job and bringing remaining family members to the United States. Success has been redefined; priorities have changed. What remains is that the Nepali refugees will do whatever it takes to "make it in the U.S."

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