

Interrupting the Middle: Doing and Undoing Gender of Nepalese Students in Australia

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Abstract

This research aims to explore gender relations in the course of student migration from Nepal. It enquires into how Nepalese migrant students in Australia continue or discontinue traditional gender roles by disclosing the lived experiences of a small cohort of Nepalese female students in Brisbane, Australia. A review of the relevant literature indicated that, despite significant development in the field of gender and migration research worldwide, the gender aspect of Nepalese student migration is still under-researched. Responding to this gap, I have developed a study that investigates the ways in which Nepalese female student migrants are negotiating gender relations between home and abroad. This study revolves around their changing perspectives on traditional gender relations as a result of living in the changed socio-cultural settings of host country, and the inherent challenges of implementing the changes in conventional interpretations of gender-based roles after returning their home country. Importantly, I share the same ethnic background and similar migration history with the research participants. Furthermore, my several years of professional experiences in education consultancies became the primary motivation for commencing this study from the position of an 'insider researcher' utilising both ethnographic observation and autoethnographic reflection as research tools. Six married Nepalese female students, studying in different institutions in Brisbane, were requested to participate in a qualitative semi-structured interview. In addition, I draw from autoethnographic observations and reflection on my personal encounters as a student migrant in Australia, as well as professional engagement as an education consultant.

The semi-structured interviews provided the primary data for the research. Interview transcripts were manually coded based on their affinity with two distinct themes: negotiating in-betweenness in gender relations in the course of living in a different context; and circumstances of mobility either in the origin country or in the host country. At the same time, whether playing the role of passive observer or interviewing the participants as a researcher, their activities, as well as personal experiences and stories, were at times similar to my own. The most revealing and common experiences of all the participants after living in Australia was the feeling of emancipation from the yoke of patriarchy, which required them to play traditional gender roles in their country of origin. In spite of their commitment

to make people aware of this new-found freedom, even after returning to their country of origin, the lack of confidence to continue to live with this changed philosophy of life was equally evident in their responses. Moreover, mixed opinions about the metamorphosis of their male counterparts regarding doing and undoing gender also posed a question on whether or not the Nepalese males would continue to cooperate with their wives in introducing changes in the traditional gender roles upon returning to their home country.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed) _____

Narayan Ghimire

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At last, I would like to dedicate this research to the people of Nepal, and hope it will bring new awareness among them with regard to gender and migration from Nepal. I am also hopeful that this research will add a new chapter in the study of gender and migration.

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Chapter One: Introduction

On the very first day of my arrival to Australia, my brother-in-law took me for lunch to his Nepalese friend's home straight from the Brisbane Airport. Upon entering into a totally different world where I had never been before, I was overwhelmed by the newness of everything I saw on the way. After driving for half an hour or so, to the outskirts of Brisbane city, we reached his friend's house. As we entered the house, his friend greeted us from the kitchen where he looked quite busy preparing food. He then introduced me to a young lady who was wearing shorts and t-shirt, and who I subsequently learned was his wife. She was doing a university assignment at that time. The man, again, became busy cooking in the kitchen while I continued talking with his wife. She was, in fact, quite a bold lady who spoke in a straightforward and frank manner. She did not behave like a 'typical' Nepalese wife, nor did she give any special treatment towards her husband — in Nepalese society, a wife is expected to defer to her husband. They had a child who was quite engaged in playing games on the computer while we spoke. As the man finished cooking, he fed his son first and we all ate lunch after that. After the meal, as I went to wash my plate, he tried to stop me from doing so, but his wife spoke up from the back, 'It's common in Australia that everyone washes his/her plate but it is your first day, so you need not do it.'

We spent about one hour talking about general matters after lunch and then we departed as I needed to see my room which I had booked online. On the way, my brother-in-law said, 'Suraj [name changed] is facing domination from his wife. Did you see how she made him do all the work? She does not obey him much. Girls are like that; they change after coming to Australia.' He went on saying this and that but, beyond his knowledge, I had something stirring in my mind. I could vaguely see something in process; however, it was still in an unintelligible form — I could see the changing gender relations due to a change in the socio-cultural context of living in Australia.

A few weeks after that incident, I went to my brother-in law's house where I stayed for five days. He had got married six years earlier and now had two children. During my stay, I was quite surprised seeing him doing most of the household tasks such as cooking, buying groceries, feeding the children, etc. It was because I could see his activities quite opposite to how he reacted when his friend's wife made her husband do all the kitchen work on that day. Moreover, I could not believe it when he spoke about husband-wife relations, 'It is unlike Nepal, husband and wife here are equal, and we should share the responsibilities'. I had neither asked him anything about his friend's domestic affairs before, nor did I ask him about why he was doing all the work this time. However, he was communicating a message, through his controversial remarks, about the context of Nepalese couples doing and undoing gender roles in Australia.

When I came to Australia, I started living in a shared house with three other male students from different countries until my wife came to accompany me three months later. It took a few weeks for me to become familiar with the transportation system as well as local places in Brisbane. I gradually started visiting and spending time with some relatives and other Nepalese families living in Brisbane. One afternoon, I visited one of the couples I knew. When I reached their home, I saw the wife was trying to feed her four-month-old son. Her husband had not come back from work yet and she was struggling to feed the baby. After a while, the husband arrived. No sooner did he enter the house, than he snatched the baby from her arms and started feeding, which gave the impression that it was his regular duty and he knew more about it than his wife. I was quite surprised to see that even the child was eating more comfortably with his dad than with mum.

A few days after that incident, I went to meet them again. This time we were talking about various things and in the course of our conversation, as the husband was speaking, the wife entered into the conversation by expressing her opinion. At this unexpected interruption, the colour of his face changed, and throwing a brief masculine look her way, he shouted, 'Bich ma kura nakaata na! [don't interrupt in the middle!]'. She bowed her head submissively, giving the impression that she realised her mistake of speaking 'in the middle'. Perhaps she had forgotten that, in Nepali culture, when husband or parents-in-law are talking, wives and daughters-in-law are not allowed to speak 'in the middle' or out of turn. On my way back

home, I pondered this exchange; the husband's reaction against the interruption symbolised his reluctance to accept the ways that familial gender relations were changing.

This episode inspired both the thematic focus and the title of this thesis, which is 'Interrupting the Middle: Doing and Undoing Gender of Nepalese Students in Australia'. The main objectives of this research are to explore how students who emigrated from traditional societies of Nepal continue or discontinue conventional gender roles after coming to Australia, and to understand the future implications of their transformed perceptions of gender when they go back to their home country. It concentrates on the significance of changing perceptions of gender among the Nepalese student couples who have been living in Australia, and for this purpose, it has utilised semi-structured interviews of six married Nepalese female students in Brisbane. Two of them came to Australia to accompany their husbands as dependents but they changed their status into students later. One of the participants was relocated from Sydney to Brisbane and started living alone as a student since her married life was not going smoothly. I employ a blend of autoethnographic reflections of my own position as a recent migrant from Nepal, with the data from the ethnographic interviews. In addition, the research draws on rich observations that were either in the course of interviewing the participants, visiting Nepalese families, or also attending some formal and informal gatherings of Nepalese people in Brisbane. Together, these forms of empirical data inspired me to contemplate how gender experiences of Nepalese student couples shift during their time spent living in Brisbane.

The following table summarises the mobility experiences and the marital status of the participants who were selected for interview.

Name (these have been changed for confidentiality)	Date of Arrival in Australia	Marital Status and Details	Visa Status	Mobility Experiences
Priya	April 2018	Arranged marriage immediately prior to her migration to Australia. Shortly after arrival she separated from	Arrived initially as a dependent on her husband's visa. Has changed to a Student Visa now with her husband	Originally Priya came to Sydney as a dependent with her husband. She has since shifted to

		her husband and they are living separately but are still co-dependent due to their visa status.	as the dependent. Studying Masters of Public Health.	Brisbane and are living separately.
Laxu	July 2017	Married, but arrived in Australia independently. Her husband joined seven months later as a dependent on her visa.	Student visa with husband as dependent. She is studying Master of Public Health	Living in Brisbane, initially living alone but later joined by her husband.
Subana	February 2017	Married. Arrived in Australia after marriage.	Student Visa, with husband as a dependent, studying nursing.	Living in Brisbane.
Prekshay	March 2018	Married prior to migrating to Australia, to a Nepalese man who was already living in Australia.	Came to Australia as a dependent on her husband's visa, studied a Certificate III in Individual Support as an Assistant Nurse. She now works in Aged Care Center	She completed Bachelor of Nursing from India, and she had just started a job in Nepal when she got married with a Nepalese man living in Brisbane, Australia Working as an assistant nurse.
Anita	October 2017	Married prior to migrating to Australia.	Student visa, with husband as dependent. She is currently studying Bachelor of Nursing	Living and studying in Brisbane with her husband.
Sumitra	March 2018	Married just one week before her departure to Australia in order to study.	Student visa, her husband has accompanied her as a dependent, studying Professional Accounting	Living and studying with her husband in Brisbane.

Background

This study investigates the circumstances of doing and undoing the gender roles of Nepalese students in Australia, and also looks into the future implications of their continuing and discontinuing gender roles upon returning to Nepal. In order to explore the gendered dimensions of migration among Nepalese students, the thesis examines the lived experiences of Nepalese student couples, which were recorded through semi-structured interviews of six married female students who are living in Brisbane, Australia.

Nepal is one of the countries in South Asia which is structured through patriarchal social relations, patricentric family conventions, and patrilocal residence patterns. Gender plays a significant role in shaping very different life experiences for men and women in Nepal as many socially constructed roles are based on sex. In Nepalese society, males have the privilege of dominant positions in all spheres of private and public lives, whereas females are assigned subordinate roles with no autonomous identity of their own. According to Neupane (2017), 'Men continue to dominate women in public spaces, treating women as occupying a subordinate position in society' (p. 58). In family life, the father is, by default, the head of the family and makes most of the socio-economic decisions, hence 'the patriarch'; the majority of couples in Nepal live with the man's family after marriage, making families patrilocal; and the family line is continued through the males — women take the family name or surname of the husband and the same is transferred to their children — making it patrilineal (Dahal 2016, p. 6). Thus, Nepalese society is characterised by powerful forms of gender stratification and inequality that have their basis in the organization of domestic life.

In Nepal, there is high gender inequality in all strata of family, as well as in their social lives, education, and economic and political activities. Males in Nepalese society have the freedom to choose their own lifestyles, whereas females are assigned roles to play within the sphere of domestic labour. According to the data of the global gender gap documented by the World Economic Forum (2015), Nepal is placed 110th among 145 total countries. The opportunity to participate in economic activities, health and survival, and political empowerment, were the criteria of this ranking. Nepal's low ranking, as reflected by the data of the global gender gap, reveals the traditional gender-based family pattern, according to which the oldest male

has the highest position in the family, while females have to perform subordinate roles and are deprived of all the opportunities which males enjoy.

These gender relations have also influenced the dynamics of Nepalese emigration. Historically, international migration either for employment or for study purposes, has mainly been perceived as a male phenomenon in Nepalese societies. Up until recently, there have been rare cases of international migration of Nepalese females. Women would mostly stay at home, look after children or engage in domestic and agricultural work, and support the running of small family businesses. Those who did emigrate would only move over short distances (to regional neighbours such as India), and mostly by accompanying their husbands and other members of their family. According to Bajracharya (2015), patriarchy is the root cause of this condition because it has restricted females in Nepal to work outside of their homes and limited their movement to within household activities. Only rich people — the majority of whom are men — would travel for the purpose of education, in which case women would occasionally accompany their husbands.

Lately, there have been considerable changes in such patterns of gendered migration from Nepal. The political movement in 1990 overthrew the three-decades-long Panchayat system in Nepal and it was followed by many other social revolutions, which eventually had a positive impact on the growth of Nepalese student migration to different countries. India has remained the most popular destination for student migrants from Nepal. However, in recent years, other destinations, such as Australia, USA and UK have been quite popular among Nepalese students. According to Valentin (2015, p.321), ‘The relaxation of emigration rules combined with 10 years of armed conflict between government forces and Maoist insurgents (1996–2006) and the ensuing post-conflict situation characterised by political instability contributed to increase in emigration from Nepal’. This indicates that, apart from introducing favourable emigration policies, the adverse political environment in Nepal was also a significant factor which forced Nepalese students to find alternative study destinations. The vulnerable political atmosphere coincided with some affirmative changes in migration regulations because of which Nepalese students started departing to different countries for study opportunities.

Traditional gender roles in Nepal tend to limit female movement within household activities, which has been the main discouraging factor for female participation in both foreign employment and foreign education opportunities. Shakya's (2014) finding reveals that in comparison to the ratio of migration from Nepal in 2001, there was substantial increase in male migration rate in 2011 as it rose by 40% more than in 2001, but in the case of females, there was only a 34% increase. Even for study purposes, more males than females migrate from Nepal, but still gender inequality is not as pronounced in educational migration patterns as it is in labour migration. Bhadra's (2007, p. 5–6) study reveals, 'Nonetheless, due to gender discrimination, their migration and the work is not smooth, safe and/or secure, from within their homes/families and their country, through the country/countries of transit to the country of employment'. There is a continuous rise in the flow of Nepali students who go to different countries for their further studies. Ministry of Education Nepal statistics show that a total of 32,889 students went to different countries for further studies while it was only 30,696 in the year 2014–15 (The Himalayan Times, 2016, December 21). After the year 2007, there was a noticeable increase in the flow of Nepalese students who chose to study with different Australian education providers. O'Keefe's (2007) study shows that there were 2,884 Nepalese students who commenced their studies in various institutions of Australia in 2007, a 504% increase in comparison with the record of the previous year. In the case of Nepalese students, Australia has been one of the most preferred study destinations. The statistics recorded by the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs (2014) state 36,940 Nepalese-born people were living in Australia, seven times more than in the year 2006. According to the Australian Government's Department of Education and Training a total of 15,219 Nepali students were studying in different regions in Australia. Among them 61.2% were males while female participation was only 38.8% (Research Snapshot 2015 February).

Research Problems

Despite the significant increase in the number of female students from Nepal who migrate for further studies, an obvious gender gap still exists regarding the participation in foreign education opportunity due to the patriarchal family system. According to Bajracharya (2015), females in Nepalese society have to undergo the experience of male domination both before and after marriage. Both fathers and husbands possess the authority to make decisions about all issues related to their daughters and wives. Although several research works have been conducted regarding Nepalese student migration, I have noticed a lack of sufficient research specific to the gender aspects of student migration from Nepal. Besides, both male and female students who represent conventional gender roles, encounter many shocking experiences during the initial periods of their entry to the open Australian society with a spirit of equality. Since they come from the society in which they are accustomed to live with the prejudice that males and females should perform distinct roles both in domestic as well as social spheres of life, they tend to react with the feelings of disbelief when they arrive to the society that does not differentiate (at least not formally) between males and females regarding their engagement in domestic as well as social activities.

As they spend some years living in Australia, both groups are likely to perceive different meanings and interpretations of their gender roles which are likely to pose challenges to the traditional gender relations and patterns upon their return home to Nepal. Dahal (2016) observes a changed perception of gender among Nepalese men in Portugal as they put fewer restrictions on women, symbolising “undoing gender” since gender-based roles, particularly in the case of females, are considered compulsory in Nepalese society. In many cases, they have to compromise with dual gender roles throughout their lives, i.e., the one as expected by the conventional society back home and the other offered by the open society that they are living in, with a lesser degree of gender discrimination. In the course of living in a new society, Nepalese student migrants begin to adopt new-found meanings of gender in day-to-day life, such as feminine and masculine practices shifting, and domestic roles and responsibilities being adapted into new routines and configurations. However, as they go

back to their home society, they may have to continue traditional gender roles because of the obvious differences of their socio-cultural setting.

Notwithstanding the positive development in the flow of migration from Nepal for study opportunity, females have less freedom to make migration choices in comparison with males because of the patriarchal social pattern. Boyd and Grieco (2003) argue that gender relations and hierarchical family circumstances have impacted on the migration of women because family circumstances are the points of origin for female subordination to male authority. They begin to learn about the different gender roles for sons and daughters, as well as husbands and wives from the family environment they live in. Ghosh (2009, p.20) believes, 'The nature of gender relations in the sending society is a crucial determinant of both the ability of women to migrate and the pattern of migration'. He implies that, in many migrant-sending societies, gender roles, which are socio-cultural constructions, still shape` female migration patterns. However, after they migrate to a different society, they slowly and gradually change their interpretations of gender norms due to the influence of socio-cultural contexts in host societies.

During the 11 years I have worked as a study abroad education consultant, which I have continued even in Australia, I have counselled many female students and female dependents who accompany their husbands. Most of them find migration as a means to escape the gender discriminations in their home country, as they could now enjoy emancipation from the responsibility of performing as a daughter-in-law in an extended family. In order to represent a comprehensive picture of gender relations, research should include both male and female perspectives of gender (Khadka, 2014: 21). This emphasises the necessity of including both males' and females' experiences in gender research. However, there is a tendency that most of the gender research look at gender relations through the experience of males alone, or, that experiences of females are mediated through their relationship to their husbands, male partners, or families. My research aims to shift the focus to the females' perspective of gender relations based on their lived experiences where they are the agents of their own transformation. A study by Rolls and Chamberlain (2004) reveals similar experiences of Nepalese migrant females in Australia because this has given them the opportunity of emancipating from the obligations

of playing subordinate roles, and they are now capable of seeing themselves as autonomous individuals. Furthermore, their husbands consider their involvement in the decision-making process of family-related issues, forging an egalitarian bond between husband and wife. As a result of integrating with open society, and as a result of shifting from a traditional joint family to a nuclear family, men begin to perform non-traditional caregiving roles and support their wives in household duties, which is quite unusual in the society back home where males are not expected to perform such roles. According to Dahal's (2016) interviews of male migrants in Portugal, they began to share household activities with their wives because of the impact of the context after coming to Europe. After living in Portuguese society they have developed the understanding that there should not be division of work on the basis of gender. However, Adhikari's (2010) finding opposes this since, 'Men, who have migrated to the UK as dependent husbands, feel demoralized and frustrated because they do not have the same social position they would enjoy in Nepal' (p. 174). It suggests that the influence of changed social contexts on gender behaviour cannot be generalized to be same since not all males who migrate from traditional to open societies develop the same understanding regarding the changing gender roles. Moreover, those studies are focused on male's experiences, and thus do not represent the gender perspective of migrant females in the host societies. My research attempts to redraw the boundary of male centered gender research in that it accommodates females' own experiences of gender relations while living in the host society.

While the studies by Dahal and Adhikari reveal how Nepalese men's doing or undoing gender is influenced by the socio-cultural setting, my research attempts to relate the experience of migrant Nepalese female students who have been doing or undoing gender in the receiving country, and also how they intend to continue or discontinue after returning to their country of origin. This study, thus, is intended to understand and explore how the foreign education opportunities taken up by female students from Nepal impacts gender relations.

Research Questions

This research has formulated the following questions to address the focus of this research:

1. How do Nepalese female students continue/discontinue traditional gender roles while living in Australian society?
2. How do they perceive the consequences of such change regarding gender roles, both in Australia and back home?

These questions are intended to shed light on how Nepalese students, after arriving in Australia, compare their perception of gender roles based on their experiences of two conflicting social settings, i.e., of the host country and the country of origin. This study accommodates the perceptions of Nepalese female students regarding the issue of positioning in different roles such as daughter, wife, daughter-in-law, and mothers in both societies.

The context of revealing their experiences of performing their gender role in changed social situations represents how they have been continuing or discontinuing gender at present. It also focuses on how they value or challenge the traditional gender roles in the country of origin. In addition, it also gives space to the discussion on their opinion of their male partner's perceptions and experiences of sharing the responsibilities in domestic spheres that are typically referred to as feminine duties back in their home country. It further, attempts to explore future implications of their changing perceptions of gender. In fact, this question assumes the consequences of change of meaning and interpretation of gender when the migrants return to their home country or continue to live in Australia.

Research Outcomes

The purpose of this research is to reveal the changing perception of gender among Nepalese female students who are in Brisbane, Australia. It employs semi-structured interviews with Nepalese female student migrants who are living in Brisbane. It also compares the level of impact on the concept of gender in the country of origin to that of their lived experiences in Australia. Alongside the project's aim to understand how Nepalese students perceive gender roles before and after arriving in Australia, the research compares the meaning of 'gender' in both societies based on the experiences of those migrant students and their families.

In short, the research identifies the significance of changing social contexts on female and male student migrants from Nepal for doing or undoing gender in Australia and upon returning home to Nepal. It examines how traditional gender roles are being continued or discontinued by Nepalese student couples in the course of living in a host society as temporary migrants. Based on the lived experiences of Nepalese female students living in Brisbane, Australia, it also looks into the possibility of living with the changed meaning of gender after returning to their country of origin.

This research focuses on the following proposed outcomes:

- To explore the challenges of doing/undoing gender both in the host and home countries.

- To reveal how the change in gender perception among Nepalese students, particularly females, after arriving Australia, has affected their private and public lives.

- To make the people of the host country aware of the negative and positive aspects of invisible gender relations of student migration to Australia.

- To inform education agents and counsellors in Nepal about how Nepalese students have been affected or benefitted by the new-found meaning of gender in Australia so that they could counsel future students accordingly.

- To acquire knowledge of essential research skills that can contribute while continuing my future academic journey in research.

Through the above intended outcomes, the research considers the impacts on shifting gender roles on the wellbeing of Nepalese communities, students and others, living either in the sending or receiving countries.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In light of the wide range of studies conducted in the field of gender and international migration, this research has specific aim of exploring the gendered dimensions of student migration from Nepal. This chapter reviews previous published research works in the field of migration and gender. The focus of this review is to illuminate how knowledge has evolved in the research fields that investigated similar circumstances of migrant students from Nepal for doing and undoing gender roles which I have foregrounded in this research. This chapter is organised thematically, surveying different — but overlapping — bodies of literature that engage with the ‘gender/migration nexus’. In order to elucidate the clear themes that keep affinity with the context of gender and migration, this chapter is divided into three different sections. The first section comprises of previous studies specific to Nepalese migration to foreign countries, while the second section incorporates insights from broader international migration literature. The final chapter focuses on the research works that engage with gender relations in everyday life. The chapter concludes by demonstrating that there is a clear gap in the existing literature.

Nepalese Migration Literature

As this research intended to explore the specific nature and context of gender and migration of Nepalese students, the literature from previous studies were selected for review which represented a comprehensive picture of gender relations and migration gender and migration in the context of Nepal. This section focuses on the existing literature that relates to the experiences of Nepalese students’ migration, as well as labour migration to various countries. I specifically concentrated on the theme of gender in relation with the migration and mobility of Nepalese women in those studies. Furthermore, I found that the inclusive study of the diverse groups of literature related to Nepalese migration could give insight into

the context of gender and migration from Nepal since they discuss the involvement of migration agencies, as well as the socio-political, gender, cultural and other differences in the sending and receiving countries. Since my study aimed at exploring the circumstances of migration and gender based on the lived experiences of Nepalese students in Brisbane, I felt that reviewing previous research works specific to the Nepalese migration context would be more beneficial.

According to Khadka, 'in Nepal, the division of work is based on a person's gender which enables the majority of women to engage in a reproductive role, whereas men are in productive and community work' (2014, p.17). He implies that gender determines the division of domestic as well as social responsibilities in Nepalese society, and females are prevented from participating in productive and community work because of their gender. Similarly, mobility of Nepalese women, as Valentin (2015) notes, is more restricted in comparison with that of men, and is tied up with a set of expectations regarding suitable behaviour and future pathways for women. Bhandari (2015) opines that Nepalese society, because of a lack of opportunity to proper education, has the dominance of conservative assumptions which gives space to discriminatory gender relations. In Nepalese society, males tend to engage in work outside the home since they are assigned the responsibility of providing financial support to other family members, whereas females' roles are largely confined within the domestic spheres (and are thus discouraged from working outside of the home). The study by KC, Van Der Haar and Hilhorst (2017) nevertheless discloses the different finding since they found that Nepalese women, during or after the Maoist movement, started to engage in the jobs such as agriculture, business, politics or social sectors, which used to be performed by only men before. It was because many males, in the rural areas of Nepal, were killed in the war, many of those who were alive, chose to out-migrate for financial gain, and also to get rid of the situation of being forced participate in the war. Yet there was not substantial increase in the female migration from Nepal, female participation in those sectors more of necessity than of changes in gender roles. One study explores that females constituted a significantly lower percentage of international migration from Nepal, registering only 12%, even in the interval between 2001 and 2011 when it saw a marked increase in the trend of migration from Nepal (Sharma, Pandey, Pathak, & Sijapati-

Basnett, 2014). Findings of this study indicate that gender-based discrimination with regard to migration from Nepal, as there was vast gap between the percentage of male and female migration.

In spite of many political changes, most of the Nepalese women have not experienced emancipation from the yoke of traditional gender norms and roles, which require them to perform gender based roles in the name of continuing cultural and religious values, for example, not leaving the house without a male family member such as their husband or others (Neupane & Chesney-Lind, 2014). The primary meaning and purpose of females' lives in Nepalese society is marriage, and the tragedy is that they do not have freedom to make their own choice (Bhadra & Shah, 2007). Due to the dominance of conventional and superstitious beliefs which value male supremacy, females in Nepalese society have been prevented from making their own decision even in the most sensitive cases, such as education and marriage. Bhadnari's (2015) finding reveals that people in Nepal, mostly the girls, were forced to marry early due to family pressure, as well as superstitious beliefs in the society. In most cases, they are controlled by their fathers before marriage; in many societies, females are still discouraged from choosing their life partners because it is believed that fathers have the right to make decisions on behalf of them. Khadka (2014) states, 'Nepal's patriarchal society gives men a greater social and economic status than women. The role of women in decision-making is negligible except in raising children and household management' (p.43). Both Bhandari and Khadka are of the opinion that females in Nepal are deprived of the opportunity to live independently, their role is restricted within household chores, and they have no opportunity of being involved in decision-making activities. Therefore, we can infer that gender has distinct impacts upon the process of migration from Nepal (Bhandari, 2009). These impacts are unequally distributed between women and men.

While it is obvious that traditional gender relations shape the way in which female Nepalese migrants engage in migration, it is through migration that women are able to challenge the patriarchal norms and structures outlined above. Adhikari (2010) examines the frustration and anxiety among Nepalese nurses in the UK due to the misguidance of education and migration consultancies of Nepal although they had to pay a hefty service charge. In Nepal nursing is considered to be a female's profession. Those nurses who relied on the information

provided by the education consultancies in the course of migration regarding jobs, remuneration and other facilities had complaints against those service providers when they found the situation different than they were told. It implies that such agencies should be obliged by their professional ethics, i.e., to provide factual information about the challenges that migrants are likely to encounter. In spite of the difficulties they had to face initially, their migration had a positive impact to uplift their position both in their families and society. As Adhikari (2010) further observes, the international career of Nepalese females in nursing has resulted in visible changes in family and gender relations since they have been valued as a family asset and their migration enhances the family's honour and social standing. Adhikari's research shows that although Nepalese nurses had to face challenges as migrants in a foreign land, this had a positive impact on their status both in the family as well as in society. Shakya's (2014) study also analyses the changing gender status of females, 'The proportion of females migrating to Europe is much higher than males, possibly due to education, employment or marriage' (p.232). In most cases migration to European countries is provoked by factors such as economic opportunity, dreams of a better future career, aspirations for a better education, and the like (Saru, 2015). The study by Baral and Sapkota (2015) indicates that a better working environment, educational opportunities, as well as better remuneration abroad to be strong motivating factors for Nepalese nurses to migrate abroad. Bhadra (2007) finds the positive aspects of foreign employment opportunity towards the path of independence as he mentions, 'The opening of opportunities for Nepalese women in the global labour market has transformed the image of women from dependents to economic actors' (p. 14). In a nutshell, the studies reviewed above reveal that secure career opportunity and economic independence have become the major attractions for female migration from Nepal. They also point out that the increasing trend of female migration for career reasons has significant contribution in changing the image of Nepalese society because this has made them successful not only to live independently, but also to change the perception of family and society towards them.

In recent times, there has been significant research conducted regarding Nepalese migrants' process of acculturation and their perception about their changed socio-political context. Gartaula (2009) argues that the changing trend of migration has significant influence on

different aspects of society, i.e., social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions in both the sending and receiving countries. Bajracharya (2015) documents the changed perceptions of Nepalese migrant women during the process of their amalgamation into Portuguese society as most of them enjoyed financial independence by finding employment or running a family business. While Bajracharya infers that the financial freedom gained after migration as an encouraging factor for Nepalese females for assimilating with different socio-political contexts, Adhikari (2013) suggests that the financial opportunities for the migrant women, which gave economic freedom to the women of the young generation after migration, also required their dependent husbands to compromise with their subordinate social and professional status in the changed context. However, Nepalese male migrants who were living in Portugal had a different experience because they believed that due to living in a different socio-political context provided them an opportunity of transforming their perception and practice of gender (Dahal, 2016). At the same time, some Nepalese diaspora living in Oslo reveal different versions of their migration experience because in spite of living in changed socio-cultural contexts, they have been able to change their perception of gender relations since they still have deep attachment with their families and relatives as well as a political scenario of their homeland (Bhadnari, 2015). The findings of these studies imply that although Nepalese migrants have changed their understanding of gender relations to a greater extent after living in different societies, they still have attachment to their native traditions and cultures.

Some studies have investigated the contexts in which Nepalese males felt uncomfortable with the changing gender roles since they had a pre-occupied concept regarding gender roles as in their home country. Adhikari (2013) has observed cases of discomfort due to 'role reversal' with some of the Nepalese husbands in the UK as they went there to accompany their wives, who were working as nurses. These findings imply that males who migrate from countries with traditional gender concepts experienced difficulties in their new roles of husbands as they had to compromise their dominance over their wives. Coming from a society where husbands have the upper hand, they were now required to share the household tasks which were previously performed only by their wives.

Some studies have explored the different aspects of migration in Nepal, i.e., utilising the knowledge and skills that they learned while living in foreign countries back in the country of their origin. This is quite a new subject of investigation in migration studies because most of the migration research in the past would focus on socio-cultural as well as economic factors involved in the course of migration. Recent research scholars have started investigation on the use knowledge and expertise, which they glean in course of migration, when they come back home. This hitherto unexplored phenomenon has drawn the attention of some scholars in migration studies. Ghimire and Maharjan (2015) argue 'To date there is neither a documentation of returnees' individual accounts of what knowledge and skills they gain from the migration cycle, nor an adequate focus on returnees' thoughts and experience about using their knowledge in the home country' (p. 91). Their finding implies that research on how Nepalese return migrants utilize their knowledge and experiences is an under-researched phenomenon. Ghimire and Maharjan (2015) further opine that Nepalese returnees, in spite of having adequate skills and experiences, fail to contribute in their respective fields due to the lack of infrastructure, non-responsive policy and lack of required facilities. It indicates that concerned authorities in the country of origin need to take action to create an environment which would encourage the returned migrants to contribute the knowledge and experience they gained in the course of living in foreign countries. There are some studies that focus on the different aspects of return migration. A study by Levitt (1998) regarding social remittances focuses on 'the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities' (p.926). Although her research highlights how migrants' import their socio-cultural experiences of living in receiving countries when they return to home countries, it does not give space to the gender experiences, particularly of female migrants which my research highlights in the context of Nepal. Nepalese female migrants, according to one study, 'expect gender equality within the family and the community, and treatment by the State as equal citizens' (Bhadra, 2007, p.41). In order for the female migrants to contribute with their changed perception of gender relations, after returning to their home country, learned the concerned authority in government needs to assure the atmosphere of gender equality.

The impact of remittances on family members who are left behind, particularly the wives, has been one of the major focus areas for the researchers of Nepalese migration studies. In the case of many Nepalese households, money remitted by their migrant family members in different countries has not only become helpful for their survival but also contributed in uplifting their standard of living (Bohra & Massey, 2009). Most of the cases of migration from Nepal are influenced by the perspective of sending money back to the family members left behind — money which is used for covering household expenses, as well as changing their lifestyle. Gartaula, Visser and Niehof (2012) point out the similar view as they found a positive reaction from the wives towards their husbands' migration because they could improve their financial condition and also utilise the money for a better future for both themselves and their children. Based on their findings, it can be concluded that financial remittances sent by migrants is the main motivation of labour migration from Nepal. While wives were happy with the husbands' migration to enhance their financial condition, it is unclear if male migration would uplift their position in the family as well as in society. Research focusing on the consequences of male labour migration from Nepal on the social and economic position of women left behind has been a recent concern among many researchers. A group of researchers have found that 'The impact of male migration on the women left behind has received slightly more attention than female migration' (Maharjan, Bauer, & Knerr, p. 2012). It is believed that most of the migration studies highlight only the positive effects of male migration on the wives left behind. This, as a result, has overshadowed the real impact of male migration on the left-behind females which is the most complicated and least understood gendered dynamics of migration. This indicates that there is scope to develop further research on how women migrants are acting as agents of change in gender relations through their own mobility.

Male migration in the Nepalese context has varied impacts on the position of wives left behind. Some studies have revealed that it contributes to the females' empowerment significantly, while others believe that it has rather limited their mobility. Kulczycka (2015) states that male labour migration does not contribute significantly to the empowerment of women left behind in Nepal since traditional patriarchy still continues despite the absence of the husbands, and most of the women do not, or are not able to, choose the circumstances

and resources available to change their position. In the case of some Nepalese women, male migration to foreign countries may provide favourable circumstances; others, however, perceive this as an obligation for undertaking the burden of responsibilities (Kulczycka, 2015). It suggests that the impact of male migration on the women left behind in Nepal varies based on the circumstances. Some utilise this as an opportunity to uplift their position but others, at the same time, undergo the burdensome experience of carrying the responsibilities in the absence of their husbands. Gartaula et al. (2012) find female involvement in the agricultural sector as labourers is one of the significant influences of male migration abroad. Conversely, other research suggests since male migration from Nepal increased the flow of remittance, it has caused a decline in women's participation in the labour market (Lokshin & Glinskaya, 2009). The findings of this research imply that even in the absence of males, females in Nepalese society are not emancipated since factors like lack of financial opportunities, traditional assigned values and others still preventing them from making autonomous decisions stand in their way. Moreover, those research works do not address the gender aspect of migration adequately. This discloses the gap in the previous studies regarding how gender relations are renegotiated in the process of couples' temporary migration from Nepal. Although those studies raised the burning issues of gender and migration in the context of Nepal, they have nevertheless failed to incorporate the issue of how gender relations are renegotiated in the process of temporary couple migration. By the same token, there is also a lack of research that adequately examines the changes of gender perception among female migrants in the different socio-cultural settings of host societies. Hence, my study addresses this gap in the study of gender and migration from Nepal.

Researchers have different findings regarding the primary motives of females' migration from Nepal. While Saru (2015) presents education to be one of the most influential factors behind Nepalese immigration to Norway, Sharma et al. (2014) observe the distinctive reasons behind male and female migration from Nepal. For males, employment is the primary influential factor to migrate both within Nepal and also outside the nation for foreign employment; whereas in the case of women, for most of them migrating to foreign destinations, marriage is the primary reason. Shakya's (2014) research displays the evidence supportive to this argument which says 54% of total female migration is due to marriage;

whereas 72% of male migration from Nepal has been for the sake of employment opportunities. Bhadra's (2007) discovery, however, opposes this finding regarding what influences the migration process of Nepalese females since, 'The primary motivation for women to migrate is to provide a better life for their children' (p.56). These contradictory findings regarding the motivating factors of female migration from Nepal denote how traditional gender roles shape the mobility of women in the course of migration because most of the females as indicated by those studies migrate either because of marriage or with the hope of a better future for their children rather than because of their own career perspectives. Bohra and Mishra's (2011) investigation on the circumstances of migration from Chitwan Nepal reflects that marital status played a different role on student migration and labour migration since he found that unmarried candidates had a higher possibility of migrating for studies but in the case of migration for work, people who were married and had the responsibility of family were more likely to migrate. Bohra and Mishra's (2011) finding implies that after marriage, migration from Nepal takes place mainly for the sake of personal as well as the family's financial prosperity. As a result, in most cases, married candidates chose to migrate for employment opportunities. At the same time, it also mentions that unmarried candidates have more chance of migrating for study opportunity. This analysis has great significance in the study of migration and mobility. However, it does not specify if males and females are affected in the same way or differently in both forms of migration.

International Migration Literature

My reading of research publications associated with gender and migration from Nepal, beyond a doubt, had substantial benefit in that I could gain knowledge of the context of migration and gender relations in Nepal. However, I found them not addressing the core focus of my research as I intended to investigate the changing gender perception among Nepalese female students based on their lived experiences before and after migration to Australia. Therefore, I decided to shift my focus to reviewing the research of international migration that would cover a wide range of analyses and findings about dimensions of international migration, especially those specific to the circumstances of female international migration. Pinawala (2009) argues that research into migration has only partly addressed the issues of women empowerment. Most of the migration studies interpret females in relation with male migration because of which they have not covered actual experiences of females regarding gender and migration. Similarly, Carling (2005) believes that only having knowledge of trends in relation to gender with females does not always result in convincing outcomes in migration studies. Carling's statement implies that migration studies have a broad spectrum, therefore, knowledge of how to associate gender issues with females may not always produce effective results in migration research. It is imperative for migration theories and models to include the multiple aspects of women's lives which they are caught up with the reality of changes in employment, household and social structures because females' participation in all forms of migration has a direct or indirect impact on all spheres of familial as well as social lives in both the sending and receiving countries.

With this perspective in mind, I commenced reading various published international migration research books and journal articles from diverse socio-cultural contexts, particularly concentrating on the circumstances of international migration of males and females. Evidently, gender issues of international migration highlighted by the previous research works could have proximity with the focus of my research since I intended to investigate the circumstances in which Nepalese students, in their migration status in Australia, reveal their experiences of shifting gender relations. Therefore, the research that emphasised the lived experiences of migrants from various socio-cultural backgrounds was

mostly selected for the reviews. Apart from this, the push and pull factors of migration, as well as the impact of migration on the lives of those left behind, especially females, were the major focus of this review.

The varying degree of socio-cultural contexts determines the perception and interpretation of gender. This obviously has an impact on how migrants experience gender relations in changed contexts. Hagen-Zanker (2008) defines migration as 'temporary or permanent move of individuals or groups of people from one geographic location to another for various reasons ranging from better employment possibilities to persecution' (p.4). This interpretation of migration integrates the push and pull factors either because of the employment perspective in the receiving societies or because of the adverse living conditions in the sending societies. Hagen-Zanker (2008) further states that political context plays influential roles in migration decisions. Political instability in the country of origin becomes one of the push factors of out-migration as people start looking for other safer destinations. Quite opposite to this, a favourable, peaceful political atmosphere encourages migrants to choose those countries as their migration destinations because such places can offer better employment opportunities and secured lifestyles. Different research scholars have investigated the impact of migration on various aspects of the lives of people. One study relates migration with the changing interpretation of gender as he believes that migration has changed the way that men and women perceive gender identities (Dahal, 2016). According to Kumar (1999), 'Migration may involve new sets of frameworks impacting gender, culture as well as class' (p.11). Kumar is suggesting a different perspective of migration with regard to its impact on diverse issues of society such as gender relations and cultural as well as other aspects which are the frequently discussed phenomena of migration research. From the analysis of Dahal and Kumar, it gives the impression that changing gender relations should be the integral part of migration studies since the gender perceptions of migrants change as they arrive in the receiving countries with a different socio-political context. Their finding implies that the changes in gender relations of migrants in host societies should be included as a part of migration studies because the interpretation of migration on gender relations vary due to the change of social and economic settings which can explore a broad spectrum of migration research.

Some studies probe into issues such as the impact of gender awareness on the process of migration and the experiences of estrangement that migrants undergo while living in foreign lands. Waldron (2005) foregrounds the necessity of examining the gender dynamics of migration and acculturation which give better understanding of not only the differences of perception that males and females have regarding the process of migration, but also the ways in which perceptions of gender reflect the interplay between migrants' decisions to adopt certain gendered behaviours that they perceive to be normal. The discussion on the differences of meaning and interpretation of migration as experienced by males and females have been highlighted in many migration studies. Waldron, however, emphasised that it should also examine how migrants' understanding of gender indicates their intentional choice of gendered activities.

Obviously, in many cases, contexts of male and female migration vary as per the socio-cultural factors associated. Therefore, international migration research works should incorporate gender dimensions of migration that give space to both male and females' perception of gender during the entire process of migration which includes their experiences of gender relations before migration, during the period of living in the host countries and after returning to their home countries. This can contribute significantly to explore more relevant information regarding gender relations in international migration. Skrbiš (2008) defines migration as a process which disconnects people from their family members and also other relatives and friends with whom they have strong emotional attachments in the country of origin. The hardest part of migration that haunts migrants mentally is the emotional ties they have with the people they have left behind. It is not always limited to the love and affection of the family and friends, they also have the feelings of being disconnected with their culture and traditions. According to Ahmed (1999), 'Migration can hence be considered as a process of estrangement, a process of becoming estranged from that which was inhabited as home' (p.343). It is the inevitable consequence of migration that people are alienated from their own past home where they spent an important part of their lives. Both Skrbiš and Ahmed highlight the separation or disconnection as an inextricable phenomenon that migrants experience in the course of migration.

Some researchers have documented the impact of migration and remittances on gender relations, ethnicity, land use and land distribution in different countries. Carling (2005) notes although changing gender relations due to migration are a kind of social consequence, gender also has its impact on other facets of migration such as intra-family gender relations, as well as a tendency of male and female migrants to remit their earnings. Carling's statement infers that gender and migration have a reciprocal impact on each other because as the changes in socio-cultural contexts due to the migration have effect on the meaning of gender relations, gender also affects other aspects of migration. Fidler's (2015) study on the impact of lengthy absences in the course of migration reveals, 'Women's relationship with the world outside the family was mediated through male relatives, thus reducing women's ability to act as independent agents' (p.413). Women's mobility in many South Asian societies which have a concept of traditional gender relations, is still determined by other family members or relatives when husbands are away from home due to migration. One of the most dominant reasons behind the limitation to females' freedom is the patrilocal pattern of marriage which requires wives to live in the husband's home after marriage. Also, the traditional gender norms according to which sons by birth have a right to the parental property, has put further restriction on females' ability to make free choices. Apart from this, the migration of men does not contribute to any significant change in the position of women from the limitations of their traditionally defined gender roles (De Haas & Van Rooij, 2010). In fact, the husband's migration does not make a difference to the women's movement back home because they still have to perform in the family as well as society according to the established gender-based roles. Moreover, even though husbands remain absent, the wives have to obey other male in-laws in the family, and they also have to perform the tasks of their husband in their absence. Therefore, they have to undergo the situation of double burden due to the men's absence. According to Jetley (1987), 'The females, in most cases the wife of the migrant, shoulder the major responsibility of taking care of the children. They manage the several minor and some major crises in the family, sometimes single-handedly' (p.5). Due to the husbands' migration, the wives that are left behind in many cases have to take responsibility of performing minor to major tasks such as taking care of children, their schooling, amongst others.

Meanwhile, many South Asian countries have implemented policies of gender and age restrictions in order to put limits on female migration (O'Neill, 2001). Females in some societies still cannot make their own choices in their lives, instead they have to wait for permission from male members before making any sort of decisions in their lives. There are several extreme cases of gender discrimination in some countries in South Asia and West Asia where females are legally prohibited from performing certain activities without the permission of male members of the family, such as a father, brother or husband (Ghosh 2009, p.9). Findings from both studies speak about how patriarchal society conventions have imposed limitations on females' movement. They are not allowed to choose any kind of social or physical mobility without permission from male members. Females in many cases have to face gender-based discrimination even after migrating to different countries. Their subordinate position continues even after they arrive to the receiving countries (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). In the case of migration from societies of traditional gender relations, females still have to play gender roles mostly because of their husbands' reluctance to accept the change according to the new contexts of living. In some cases, their lack of confidence to embrace their new-found freedom causes them to compromise with their inferior position. Interestingly, migration policies of some developed countries have also discriminated against female applicants based on gender because of gender-biased migration policies, specifically in Australia and Canada, because in those countries, 'skilled migration schemes disadvantage female applicants substantively if not formally' (Boucher 2007, p.38). Although they do not have any formal announcement of such policy, still females have been the victim of discriminatory decisions by the concerned authorities.

In many developing and less developed Asian countries, female international migration, initially, also took place in the form of international marriages. Indeed, in most cases, migration of females, whether it be movement within the same country or migration to foreign countries, has been mostly as a result of marriage, for the purpose of accompanying their husbands (Ghosh, 2009). Ghosh's findings imply that the female migration process is mainly determined by their marriages as they are supposed to accompany their husband rather than choosing to migrate on their own. But even so, in some countries in Asia, there are many cases of female migration for work opportunity. The responses from the female

nurses who migrated from Philippines to the Middle East disclose that the economic opportunity through well-paid jobs particularly in Saudi Arabia was the main motivating factor of migration (Salami, Nelson, Hawthorne, Muntaner & McGillis Hall, 2014). It suggests that despite the dominance of marriage-based migration from undeveloped countries in Asia, females of some countries such as Philippines have started moving to other countries for employment opportunities in different sectors. Foroutan (2009) noticed that females who migrated from traditional gendered societies in North Africa to a country with a lesser degree of gender discrimination, were still found faithful to the gender roles assigned by the prevailing cultural values in their own origin society. Their attachment towards such cultural depiction of women's traditional roles confining them within the house, and males earning for the survival of the family members was also the reason behind the low wages for those female workers. Some Asian female students, in the study by Shu and Hawthorne (1995), revealed that even after living in Australian society, males were still expecting them to perform household duties and provide support to them for many domestic chores as they would do in traditional societies back in their home country. Females in both these studies could not appreciate their new-found freedom either because of a tendency to feel a longing for the way of life left behind or because of the continuation of male chauvinism in spite of living in advanced societies. Fouroutan's analysis revealed that female migrants from North African societies in spite of living in different contexts, still had attachment with their subordinate roles within household chores and failed to emancipate themselves mentally from their past experiences of living in male dominated societies. But Shu and Hawthorne's findings reveal that husbands of Asian females who were unwilling to change themselves, wanted their wives to continue to perform traditional gender roles even in Australian society. It indicates that a change in geographical location does not necessarily change individual's and communities' expectations of gender roles. It also suggests that understanding the relationship between gender and migration requires close examination of how individuals negotiate gender roles and dynamics between their home and present location.

In addition to the discrimination resulting from the traditions and culture associated with their origin countries, many female migrant workers have also encountered unfavorable situations in terms of receiving their wages such as late payments, deposit of their salaries

into a bank account which is not accessible to them, or even receiving less than their usual wages (Ghosh, 2009). However, the experiences of Taiwanese women who migrated to Australia between 1980 and 2005, as documented in the studies of Rejewski and Blumberg (2014), contradicts this since they were fascinated by the flexibility of their new-found freedom, and were capable of developing new social relations in their new home, and also successful in keeping up their existing networks back home. Also, since they had the opportunity of seeing and meeting better educated, working and more independent female migrants, it made them more aware of other lifestyles which inspired them to realise that their dreams and aspirations can also be achieved (De Haas & Van Rooij, 2010). Indeed, a culture of migration has clearly pervaded women's lives as well. In addition, the opportunity of international migration has established females as 'principal bread earners' in the family which challenged the conventional beliefs of many traditional societies where men were perceived as the bread earners and females were considered solely for their reproductive role (Siddiqui, 2008). This is due to the migration opportunities for females, because of which they became capable of supporting themselves and other family members financially. Conventionally, women in such societies were imprisoned within the four walls of domestic chores but the opportunity of migration opened the door of possibilities for them as they could now challenge the established gender-based roles. Most importantly, due to their economic independence as well as the opportunity of learning from lived experiences in foreign societies, females can now question the traditional boundaries in their countries of origin that restrict them from having autonomous status because the prevailing concept of gender relations in the society in their home country plays a great role to determine females' capacity to migrate and also to influence the overall trend of migration (Ghosh, 2009). In those societies, females were deprived their autonomous choice to migrate since either their parents or husband would determine their migration process. However, because of living in free societies in the host countries, they have been aware of their own freedom. Therefore, they are now capable of questioning the old pattern of the discriminatory migration process.

Feminist researchers advocate on behalf of the feminist analysis of gender in the migration process. The joint research by a group of researchers reveals, 'with demographers claiming that, globally, female migration is now virtually equal to that of males, the phrase "the

feminization of migration” is gaining currency’ (Donato, Gabaccia, Holdaway, Manalansan, & Pessar, 2006, p.4). They emphasise that the feminist approach in migration research is necessary in the wake of the rapidly increasing trend of female migration worldwide which is more or less equal to that of male migration. Boucher’s (2007) investigation analogously emphasises the need for feminist analysis of the gender implications on skilled immigration in many traditional immigration countries since conventional gender concepts in those countries discourage female participation in foreign skilled employment in comparison with males. In addition to this, migration theories should now consider the multiple facets of women's lives and the reality of changes they have encountered in the last few decades in areas such as employment, household duties and social structures (Kofman, 1999). Migration researchers have lately started to realise that feminist researchers could better analyse gender issues related to migration. Family members who are left behind have been ignored by most of the migration studies. As a result, researchers have failed to recognise the new activities and responsibilities that other household members are supposed to perform after the departure of their husbands, wives, parents, brothers and sisters (Pessar, 2005). Aguilar (2009) relates the underlying cultural dimension as the sole influential phenomenon behind economic investment by overseas migrants as symbolic representation of filial duty and kinship — migrants prefer to maintain unoccupied houses and appoint a caretaker for their brief visit, just to symbolise that they have not forgotten their place of origin as ‘showcase of a diasporic life’. Despite the differences of gender perception for male and female migrants, they are equally pulled by the emotional ties in their countries of origin such as with family, culture, property and others.

Long distance male migration, in some societies, has quite mixed impacts on their wives as some find it as an opportunity for autonomy and employment outside the home, while for others, particularly those who have not borne a child, experience insecurity as children are the only evidence, in the case of divorce, for a legal claim on the house where they live (Reeves, 2011). The absence of males creates the opportunity for females to participate, either in employment or other sectors, and make their independent choice to some extent. However, as males still have ownership of the immovable properties, females feel that giving birth to a child is the only means of guarantee of their right to that property in case of

separation with their husbands. The study of rural Morocco discerns that the social convention which allows only men to choose to migrate on their own, and in the case the migrant was married, other family members would look after the chastity of his wife and daughters because females in Morocco seem to have no right to their own body as well (De Haas & Van Rooij, 2010). Taylor, Moran-Taylor, and Ruiz (2006) find migration and remittances to have no significant contribution to community and development as well as gender relations in the country of origin which has a patriarchal social structure, and still prevents the women from enjoying their freedom in the pursuit of equity in male-female relationship. Their statement suggests that male migration and the money sent by them do not bring any changes in the patriarchal social pattern nor do they have any significant role in the development sectors. Migrants send money to their home solely for covering the expenses of their family. Therefore, it is utilised for the benefit of their family, it does not necessarily deliver wider social benefits. Similarly, the husbands' migration does not necessarily uplift the wives' position in the family because they still have to perform gender roles, and in most cases, they are not the ones who receive the money remitted by their husbands and decide how to spend it.

The increase in the flow of international migration for study purposes has drawn the attention of many researchers in migration studies. Most of such studies concentrate on the challenges of adjusting with the meaning of gender as well as socio-cultural situations as experienced by the migrant students. Many males who went to Australia to accompany their wives as dependents from Asian countries, and who believe in traditional gender norms, experienced the 'status shock' as they felt themselves compelled to encounter 'unprecedented role reversal' (Shu & Hawthorne, 1995). In most Asian countries males enjoy a superior position whereby the females have to perform all the household tasks as based on conventional gender relations. However, as they arrive in Australia, the males feel uneasy as they are required to perform tasks they were never required to perform in their home country. Various migration studies relating to the experiences of international students have compared social, gender, and racial inequalities in both host countries and the countries of origin. For example, Schaefer's (2016) study of international students in the USA who have come from different countries indicates that most students experienced changes in their

perception of social inequalities in US society, while others experienced racial inequality which is more prevalent in the host country. Another study, which analyses the characteristics of Asian female student movement to Australia between 1983 and 1994, suggests that, in spite of various challenges such as social, linguistic and academic, there is an increasing trend of female students entering Australian Higher Education, contributing to many changes regarding the female's position in Asian countries (Shu & Hawthorne, 1995). Whereas the survey of literature related to international students' experiences by Smith and Khawaja (2011) demonstrates a lack of empirically tested interventions to support acculturation of international students, it also suggests the necessity of further research in this sector to make the host countries aware of their role to provide support to those students in acculturating into universities and the wider society.

Although several research works have been conducted regarding international education in Australia, they have not represented the presence and specific settlement experiences of Asian female students adequately (Sue & Hathorne, 1995). Ghosh (2009) believes that the migration of young women has been of quite a small scale and is still in the process of growth. Voigt-Graf and Khoo (2004) notice gender biased preference of Indian families regarding student migration to Australia because 'the predominance of Indian male students in Australia indicates the preference of Indian families to send their sons overseas for educational purposes because of what they perceive as greater cultural risks associated with sending their daughters overseas' (p.430). Cultural factors in many countries have become barriers to the migration of females. Shen (2005) observes student migration as an essential phenomenon of international labour migration. She insists on the necessity of better migration management to make a 'win-win situation' for student migration, which can be possible through institutional coordination and cooperation. She emphasises that institutions in the UK/EU need to analyse properly 'both the economic and social impact of student migrants flow in the entire process from selection to integration' (p.434). She proposes research-based procedures during the migration selection process which can produce comprehensive figures regarding the future impacts of migration. According to Dunn, Pelleri and Maeder (2011), 'Although China remains the highest country of international student enrolment, Indian student enrolments have also grown substantially

(by approximately 927 per cent) from 11,364 to 116,728 over this same eight-year period' (p.75). Australia has been one of the major study destinations for students from many Asian countries such as China, India and Nepal.

Gender Relations In Everyday Life

The literature reviewed in previous sections highlighted different socio-cultural aspects in relation to human migration either for employment or for the purpose of study. Obviously, my reading of research publications related to international migrations as well as Nepalese migration literature was immensely beneficial. While the first group of literature provided a great variety of analysis and findings associated with different types of transnational migrations, the second group of resources contributed by broadening my understanding of the characteristics of circumstances of gender and migration in Nepalese society. I could also understand the gender perception of Nepalese migrants based on their experience of living in changed socio-cultural contexts. Still, I found them inadequately addressing the concerns of the research questions since my research intended to highlight how the females, who migrated either as a temporary students or dependents, negotiate and witness their own transformation of gender relations in receiving society. Most importantly, at this stage it made me aware of what I should review next. It was evident that the central focus of my research is changes in gender perception which is in relation to the migration experiences of students from Nepal. For this reason, I reached the conclusion of reviewing the literature related to gender in everyday life.

Different scholars have different conceptions of gender. The term 'gender', was included to social science to mark the difference between social and biological interpretations of sex, and 'it encompasses both men's and women's active roles in society and their ideas about maleness and femaleness' (Carling, 2005, p.2). Many research works have strived to include gender as an inextricable part of social construction as well as a process of migration. Knapp, Muller and Quiros (cited in Dahal, 2016) define gender to be a socio-cultural construct of

female and male identity that shapes how individuals live and relate to the world around them. Gender, they argue, is not a biological phenomenon, but learned in the course of living. In their opinion, male or female identity is created not because of biological factors but because of a socio-cultural construction of gender; whereas, another study contradicts this because such interpretation of gender as a mere social construction, and independent of sex, may bring confusion to the biological meanings of male and female since it signifies the biological structure of being either male or female.

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one (Butler 2002, p.10).

For Butler, gender cannot be constructed by isolating it from the biological interpretation of male and female identity. On the other hand, several research findings interpret gender by associating it with social practices. Mahler and Pessar (2006) defines gender as a meaning that people link to the biological reality indicating that there are two sexes. Many researchers continue to produce similar findings that conventions and traditions, which keep on changing from time to time, are responsible for shaping the gender roles in all societies. According to Holmes (2008, p.130), 'social expectations about "ladylike" or "manly" behaviour do shift, as you will know from sometimes hearing older folk exclaim about how what youngsters are doing or wearing would not have been acceptable in their day'. In the course of changing cultural values and traditions, the perception of gender changes as it is apparent that older people feel that things were different in their day when compared to the present. One research regarding this indicates that cultural settings in every society have numerous dos and don'ts for both male and female gender regarding dress and hairstyle, manners and behaviours (Knowles, 2002). Such prescriptions are not naturally gleaned but are rather socially constructed. Both studies imply that lifestyles and behaviours associated with gender are shaped by social factors rather than biological, and keep on changing as the social norms and values change. Various studies have reached conflicting consequences regarding the interpretation of gender. Sjoberg and Fontoura's (2017) study echoes Knowles's finding

since they believe that concept of gender is constructed by society, and it is, 'a product, but at the same time a producer, of human social expectations' (p.174). Another study by O'Neil (1981) reflects a similar impression since he defines gender roles to be the sets of behaviours and expectations interpreted by society as being associated with masculine or feminine, inherent in the behaviour of the individual man or woman, and culturally regarded as appropriate to males or females. They seem to agree on the point that socio-cultural interpretation of gender was decided based on the observation of biological activities. Whereas several research works have interpreted gender in reference to female sex, Vardazaryan (2016) refutes the idea of associating meaning of gender only with females in various studies because gender, in his opinion, is a social construct which represents the identity of both males and females. Furthermore, Carling (2005), expresses critical views on the conventional and myopic interpretations of gender relations as they did not include other types of relations between men and women, i.e., mothers and sons, brothers and sisters, and also between female employers and male employees. Vardazaryan and Carling insist on the necessity of expanding the scope of gender research so that it incorporates the broader spectrum of gender relations in families as well as societies.

Women in many societies of Asian countries have the pitiable condition in having to perform many gender-based discriminatory roles assigned by their patriarchal society. Bohra and Massey (2009), as well as Williams (2009), have observed that social responsibilities of both men and women in south Asian countries are largely determined and dictated by family life and the institution of marriage which is patriarchal in nature. Institutions of marriage in some countries in Asia have largely restricted female movement within household activities. After marriage women move to live in their husband's house and are expected to remain close to the home to care for their children (as cited in Compennolle, 2017). Nepal is one of those south Asian countries which has a vast gender discrepancy in all layers of society. Bhadra and Shah (2007) argue, 'Nepalese society is son-preferring. The birth of a daughter is neither celebrated nor is her death lamented much' (p.19). This hints at the stark reality of gender-biased social structures of Nepalese society. The traditional gender dimension in Nepalese society has treated men and women differently where males dominate and enjoy superior positions while females are obliged to play traditional submissive roles.

Women are mostly dominated by the men throughout their life; by their father when they are unmarried and husband after they are married. Every big or small decision regarding their lives is decided by the superior of the house, generally men. This is one of the reasons women often end up without adequate education or opportunity to work and are solely dependent on husband, father or brothers for economic support. (Bajracharya, 2015, p. 12)

Traditional family conventions in Nepalese society underpin the husband and his family's objections to wives working away from home, which has forced women to work at home in order to maintain family prestige in the eyes of neighbours and relatives (Neupane, 2017). Both Bajracharya and Neupane have found a common theme — the context of discrimination of females in Nepalese society by the male members based on gender. Neupane further explores how patriarchal social conventions in Nepal allow males to put restriction on female mobility within the institution of the household. It is quite disheartening that Nepalese women, even after the death of their husbands, are not allowed to remarry, and also treated badly by their parents-in-law (Kharel, 2016). Although there have been some changes in the traditional concept of gender roles, males are still regarded as the 'breadwinner' for the family while their wives are considered to be responsible for the household activities (Kharel, 2016). Their analysis forms the image of the subordinate positions of women in Nepalese society where males have been enjoying dominant roles in all facets of family, as well as social life, at the cost of the independence of females. Bhadra and Shah (2007) have also examined the pathetic condition of Nepalese females because according to them, 'women in Nepal have neither the freedom of marital choice nor they have the fertility choice. Many women still go through unwanted pregnancy and childbirth due to lack of choice and decision-making' (p.20).

Fostering the concept of equal participation of females overall in societal activities can enhance the females' position both in the family and society. According to Pessar (2005), 'gender equity is a crucial dimension of democracy, social justice, sustainability, and the eradication of social inequality' (p.16). Gender is not merely about the division of male-female roles but also an essential component of all aspects of society, and gender equality

has positives in other dimensions such as democracy and justice, amongst others. It is necessary to encourage female participation in the development sectors of Nepal so as to introduce gender equality from a socio-economic point of view because the, 'female population is increasing census by census compared to the male population' (Shakya 2014, p.222). Since females have to sacrifice more due to the gender- based roles in Nepalese society and also there are more females than males in Nepal's population, Shakya believes that encouraging female participation can result in gender equality in the social as well as financial sectors. While both Pessar and Shakya have common perspective with regard to the benefits of gender based equality for the all-round development of the society, the latter points out the necessity of encouraging gender based equality in socio-political activities in the context of Nepal because notwithstanding the many political movements for the rights of citizens, the female position has not improved much in Nepalese society.

The restructuring of conventional social patterns and formulating rules and regulations which encourage female participation in socio-economic sectors, is instrumental for the formation of society. The female participants in my research, who have come from the same socio-political context, are the really important actors in the gendered worlds of Nepalese societies. This is because they are the educated people who are capable of contributing to the socio-political changes, and most importantly they also have the experiences of living in both the sending and receiving societies. Their lived experiences of the host society have great significance to explore the veritable pictures of gender discrimination when they go back to the home country which eventually help them identify the inherent factors responsible for unequal gender relations, and also to contribute to the elimination of gender-based discriminations. Al-bakr, Bruce, Davidson, Schlaffer, and Kropiunig (2017) insist on the necessity of reshaping the hierarchical social structures. Since men have enjoyed a privileged position in all spheres of lives, the path to gender equity requires them to reconsider the formation of their own personal as well as professional lives. Another study exhibits the discriminatory traditional gender norms which favour lucrative employment opportunities as well as provision of financial support for husbands, but wives are expected to remain close to home and perform certain assigned roles such as cooking and serving food, as well as providing emotional care to family members (Compernelle, 2017). Bhadra and

Shah's (2007) analysis also resembles similar remarks as it shows a vast discrepancy of income opportunity between males and females in Nepal based on opportunities for employment and the amount of income generated, which has forced women to be victims of poverty. One of the main reasons of male supremacy in Nepalese society is due to the orthodox gender norms which allow men to work outside and have a hold over financial opportunities while women's movements are restricted inside domestic responsibilities. As a result, they cannot have access to employment sectors which has caused them to depend on either their husbands or other male members for financial support. Compernelle, as well as Bhadra and Shah's investigations reveal that due to the women's imprisonment within the household activities, they did not have opportunity of employment and other or access to financial resources, whereas males had hold over those sectors through which they could generate income. Their analysis indicates that economic independence is the major factor to improve women's position in society. This is quite an important area of investigation in my research because how migrant students relate to their experiences of gender and mobility after they become independent financially is one of the major discussions in my research.

Some researchers have investigated family circumstances as well as other socio-cultural factors which are associated with issues of women's international migration. Women's migration has been affected by discriminatory gender norms at almost all points of their journeys, beginning from the family and society to the national level, even government laws and policies are biased towards females in this process (Bhadra, 2007). Moreover, even the migration rules in some countries are found to be discriminatory since they put bans on female movement across the border while males have complete freedom to migrate without any restrictions (Ghosh, 2009). As societies have gender-based discriminatory rules for females, their migration process is affected because those restrictive social policies often discourage female migration although males are not required to face such barriers. Prevailing social conventions that value males as superior to women have direct impacts on the female socialisation process which shapes their values, attitudes and behaviours (O'Neil, 1981). In most societies which have a dominance of traditional gender norms, females are taught to accept that they are inferior to males which is eventually reflected in their everyday activities. Conversely, Butler (2002) opposes this as she finds it illogical to define gender as the cultural

interpretation of sex when sex itself is a gendered category and insists that gender cannot be a mere cultural depiction of 'pre-given sex'. Butler disagrees with the possibility of having a cultural meaning of gender which is in fact associated with biological appearance. Being categorised as male or female is already declared identity based on biological factors. Therefore, she denies the possibility of a cultural meaning in gender since gender, according to her, is already decided by the biological features. It is an obvious fact that traditional norms and values in many societies around the world have treated males and females differently, still, the question whether biological or cultural factors dominate the biological interpretation of gender or vice versa, has been a matter of controversy among many researchers. O'Neil and Butler disagree with each other because the former believes that social norms and values which are discriminatory in nature guide people in society to perform gender-based roles, but the latter refutes this since according to her, sex is already biologically gendered and cultural values alone, therefore, cannot determine meaning and interpretation of gender roles. These studies have raised the very important issue of discussion in my research, i.e., if the meaning and interpretation of gender roles change in socio-cultural contexts, then we need to engage with the nature and mechanisms of change in sites, spaces and scales in which women negotiate and drive such change.

Many studies have made attempts to explore the relation between migration and gender in different ways. According to Donato et al. (2006), 'research on women, gender, and migration has fundamentally expanded and changed since it was last surveyed in IMR [International Migration Review] in 1984' (p. 23). In recent years, researchers have developed new perspectives on the study of female migration since the impact of migration on the status of females should be studied with regard to the time and place they live in and the context of their living (Carling, 2005). This shifting of focus has explored diverse issues of migration and gender. Such scholarship has specifically focused on the limitations of previous research in migration studies with regard to gender. Vardazaryan (2016) charges that researchers have ignored the importance of gender relations in migration activities for several centuries. Boyd and Grieco (2003) draw on the corresponding influence of gender and migration and argue that 'the dual argument that gender is an integral part of the migration process and that theories of migration must incorporate it, has also influenced other areas of migration

research' (p.2). They emphasise on the reciprocal influence of gender and migration while Kumar (1999) advocates on the necessity of space to women's experiences during the process of migration because he finds that many migration research projects have neglected the role of women in the migration process. He believes that women have either been seen as non-migrants, or have been considered as the spouses of migrants, often accompanying their husbands.

Because the process of migration is influenced by gender, migration theories should consider the impact of gender relations in migration studies. The absence of a continuous interchange between feminists and other established researchers in the field of migration studies is one of the prominent reasons of failing to materialise change in theoretical understanding of a gendered international migration in Europe (Kofman, 1999). This advocates the necessity of the joint effort by the feminists as well as other traditional researchers so as to propound convincing change in the study of international gender migration in European countries. Kofman is trying to find the middle path which produces widely acceptable theories of gender migration in European countries. Migration provides the opportunity of social mobility, as well as emancipation from traditional gender norms. In the new country context, both men and women may find greater freedom in many areas of social, political, economic and religious life (Näre & Akhtar, 2014). Similarly, Sharma (2011) believes that as migration gives opportunity of moving away from traditional patriarchal societies, it is a source of empowerment for women since they are capable of earning money and building decision-making power in their daily lives. For the migrant women from many countries of traditional gender relations, migration creates an opportunity of emancipation since they not only have found a favourable socio-political environment but also have achieved financial independence. However, Boyd and Grieco (2003) observe the other side of the relation between migration and gender since they find gender as an organising principle that determines migration and related processes, such as acculturation in the receiving country, continued contact with the country of origin, as well as possible return. Many scholars have continued to support this finding for they believe that migration for women in many societies is an opportunity to escape from the boundary of patriarchal familial and social settings (Hondagneu Willis & Yeoh as cited in Hsu 2014). A study by Dahal (2016, p.14) reveals

'migration has also reshaped the way in which men and women accomplish gender identities.' He implies that people migrating from one type of traditional society to an advanced and relatively more open society find different meaning of gender, which changes their previous understanding of it. These studies advocate on the necessity of a new perspective in international migration research which gives space to the female migration process as equal to that of the male, and which recognises the lived experiences of migrant females. Most importantly, in the case of migration from countries which have societies with traditional gendered relations to advanced countries, females' lived experiences have more to contribute to the new chapters in international migration research.

Conclusion

All three groups of literature related to gender and migration have significant contribution for further development of proposed research. However, in terms of the issues highlighted by those published works, I have found some key gaps which I intend to address through my research. The majority of research works, which examine gender relation in everyday lives, concentrate on the interpretation of gender, either as a biological or social phenomenon while the research works from international migration reflect the direct or indirect impact of migration on females, particularly in traditional societies in Asian countries. Some of them also focus on international students' perceptions regarding the challenges of acculturation. Although some of the research works regarding Nepalese migration for employment and study opportunities raise the issue of gender perception, they do not address concerns of my proposed research adequately, i.e., how students who migrate from traditional societies in Nepal to open societies in other countries, have accumulated a changing perception of gender, and how their experiences of a new-found meaning of gender, both males and females, challenge the traditional gender norms in the country of origin. Therefore, despite the significance of the literature in exploring more on the issue of gender dimensions of migration, I found that they have not pointed out the fundamental characteristics of

continuing and discontinuing traditional gender norms in the course of living in the host society.

Upon reviewing the past research publications belonging to those three different categories, I was now confident that the issues which I wanted to highlight throughout my research questions were in fact under-researched. All of them had partially dealt with the themes of gender and migration, yet there was a considerable discrepancy in terms of the core issues intensified by each of them. Beyond doubt, these studies have explored the broad aspect of migration studies, i.e., in many traditional societies gender influences the process of migration, and also, after living in a society with a different socio-cultural setting, both men and women start revealing their changed perception and interpretation of gender in their day-to-day lives. Some of them concentrated on deriving the biological or cultural interpretation of gender, and also analysing the reciprocal influence of migration and gender. As a whole, they provided an important foundation to observe and analyse the significance of changed social contexts in the perception of gender among Nepalese migrants which I have investigated through the research. However, they have not addressed fundamental aspects of how migrant people, especially migrant students, experience gender in changed living contexts, and also how their changing perceptions of gender roles affect the concept of gender in their home societies when they go back.

Therefore, the absence of the corresponding impact of gender and student migration from Nepal to Australia in the works of former researchers encouraged me to take initiation in this direction because being from the same geographical region, and also based on my professional experience with the before and after migration in Nepal and Australia respectively, I have realised the future scope of this kind of research in migration studies. I am very hopeful that it will add a new dimension to future studies of migration and gender relations.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This project uses two distinct forms of qualitative research methodologies: qualitative ethnography and observation. Being an 'insider researcher', I am actively living the research subject that I am inquiring into. Together, these two methods allow me to delve into the personal, lived experiences of gender for Nepalese student migrants in Australia. The first method, ethnographic observation, is the conventional research approach which would limit the researcher in the role of silent observer of the research subjects. Whereas the second type of methodology, that of acknowledging my position as an 'insider researcher' in which I, the researcher, am considered part of the research community and process. I am living in Brisbane, Australia as an international postgraduate student, and my wife has accompanied me as a dependent. I have also been involved in the profession of education consultant for advising Nepalese students who intend to go abroad for further studies, and I have continued this in Brisbane too. Obviously, I have the privilege of coming from the same socio-cultural background, and also working in the field of study abroad consultant. All these attributes urge me to qualify as a member of research context.. Being a member of the research context has a great advantage in different phases of research which ranges from data collection to formal and informal visits to the research fields. Ethnographic observation emphasises the objective research mode while my position as an insider researcher allows me the freedom of subjective expression, drawing on my own personal experiences and accounts. During my formal or informal presence in the research field, I could experience many instances of reflexive observation of my own personal understandings and reactions, some of those reflections might contribute to the focus of this research.

Considering the circumstances of my research project and my intimacy with the research context in terms of both personal as well as professional backgrounds, I found myself in a position of insider researcher. For this reason, I felt that autoethnography would be the best suited method for this research since it creates the platform for exploring the research questions and issues by placing the self within the research context during the period of qualitative interviews, as well as ethnographic observation in the research fields. As I was

reading literature about gender and migration, I was interested in how the personal spheres of everyday life and gender, based on the lived experiences of migrants were being used as the driving force of the research. According to Voloder (2014, p. 1), 'studies of international migration and mobility are of concern to various disciplines — economists, demographers, political scientists as well as anthropologists and sociologists are engaging with questions around the reasons, experiences and consequences of human movements'. Voloder's statement highlights how human movements through international migration have been the focus of disciplines. However, it does not specify how migrants' lived experiences of gender relations were addressed by such studies. The study by Taylor (2011) suggests that familiarity and previous knowledge of the research context play a role in deriving different as well as detailed answers from the participants. This finding is quite supportive for an intimate insider position but like Voloder's research it lacked engagement with the personal, the everyday, and did not focus on the lived experiences. In order to explore how migrant student couples have been continuing or discontinuing gender, it is essential to enter into their personal spheres of everyday life. My aim was to accumulate the insights from the lived experiences of Nepalese student migrants in Brisbane, Australia, and for this I felt the necessity of a different methodology to explore the gender dimension of student migration from Nepal. Moreover, my personal background of being from the same ethnic background and similar immigration history as a student, as well as a professional background as education counsellor, placed me in a unique position to undertake insider research.

Autoethnography and Insider Research

Since I was trying to find authentic expression to my reflexive contemplations in my own research, I felt it was more than an ethnographic research which required me to seek an alternative approach in the form of autoethnography. Ethnography would limit me in the role of passive observer with the focus on objective analysis which is quite inappropriate given the context of this research. Autoethnography, on the other hand, gives opportunity of self-representation and reflexive observation on the subject matters, which is relevant to my

research project. Muncey's (2010) statement regarding autoethnography was a tremendous encouragement for me to opt for an insider's position as it says, 'autoethnography provides an avenue for doing something meaningful for yourself and the world' (p.12). According to Butz (2010), 'autoethnography is distinct from everyday practices of self-representation in that it is self-conscious, reflexive, concerned with intervening in conventional academic knowledge production, and focused on understanding and exemplifying social circumstances or relations beyond the individual self' (p.13). Many different factors, such as being from the same socio-cultural background, professional involvement, and most importantly similar immigration history in the student category encouraged me to choose the position of insider researcher. A researcher with an insider position is supposed to have no inconveniences in entering the research field, as Bilecen (2016) describes, it allows the researcher to present the research questions and also derive the meanings based on the observation of physical activities of the participants. Placing the researcher within the research gives the advantage of building intimacy with the research context, as well as with the participants. As Doty (2015) opines, the presence of writer in his or her own writing becomes necessary in order to connect with the human beings he or she writes about.

Once I was determined to use autoethnography as a tool for conducting this research project, I happened to ask myself a question: Exactly what tools am I going to apply in autoethnography? My question was rather influenced by the excitement to venture into the new journey of research because autoethnography, so far as I understood, came as an alternative to the established qualitative research methods. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to assume any kind of methodological dominance in this type of research. This made me do further research regarding the application of autoethnography in research. Among some of the published works that I read concerning the usefulness of autoethnography in research I found Hayano's (1979) statement which says, 'while autoethnography is not a specific research technique, method, or theory, it colours all three as they are employed in fieldwork' (p.99) to be precise. Instead of being a rigidly prescriptive research method, autoethnography allows the researcher to improvise with research techniques, methods and theoretical frameworks in a reflexive way. Thus, for Méndez (2013), autoethnography as 'a useful qualitative research method used to analyse people's

lives' (280). This statement of Mendez further encouraged me to stick to the methodological choice that I made for this research project. I found the conventional mode of qualitative research was inappropriate to this type of insider research since the traditional objective research approaches in the past kept the researcher detached from his or her own research. Therefore, I chose to conduct this research project through the autoethnographic method.

My position of intimate insider to the research project, due to sharing the same socio-cultural background, as well as my professional background of student counsellor both in Nepal and in Australia, were the key influential factors for reaching this decision. This proximity of my personal as well as professional background with the research context and research participants qualified me to conduct research from the position of insider position using autoethnography as the research method.

The concept of 'insider research' is often a statement of perceived closeness, an inversion of the distance of the 'traditional' researcher. Claims to insiderness emerge in recognition of research conducted among somewhat familiar people, people with whom the researcher may identify on some significant level, or in sites in which home/field are not so clearly demarcated (Voloder, 2014, p.3).

Obviously, coming from the shared socio-cultural settings with the participants benefitted me during the data collection phase. Semi-structured interviews were organised for the purpose of data collection. Since all of the interviews and interactions were conducted in the shared native language, it was easier to derive the intended meaning from the conversation. Moreover, the research agendas and research contexts were quite familiar and common to both the researcher and participants, which created a favourable environment for data collection.

Based on in-depth research regarding the possible methodological choice, I reached a conclusion that autoethnography would be a more appropriate research method instead of applying traditional grounded theories for this type of research. Auto-ethnography is a study in which researcher and researched come from the same ethnic background, use the same

language, and most importantly, the researcher is accepted as a native member by the participants (Hayano, 1979). Butz and Besio's (2009) analysis points out the further distinction between autoethnography and the traditional ethnographic approach because according to them, autoethnography is a 'transcultural, reflexive, research subject, as distinct from the autochthonous and culturally bounded native informant of traditional ethnography' (p.1663). Another important factor which inspired me to take a methodological shift is due to my physical presence during the research interviews and also during my visits to some of the families and other occasions of socio-cultural events. Physical closeness creates intimacy between the researcher and the researched because 'we experience the surrounding place in and through our bodies, encompassing a whole range of communicative, expressive, and relational things about who we are and the places we create and inhabit' (Duffy, 2013, p.134). Some distinctive measures were considered for this methodological shift. First of all, being a member of the same ethnic community, and sharing similar immigration history qualified me to be an intimate 'insider researcher'.

It is important to define 'insider research' as a methodological tool that guides my approach and allows for a certain type of sensitivity to the researcher as embedded in the research process. Lejla and Liudmila explain that:

The concept of 'insider research' is often a statement of perceived closeness, an inversion of the distance of the 'traditional' researcher. Claims to insiderness emerge in recognition of research conducted among somewhat familiar people, people with whom the researcher may identify on some significant level, or in sites in which home/field are not so clearly demarcated (Lejla & Liudmila, 2014, p.3).

My several years' long professional involvement as an educational counsellor, which I have continued even after coming to Australia, was the most encouraging factor for such methodological adventure because this has given me an opportunity of meeting the students with whom I share a similar migration history. I too, feel that I am on the 'inside' with the participants I am studying — having relocated internationally, being only temporarily settled here (due to visa restrictions), and having experienced periods of time away from my partner and family. I negotiate these insides of migration, but also the 'outsides' of being a migrant

temporarily situated in Australian society. It is this delicate balance of the inside–outside position, of always being ‘in the middle’, which has been a key conceptual and lived experience throughout my research project. Michele Lobo (2016, p.25), shares a similar experience of being an insider researcher: ‘perhaps, this was because many white residents who were professionals, community workers, religious leaders and activists were very keen to participate and help me with my research’. I, too, had similar experiences with the people of my native society as researcher in a foreign land. Sometime after my arrival to Australia, I came in contact with some leaders of the Nepalese community, and also, I got the opportunity of meeting some of the established people at my present job in Brisbane city. When I mentioned to them about my research and my interest in the experiences of Nepalese students in Australia and how they experienced changing gender roles, it seemed they could relate. We were all living this together in various ways and many participants expressed their willingness to be part of the research project.

Some days after my arrival to Brisbane, I started visiting some of my relatives and friends that I knew from Nepal and I initiated informal talks related to the focus of my research project. As I got the opportunity to spend time with some of the families in Brisbane, I noticed a different pattern of domestic life than in Nepal as husbands would share the domestic duties (such as cooking, washing dishes, etc.) with their wives, duties which are considered to be for females only in Nepal. Also, I could see the pattern of conversation among husbands and wives was distinctly different from what would be acceptable in the Nepalese context. My wife came to accompany me three months after I came. I usually help her in doing most of household duties, such as cooking, washing and cleaning, but to speak the truth, my role in most cases is limited to only helping her and she has the feeling that she is mainly responsible for such work. Hence, due to my own personal background of migrating with my wife, I developed an awareness that my presence in the research context can have great significance in identifying and understanding the specific issues that emerge during the research process.

It was interesting to see some of the couples that I knew having a different form of family life than I saw in Nepal. One of the families who live in a shared townhouse along with more Nepalese families, had two small children. I visited them frequently in the initial period of

my arrival to Brisbane. This pushed me to a quandary as an insider researcher because I was not only a spectator of their present lifestyle, but also aware of their past patterns of living in their country of origin. I was naively hopeful that my position as an intimate insider would create a conducive platform in order to accumulate the required data from the participants. One study draws a similar conclusion about the impact of the researcher's intimacy with the research context and also the pre-established friendship with the participants.

When one is already, at some level, an insider in their field, it is probable that they have pre-established friendships—often close friendships—in that field and it is also probable that such close friendships will shape the researcher's work and influence their positioning within the field (Taylor, 2011, p.4).

But my very position, nevertheless, turned out to be a tough nut to crack on many occasions. My easy access to some of the Nepalese families as a friend or a relative placed me in a peculiar situation as a researcher because 'conducting qualitative research as an insider presents unique challenges for the researcher' (Asselin, 2003, p.100). Many of them would treat me with respect knowing my background of college teacher as well as education counsellor in Nepal. This would place me in hierarchical position; the personal/professional divide is bound to cause some degree of both personal and professional crises. People who knew me personally could treat me more as a friend and relative than as a researcher, whereas those who did not know me before would treat me more as a researcher than as a friend or relative. While doing my own research, a number of questions and concerns have troubled me. Taylor (2011) revealed that 'prior intimate knowledge' of the research context can sometimes cause personal as well as professional crisis. She further says, 'These have mostly been in relation to professional and personal ethical conduct, accountability, the potential for data distortion and my lack of objectivity and possible insider blindness' (p.8). I noticed cautious behaviours with some of the families whenever I visited them, I even had to give up the idea of interviewing some of the female candidates who, as I initially thought, were among the most potential participants for my research project. It was not because they declined to participate but because I was entangled in a web of emotional intimacy in such a way that could prevent me from maintaining the position of researcher yet again. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) insist on the corresponding impact of analysis and personhood in the research

process as they state, 'We cannot retreat to a distant "researcher" role. Just as our personhood affects the analysis, so, too, the analysis affects our personhood' (p.61). Others who were not quite familiar with me would have hesitation in revealing the stories of their family lives with me.

At the same time, I also had the responsibility of distancing myself from the research context by performing the role of outsider researcher in order to maintain clarity in the research process, because the insider position alone would pose a threat to the objectification and unbiased presentation of accumulated data. It was difficult at times to untangle myself from the experience of the moment to being able to reflect on it as a researcher later. My existing relationships with friends, co-workers, students and housemates meant that I was always trying to negotiate my own emotional investment as part of the community, but then later, as a researcher using this autoethnographic insight in my project. It required me to maintain dual personalities - one as a member of the research context and the other as a researcher - trying to pursue meanings in the activities of the participants. This is similar to what Taylor (2011) describes, where 'insiderness coupled with intimate knowledge of an emotional attachment to one's informants makes objectivity incredibly difficult and leaves very little room for analytic distance' (p.9). In order to avoid the possibility of producing biased analysis or being unduly empathetic in my observation due to the intimacy with research circumstances, I prepared some basic questions that I would ask the participants in the course of the interview which guided my conversation with them. Additionally, I would usually make note of significant expressions they had during conversations such as pause, silence, hesitation, smiles etc. During my participation in formal and informal get-togethers my insider sentiments would be controlled by ethnographic observation.

When I visited some of the families during formal or informal gatherings, I was welcomed with such a generosity which, at times, would make me forget my position of researcher. In many incidents of analysing the conversations and other family activities among some couples either as an active or as a passive observer, I experienced being haunted by predominating feelings of losing my ability to look critically over the research context in the capacity of an independent researcher. But even so, I was mindful that the participants would feel comfortable because of my frequent visits. Spending time and having informal chats with

the participants and their family creates the feeling of intimacy between researchers and the researched. As one study says, 'It is possible that people felt reassured about being involved in the research when they found out that the researcher was staying with a family they knew personally' (Basnet, Johnston, & Longhurst, 2018, p.4). Due to being with the people who shared the same culture and ethnic heritage, I frequently realised that I had more space for myself as a 'researched' than as a 'researcher', and it was natural for me to have a fear of imposing 'self' at the time of authenticating my observation in written form. At the same time, I also realised that the insider-outsider dichotomy is an integral part of this type of research where researcher is a member of the research context. What kind of image the researcher as a person should maintain in the eyes of the participants, either in insider or outsider research, has been the subject of discussion in many studies.

Whether the researcher is an insider, sharing the characteristic, role, or experience under study with the participants, or an outsider to the commonality shared by participants, the personhood of the researcher, including her or his membership status in relation to those participating in the research, is an essential and ever-present aspect of the investigation (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.55).

The relation of the researcher with the participants and research contexts either as an insider or as an outsider is the frequently discussed phenomenon in many studies. Doty (2010) further writes, 'Self is really always present in academic writing; it is usually only present by virtue of its absence. A power inheres in this absence, a power that enables scholars to present their work as authoritative, objective, and neutral' (p.1048). My watchfulness of the insider position as a researcher, which got its expression through autoethnography, created an opportunity objectifying both the personal and professional experiences as I researched. However, I found an inspiring statement by Méndez (2013) regarding the benefit of personal narratives which provides easy ingress to data since the researcher can refer to the sources from his or her personal encounters to examine particular subjects by means of reflection. In fact, it gave me the opportunity of extracting useful data efficiently.

In line with traditional forms of autoethnography, it is the recognition of prior knowledge and embeddedness in a situation of research that gives researchers this novel and distinct

perspective. For example, according to Hayano (1979), 'the criteria for auto-ethnography, then, must include some prior knowledge of the people, their culture and language, as well as the ability to be accepted to some degree, or to pass as a native member' (p.100). Hence, being a native of the same country, I felt that I possessed all the qualifications that are necessary for an insider researcher. My professional engagements as a study abroad consultant in both the countries: country of origin as well as host country, have several encounters that echo the concerns of present research questions. Besides, I have also migrated from the same socio-cultural setting and most importantly, my migration history as a student, accompanied by my wife as a dependent, pushed me even closer to the research context. My personal life definitely has more or less unequal elements of gender relations, and to disclose the reflexive stories of the private spheres of my own experiences from the position of researched, I was in search of an appropriate method. Being a member of the same society, which has a traditional gender concept, and living in Brisbane as a student migrant accompanied by my wife, I also have experienced some instances of change in traditional gender norms and roles in my own life, after coming to Australia. All of the phenomena that I considered of significant value for my research context were found to have close proximity with autoethnography which is the best suitable research method for deriving meaning from personal experiences by means of self-reflection, and also by connecting with wider socio-cultural settings of the researched as (Doty, 2010, p.1048) opines, 'making connections entails a personal aspect and this comes through clearly in autoethnography'. This evidently created a platform from which I could perform in the capacity of researcher as well as researched.

A researcher researching among his or her own group of people always enters the world of known circumstances that both groups share. This helps to erase the hierarchical relationship between researchers and researched and gives feeling that the researcher is part of the researched. England (1994) suggests that 'we do not conduct fieldwork on the unmediated world of the researched, but on the world between us and the researched' (p.86). However, this does not necessarily mean that the researcher is without any prejudices in his or her observations. Moreover, when the research context matches with the researcher's past or present experiences, their prior knowledge will inevitably influence

their process of research observation. Cruz (2015) believes that observation is an active interaction with reality and is never a neutral phenomenon. Our interactions are always influenced by our own perspectives, beliefs and assumptions. Voloder (2014) suggests that the one who has the status of both migrant and scholar is considered suitable for the insider position in migration research. Therefore, apart from sharing the same socio-cultural background, similarity of migration status, as well as relevant professional background encouraged me to choose the insider position for this research.

My background in student counselling, furthermore, became immensely helpful for conducting research from the position of insider researcher. During more than a decade-long career span as an education consultant for study abroad from Nepal, I met several Nepalese students either before they migrated or even after their return in some cases. I observed or heard stories of the experiences of many migrant families' lives in both contexts. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) highlight the significance of the researcher being a member of the researched group or context to qualitative research approach since the researchers, according to them, perform 'such a direct and intimate role in both data collection and analysis'. Fortunately, I could continue the same profession even after arriving in Brisbane, giving me the opportunity of connecting with Nepalese migrant students. They would mainly visit for services such as university/college transfer, applying for a visa extension, inviting husbands/wives on a dependent visa from Nepal, guidance on changing student/dependent status after coming to Australia as well as other reasons. Sharing the same socio-cultural background, I had an advantage of initiating informal conversations related to their family lives. I found some of them quite frank since they would share their lived experiences in changed socio-political settings. They would also tell stories of other Nepalese families in Australia who became divorced or separated due to conflicts caused by the changes in gender perception. Those circumstances had already pushed me into the role of insider researcher; I was now sure that by following the conventional approach of pure objective analysis, this research would not produce the intended outcome as it would be a fruitless effort to escape from the overwhelming reflexive observations that I could encounter as an insider researcher.

Research Method

In Nepal, females make sacrifices mostly in all aspects of their domestic and social lives because of discriminatory gender roles. This study, for this reason, was designed to explore the gender issues that continue to impose and dictate the lives of Nepalese females, even after their migration away from home. My 'insider' status proved to be essential for me to recruit participants to the study. A total of six female Nepalese candidates agreed to participate, providing me with written consent. All of them are students who have been studying in different institutions in Brisbane. Initially, I intended to use a snowball sampling technique so that appropriate participants could be found to best explore the issues of the research questions. In fact, when I started talking about the research project with some female students that I met during different occasions, they looked quite happy to support me. They suggested names of many potential participants, and even provided their contact details. However, due to the limited time duration and size of research I could not organize many interviews. Therefore, I decided to record interviews of those participants who were in direct contact with me rather than utilizing snowball sampling method. This is the best suitable method of data collection for insider research in which participants' private matters are discussed. This method, according to Biernacki (1981), 'is well suited for a number of research purposes and is particularly applicable when the focus of study is on a sensitive issue, possibly concerning a relatively private matter, and thus requires the knowledge of insiders to locate people for study (p.141).' All participants were above 18 years old and were residing in Brisbane, Queensland. As this research is exploratory in nature, it did not have any rigid structured interview patterns. Hence, participants participated in semi-structured interviews. As previously mentioned, I have more than 10 years of experience in the field of student counselling as a study abroad consultant, which I have continued on a part-time basis in an education consultancy in Brisbane. My professional engagement in an education consultancy in Brisbane was very helpful since I had the opportunity of interacting with many Nepalese students, and some of the interactions could contribute as an important data source. Mendez (2013) defines this as an 'ease of access to data' since the researcher reflects on his or her own experiences as the source based on which he or she investigates a particular phenomenon. Therefore, some of the female students who visit for

study-related services were selected for semi-structured interviews. I selected six participants in their late 20s for interviews. Most of the interviews went for approximately 15–20 minutes. However, I decided to have follow-up interviews with two of them which continued for about 10 minutes each. All of the participants were informed about the research project. In addition, my ethnographic reflections recount responses of group participants during some formal or informal occasions, such as Nepali festivals, birthdays etc.

This research is qualitative in nature and exploratory in design. Its main motive is gaining new insight into the gender dimension of student migration from Nepal based on the contexts of Nepalese student couples' doing and undoing gender in Australian society. Regarding the data collection process, it has relied on semi-structured interviews of Nepalese students who are studying in different colleges and universities in Brisbane, Queensland. Berg (2001) finds interviewing to be quite a plausible technique of accumulating information for specific kinds of research questions. During the interviews some of the participants revealed that the economic opportunity after coming to Australia had given them feelings of independence. However, I avoided the topic of how they arranged the finance during their process of mobility since it could encroach on their very personal and extremely sensitive affairs.

It is also worth reflecting in some length about the way that I negotiated subject recruitment and data collection, given that forging and sustaining trusting relationships between researcher and research subjects is vital. Through my position as an insider researcher, I utilised the networks I had in locating and identifying Nepalese females who were studying in different colleges and universities in Brisbane, approaching them to participate in semi-structured interviews. The main point of contact for the interview purpose was the Education Consultancy in Brisbane where I have been engaged as a part-time counsellor since I arrived in Australia. All candidates participating in the interviews were informed about the research project and the purpose of the interviews so as to create conducive interview situations.

Once the candidates showed their readiness for the participation, had signed the consent form and agreed to participate, we arranged a mutually convenient time for the interview so as to create conducive interview situations. Most of the interviews were conducted in my

office with the written approval from management while some interviews were recorded by visiting the residence of the candidates. Before recording the interviews, I spent time with candidates for some informal discussions regarding the purpose and context of the research project. Once the participants revealed their confidence to record their responses, I asked them to sign the consent form. All the conversations were recorded in audio format using my cell phone. The most challenging part of the process was to record the interviews of the married Nepalese females by asking questions which were related to their family life. On many occasions during the interviews, I had the perception that participants were feeling hesitant to disclose their confidential and family matters in front of a male. I also had the feeling that they would answer those questions more comfortably if I were a female researcher. My insider position as well as my profession as an education counsellor, nevertheless, helped immensely in keeping a connection and increasing intimacy with them. Kharel (2016) argues that different factors such as age, gender, race and class of the ethnographer may play a role in the positive or negative field relations while conducting interviews. In addition, I also visited some of the Nepalese students and their family, living in Brisbane, time to time for the purpose of data collection. Informal conversation, discussions and other informal talks, by spending more time with the participants, made them feel confident to express their opinions as well as individual experiences of changing perception of gender. Also, the opportunity of participation in formal or informal gathering and events organized by Nepalese Association Queensland (NAQ) in Brisbane was utilized as important sources for data collection. Again, my status of being from same ethnic background has substantial benefits since it is relatively easier to access and win the trust of participants. As Taylor (2011) states, 'Knowing your informants in all or some of these very personal ways undoubtedly affects the manner in which you relate to them professionally' (p.6). Moreover, organising interviews in native language created an encouraging environment for the participants to speak about real-life experiences without any language barriers.

The research utilised reflexivity to establish a harmonious connection with the participants' experiences, and also to situate myself within the research process. Reflecting upon his own research, Cruz (2015) writes, 'I observed my own action as a researcher and tried to make it explicit through a reflective process. In doing so, I saw myself as a subject, with my own

symbolic framework, and I recognised my subjectivity' (p.1731). Cruz's statement elucidates the process of how a researcher undergoes the experience of researching himself or herself through reflection. Whether I was interviewing the participants or observing the activities of the families that I visited, I would also find myself within the context of research which would provide me an opportunity of employing conscious and deliberate effort to assimilate my own reactions to respondents, revealing their gender perception in a changed context. It was the process of looking inward critically to self as an object, rather than distancing emotionally and physically with the research context and the participants. 'Self-critique and reflexivity have allowed me to gain some distance from the familiar and unlearn the seemingly natural ways of my own behaviour and that of my friends' (Taylor, 2011, p.10). This indicates that reflexivity as a researcher, in the capacity of insider researcher, provides opportunity of meditating critically on the activities of himself/herself or the people around them, concentrating on the themes or subjects being researched. Listening to the participants with whom I shared the same ethnic background and similar migration context, I could reflect critically on their activities and also on my own assimilation of the subject matters.

I was also aware of the challenge of producing a written report of the findings based on the research conducted because, as an insider researcher, I preferred to present myself as one of the major characters in my own research so as to reflect connection with those direct and indirect participants of the research context rather than accepting the role of silent authorship. Doty (2010) expresses the supportive opinion regarding the presence of writer in his or her writing, 'I have struggled with how to have a presence in my own writing, not necessarily to learn about myself but without such a presence I do not think it is possible to connect with the human beings at the centre of what I write about' (p.1048). Besides, I was equally aware of the responsibility towards the readers. My aim in this project was not to make judgements but to explore the issues systematically through personal observations and present them to the readers in the form of information. Méndez (2013) argues, 'The purposes of autoethnography may be as varied as the topics it deals with. However, writing accounts of research should always have the goal of informing and educating others, which is an objective that autoethnographies might accomplish through making connections with personal experiences of readers' (p.282). The main goal of autoethnography, as stated by

Méndez, is to inform and teach, which can be achieved by connecting with the experiences of the readers.

Apart from the data collected through personal observation and semi-structured interviews, this research has utilised data accumulated through secondary sources, such as extant academic literature, government reports, newspaper articles and other publications. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed by me. I listened to the recordings repeatedly during the transcription phase so that I could represent the real meaning of the participants' responses. Also, transcriptions were read and corrected carefully by matching the transcriptions with the recorded audio before using them as data. Special emphasis was given in order to glean participants' experiences of gender and their interpretation of those experiences. Field notes were also used to record my own observations and experiences.

Research Ethics

The research was conducted by seeking ethical clearance from Griffith University (GU Ref No: 2018/766). I was well aware of the ethical challenges while conducting interviews of migrant students and their families. Since this proposed research involved cases of triggering issues of domestic life, the research planning, design and delivery had taken respectful consideration to safeguard participants' rights, safety and confidentiality. While insider status provided an opportunity of building trust among the respondents, I did not attempt to be traded by using my outsider status since 'the self' can have a strong presence without dominating the story (Doty, 2010). I was also aware that my position of researcher should not influence their responses, and I should not try to intervene, or correct them by imposing my superiority and experiences.

Most of the interactions with the participants took place in the form of semi-structured interviews, as well as some informal conversations. Participants of this research were known faces, either those who visited the education consultancy in Brisbane or my personal acquaintances whom I visited from time to time and helped me to observe and understand

their context of living easily. According to Griffith (cited in Mercer, 2007), insiders beyond doubt have a better position as they understand the contexts. However, all the participants were made aware of the research project and its purpose. There was no disclosure of individual identity of the participants. The key ethical challenges of this research were entering the private spheres of participants' lives and gaining their confidence in deriving relevant information from their personal world. However, there were no attempts to take advantage of my personal background, and the participants were encouraged to ask questions about the proposed research project, its outcome, as well as any other relevant queries in order to make them more comfortable with the interview situations. It solely aims at addressing the common social agenda, i.e., how student migration to Australia has an impact on perceptions of gender; it does not have any prejudice with any particular person or group.

Chapter Four: Negotiating In-Betweenness: Continuing and Discontinuing Gender Roles

This chapter analyses how Nepalese student couples have positioned themselves in the shifting experiences of changing gender relations in the course of relocation from the traditional society of Nepal to Australia. The theme of negotiating in-betweenness for doing or undoing gender roles was the most visible commonality in the responses of all the participants recorded. The analyses of participant's narration, as well as my personal observations, revealed that in many ways they have experienced a kind of emancipation from traditional gender-based roles both in domestic and social life after coming to Australia, which symbolises the discontinuing of gender roles. However, some of their responses, as well as my experiences in field observations, imply that some of such roles are still continuing. From among the responses collected, the proportions of their conversations which resembled their positionality with regard to the interpretation of gender relations based on their lived experiences of two different societies were considered for analysis under this topic.

I came to know about Priya through a co-worker in my current place of work. One day when I was filling out a university admission application form for her, I needed information about her marital status. When I asked my co-worker if he knew about it, he started telling me the entire story of her journey to Australia, which is very unfortunate indeed. According to him, she is the daughter of his father's close friend. When she finished her bachelor's degree in Nepal, her parents fixed her marriage with a candidate who was studying in a university in Sydney, Australia. After a few days of marriage, her husband, with whom she had not yet spent much time, returned to Australia while she had to stay with her parents-in-law for around three to four months waiting for a visa decision.

Finally, Priya's wait was over and she left for Australia with huge excitement to meet her life partner, about whom she did not know much. However, when she arrived here she found him behaving in a different manner than she had imagined. He would not speak with her much, would sleep in a separate room, and they would have frequent conflicts for no apparent reason. Feeling helpless, one day she called my friend and revealed all about her tragic life

story. He then asked her to come to Brisbane and live in his house where she has been staying since. It was interesting to note that her husband was ready to bear the cost of her tuition fee and he has even changed his status as her dependent now.

After she came to Brisbane, Priya would frequently come to the consultancy in the course of her admission and visa application. Though not in detail, she shared some pieces of her story with me during informal conversations. As she mentioned, her parents-in-law and other relatives of her husband were supportive of her and would call her from time to time to show their love towards her, and also suggested that she has patience towards him. She said that her husband did not point out any faults she may have to cause him to dislike her. I noticed a typical quality of Nepalese female in her when she denied my colleague's suggestion to file for divorce. She instead revealed that she still had a little hope that he would change one day.

It took many days for me to request her participation in the interview because whenever I wanted to talk to her about my research, her sad face, full of stress, would discourage me from doing so. But I eventually found an appropriate time to tell her briefly about my research project. She appeared curious and wanted to know more about my research, agreeing to meet for an interview the next day.

When asked about the changes in her understanding of gender after coming to Australia, Priya mentioned that both males and females in Australia are treated equally, while there is greater gender discrimination in Nepal. Quite different from other participants' responses, she found no change in her husband's perspective of gender despite living in Australia for many years. As she said, 'as a married Nepalese woman, I have found that my husband is not able to change according to the context of living.' She further charged that he was still carrying the discriminatory gender concept of Nepalese society which says only males have a right to employment, females should be submissive, and wives should be under the control of their husbands and follow the commands of males.

Although Priya looked quite confident in contributing to bring change in traditional gender concepts in Nepalese societies after going back, the determination of introducing change disappeared suddenly from her body language when I questioned her how it would be

possible without the cooperation of her husband. She answered in a very hopeless tone, 'in that case ... what to say ... not sure ... slowly and gradually if he understands these things such as gender discrimination ...' She failed to complete her answer and looked completely nervous as if she were fighting a losing battle. Cassarino (2004) sees very low possibilities for migrants to contribute to the changes in the society of origin upon their return because, 'owing to the strength of traditional vested interests in origin countries, returnees have a limited innovative influence in their origin societies' (p.259). Again, I asked her if she still saw the possibility of change in him. She gave a vague reply beginning with some pauses, '... possibly ... I don't see anything as such, but still if it happens or change comes, it will be good for him too.' Her hopeless response implied the inherent challenges in implementing the concept of changing gender roles without the support of her male counterpart upon returning to their country of origin.

In response to the question if she could see equal male and female relations in Nepalese families living in Australia, Priya gave negative remarks as all of them have come from the culture of male dominance. However, she is hopeful that future generations who study and grow up here might accept the concept of equality more easily. She claimed that most Nepalese wives have still been compromising even after coming to Australia. She looked confident in saying that as Nepalese student couples have the experience of living in a society which believes in traditional gender relations, wives still have been performing their gender roles despite coming to Australia. Her view reminded me of an incident when a wife had to bow her head, realising the mistake of speaking in the middle, because her husband did not like it.

Subana (name changed) came to Australia to study nursing in February 2017 and she was accompanied by her husband who became her dependent. I met her on the second day of my arrival to Australia. They were living in a shared townhouse with one of my relative families. In the course of exchanging introductions, I came to realise that she was feeling despondent and did not speak much. Later on, my sister-in-law revealed that she had quarrelled with her husband that morning. She also mentioned that her husband would torture her mentally from time to time as he possessed the characteristics of a typical Nepali husband who wants

his wife to remain silent and submissive. I had informed Subana of my research long before and she had given her verbal consent to record her opinion whenever required. After waiting a few days for the ethics committee's approval to conduct interviews, I went to meet her one afternoon to record an interview. I had called her to arrange a suitable time before the visit.

Subana also found a completely different conception of gender after coming to Australia because, here, both males and females are considered equal and have equal opportunities to work. Many scholars of migration studies believe that migrants' aspirations to better lifestyles and perspectives of career opportunity in developed countries have a remarkable impact on their migration decision (Tamot, 2008). In Nepal, on the other hand, Subana argued, 'It is believed that females should remain at home and perform the task such as cooking and agriculture related works, while males are expected to go out and earn money.' Coming from a country with a high degree of gender disparity, where females are restricted from going out after dark in the evenings, it was a totally different experience for her when she saw females going to work even at night. According to Krajewski and Blumberg (2014), 'Women who change places need to become active in building new relations, not to replace but to replenish the old ones' (p.711). Subana's expression revealed that she was quite overwhelmed by the opportunities of working and going out even at night which she was not allowed when she was in Nepal. Seeing this, she was 'proud as a female as well as a bit worried, thinking that my country has the opposite situation'.

Subana observed a significant change in her husband after coming to Australia. He started helping her in the kitchen and doing other household tasks, which was not the case while in Nepal (although it took some time for him to change himself according to the life patterns in Australia). Her face brightened while narrating the amount of happiness that she felt due to the change in her husband's behaviour.

She did not look optimistic about how she would choose to live after returning to Nepal, and her facial expression reflected uncertainty. She remembered how the patriarchal society in Nepal assigned females an inferior position in society. She continued, 'After returning from here, I may have to live as I did in the past, or maybe, by the time I return, my country will be a bit more developed from the current form of patriarchal social pattern. I can't say what will

happen by that time exactly.’ However, if Subana were to introduce the change herself, she would start from her own family, and for that she would give examples of the concept of equality between males and females in Australian society.

As I asked Subana about the challenges of executing the notion of equality, she took a long breath with hopelessness. Though she found it to be easy in Australia, in Nepal it was an uphill task because patriarchal social conventions, she complained, would pose obstructions to this. ‘If I go and start speaking, it will be interpreted as being over-smart. It can sometimes create problems too, and we may not be able to do as we want sometimes.’ Indeed, she was also aware that females have a right to express their voice in Nepalese society but she is equally aware that, ‘it is not possible to convince all the people at a time, so despite being right we can’t express that sometimes’.

Subana was quite confident that female student migration from Nepal had its contribution to the change in traditional gender perception since, ‘even those who did not do anything in Nepal have changed to some extent by observing or learning from here. Even after going back to Nepal, though it may take three or four years, they can certainly bring change within that time.’ Cassarino (2004) believes, ‘Return appears to be guided by the opportunities that migrants expect to find in their origin countries but also by the opportunities already offered in their respective host countries’ (p. 258). Daughters are as strong as sons if they are given equal opportunity to education as well as freedom of choice — this is the biggest achievement that she learnt after leaving the Nepalese society of traditional gender roles.

Sumitra (name changed) came to our office with her husband for suggestions about transferring from her present institution. As they entered the office, they greeted me with a familiar sentiment. After that, both went to talk to another counsellor while I became busy in my own work. After around half an hour as they were about to depart, I remembered that I needed one more candidate for interview. Therefore, I requested if she could participate in my interview. To my surprise both husband and wife accepted my request in a way as if it was their own task. After I finished recording the interview, they revealed that they knew me from Nepal; they were students of the same college where I used to teach when I was in

Nepal. Sumitra was married just one week before her departure to Australia and her husband joined her later with dependent status.

Sumitra also had similar opinions regarding the difference of gender relations between Australia and Nepal. The significant difference according to her is that there are many dos and don'ts for females; they have to face many questions both in their parents' home and in their in-laws' home should they come home late in the evening for example. Conversely, in Australia, as she has been living only with her husband, she is not required to face such a situation. 'I have not felt this in Australia, and it might be because I am living only with my husband. Since my father-in-law and mother-in-law are not here, I can speak straightforwardly to my husband, and husbands these days are not like in the past.' Sumitra further says, 'In Nepal I might not have the freedom of choosing a dress, for example a short dress. I would not be able to eat food of my choice as I would have to prepare whatever food my father-in-law and mother-in-law wanted. But I don't have any such feelings of discomfort now'. Bajracharya (2015) argues that conventional rules and responsibilities in society, which are accepted by most people in general, have direct or indirect impacts on women.

Like Subana, Sumitra also thinks that after returning to Nepal, she should begin the change from her own family.

I will try to make my family members aware because since I have got experience of freedom, obviously, I will not want to live in a conservative society again. Therefore, I will try to convince my parents. I will make efforts from my side.

Her determination to introduce change after going back to her home country is influenced by her present experience of living in a host country which according to her, has no restrictions on female movement. She is quite optimistic about the contribution of married female students in changing the gender concept after they go back to Nepal. In her opinion, although they may not introduce radical change, still there will be more or less impact of their experiences of living in a good society. Sumitra's view seems identical to the study of Krajewski and Blumberg (2014) according to which Taiwanese women not only build a new friend circle after coming to Australia, but also maintain their family, as well as social connectedness back in their home country because of which they 'experience empowerment,

new freedom and a truly “transnational identity” where they embrace the traditions and lifestyles of both cultures and are able to go back and forth between them’ (p.702). According to Sumitra, those females, after experiencing a taste of freedom in Australian society, will never accept being dominated.

Females, after knowing everything about what is their freedom and what is their wishes in the course of living in Australia, will not obviously want to embrace the old conservative culture which discriminates between sons and daughters; nobody wants to live being dominated. If males do not want that, females don’t want that too. Therefore, all of them, I think, will make an effort from their own level.

Sumitra seems confident that females who have experienced the Australian lifestyle will not accept living in a submissive role again after going back to their home society. They will rather attempt to change the pattern of traditional gender roles as much as they can.

Laxu (name changed) came to Australia on a student visa in July 2017, but her husband came seven months later to join her on a dependent visa. She expressed mixed opinions about her experience as a daughter-in-law in Nepal and the changes that she found after coming to Australia. Since she came alone initially, she felt lonely in the absence of her husband and parents-in-law. She had feelings of missing the guidance of her husband as well as her parents-in-law as they were her guardians. At the same time, she also felt relieved as she did not feel the pressure of her parents-in-law after coming to Australia. For example, although she had a job, she also had to manage her time for other household tasks being a daughter-in-law when she was in Nepal. But after coming to Australia, she did not have that pressure since she could now make her own choices as Krajewski and Blumberg (2014) state, ‘The insight that the women’s own education and distance from a patriarchal environment plays a key role in their decision-making process needs to be taken into account’ (p.711). Obviously, the opportunity to learn from the new social context had influenced her changing perception of gender relations.

After coming to Australia, Laxu had the similar experience of living for her own prosperity since she had feelings of emancipation from the burden of performing as a daughter-in-law and her activities were not controlled by the norms of a patriarchal society anymore. It was due to the impact of prevailing cultures in Nepal that she had to play the role of typical wife and daughter-in-law. Conversely, she has found her husband totally different because in Nepal they were living within the boundaries of a conventional husband and wife scenario, but here they have become friends. While in Nepal, her husband would listen to his parents more than her and would be anxious about social expectations. She gave an example of his reaction towards her dress because he would observe carefully when she wore any modern dresses, 'What kind of dress are you wearing? People might get the wrong impression'. She also explained the role of a typical daughter-in-law in Nepalese society. Mainly, they have the obligation to obey their parents-in law, and even if they have different opinions, they cannot express these because they are not allowed to speak to their parents-in-law in a straightforward manner or interrupt them in the middle. Hence, coming to Australia, she had a feeling of being released from imprisonment in the form of limitations which denied her the freedom of choice.

However, at the same time, Laxu appreciated the tradition of family bond in Nepalese culture. This is something she found lacking in Australia.

While in Nepal, we would think that Dad and Mum might say this and that. Plus, there is a different role for a daughter-in-law. But after coming here, many Dads and Mums have already been divorced, so no Dad or Mum at all. They need to go to an aged care centre to meet Dad and Mum. I was totally shocked to see no attachment, I found almost zero attachment. In Nepal it is because of strong attachment that we are bound by some rules — to obey Dad, Mum and our guardians.

This speaks about how migrants continue to miss the old pattern of life in their origin country despite enjoying their new-found freedom in their host country. According to one study, 'Family ties and missing their home country's lifestyle and culture, for instance, were some of the main factors that influenced the return intentions of Sub-Saharan healthcare workers working in Europe' (Motlathledi & Nkomazana 2018, p.12). Family ties and socio-cultural

phenomena in the home countries are some the influential pull factors of return migration. When I asked Laxu if there were some household activities normally performed by females that she was still continuing to perform, she replied that in the past she would not get any support from her husband in cooking and other household chores because of the presence of her parents-in-law, but after coming here, such household duties became a common responsibility for both. Laxu also had a similar response as that of other candidates to the question of how she would make an attempt to bring change in gender ideals and relations after going back to Nepal. She would start to change from her own home by addressing all the limitations that she had to face. She repeated some of them: 'Don't stay outside. Don't do this. Don't wear these clothes'. Like other participants, Laxu also believes that as she started performing gender roles from the family circumstances, she believes that home is the ideal place to start change after returning from Australia.

When I met Anita (name changed) in my office, I found her happy and cheerful. I had never met her before, nevertheless, as I mentioned the research project to her, she became very much excited to participate in the interview. It was surprising to note that Anita asked her friends to wait outside for her for half an hour so that she could record the interview although I had clearly mentioned that she could do it later if she had to go with friends.

Like all other participants, Anita also experienced freedom in Australia while there were many 'dos and don'ts for females' in Nepal. Females in Nepal, according to her, are discouraged from doing the things they want. They are instead forced to perform household jobs. She gave an example of how her husband encouraged her to learn to drive and find a job after coming to Australia, which he did not suggest when they were in Nepal because it was considered unusual for females to learn to drive there. Anita seems quite happy to have an educated husband who encourages her and also has a positive reaction towards her changing perception of gender roles. At the same time, she also revealed that when they were in Nepal, he used to listen to his parents more.

Anita had given a quite contradictory opinion to the question of whether she would continue to live following the Nepalese concept of gender upon returning to Nepal. On the one hand, she said that it wouldn't be acceptable to her to follow the Nepalese pattern of gender

relations again. On the other hand, she also mentioned that she wouldn't be able to continue the Australian pattern of living as well. As a female, Anita is determined not to accept restrictions on her employment and other outdoor activities, and she would definitely want her husband to share responsibility for taking care of their children. Blain (1991) believes, 'parenting as work, so that both young women and young men can be honestly presented with real choices which give them the opportunity to create a society that is more just, and more equal, than the one we have today' (p.7-8). Blain's statement suggests that parents should provide equal opportunities to both male and female children which eventually contribute to the creation of society with equal gender relations. Anita seems to be aware of this fact after living in Australian society as she expects her husband to participate in the job of parenting when they will have children in future. It is because of her living in Australian society that Anita appears confident enough to reject some of the traditional gender roles after returning to her home country. Her determination not to compromise with the freedom of engaging in the However, since she is aware of the unequal role distribution for males and females, she also accepts that she will not be able to follow the Australian pattern of living. She carries the feeling of in-betweenness regarding how she will live after returning to her country of origin.

It was one week after I joined my present job at the consultancy when a young man of average height came in with an inquiry about his wife's visa status. He was a friend of my brother-in-law. He got married six months earlier when he had gone to Nepal during the holidays. His wife, Prekshay (name changed, one of the six had completed Bachelor's degree in Nursing in India, and she had just started a job in Nepal when they got married. I was quite surprised to learn that he had no excitement about his wife's coming to Australia. The most unbelievable fact was that he had not revealed the news of his marriage to any of his friends in Australia or in Nepal. According to him, many of his relatives did not know about his marriage either. Two days after his visit she got her visa approval.

At that time, I was searching for other accommodation because my wife and I were not comfortable where we were living. Prekshay's husband informed that there was available accommodation near their residence so we moved there. This gave me the opportunity to meet Prekshay and subsequently introduce my research to her and request that she participate in an interview. She had a little bit of hesitation initially because I knew many

things about their married life. I had heard from one of their relatives that her husband was not happy with married life. In the course of informal conversations, she revealed that they did not even have a photo together. Although they were living together, he said it would take four years to decide if they could be husband and wife permanently.

During the interview, Prekshay also expressed her experience of change in gender perceptions after she arrived in Australia. According to her, in Nepal 'females are expected to work at home and look after their family members', whereas in Australia she had observed that both males and females shared the household duties as per time availability.

According to her, 'in the Nepalese context females have to perform all household duties, males don't have any responsibility as such in those tasks'. But after coming to Australia, she came to understand that household jobs are shared by both as per time availability. Similar to Anita, she also gave an example of Nepalese females learning to drive after coming to Australia which in her opinion, is a symbol of freedom as it is in Nepalese society for females to drive themselves. As she linked the driving skills with independence, it reminded me of an incident with my wife. One evening I was accompanied by my wife for a walk in a nearby park. In the course of talking about general subjects she happened to say, 'Now I am thinking of learning how to drive. I want to be independent'. At that time, I simply smiled without any remarks, and it was a husbandly reaction. Later on, when I saw it from the position of a researcher, I could see the visible meaning in her statement. Méndez's (2013) statement about the benefit of using autoethnography encouraged me to reflect on my own experiences because as it says, 'Another advantage is the ease of access to data since the researcher calls on his or her own experiences as the source from which to investigate a particular phenomenon' (p.282). That was the first time that I felt I also had stories to tell, and realised the value of researching the researcher.

Prekshay stated that because of living in Australia, she has learnt to be independent because according to her:

In Nepal I used to be quite afraid of speaking with people, would speak less and was shy. Even after coming here, changing totally takes time, but I have got the concept

that I should be independent, and should not live being dependent on others. Now I have felt that I should solve problems myself rather than depending on others.

She believes that males have also changed themselves regarding domestic chores after coming to Australia because 'a male candidate who did nothing at home while in Nepal and would think, Mum, wives or sisters should do household chores has realised after coming to Australia that he should also perform domestic chores.' She believes that they have also become independent in a way since they don't have to depend on females to prepare their food now, and 'at the same time, it has benefitted females too because it has been helpful in reducing gender biasness.'

When I asked if this was the case in her life too, she laughed ironically. In fact, her husband was quite different than that of Subana since he did not like household duties, particularly cooking. She says, 'He is still the same as he used to be in Nepal, he does not think it is necessary for him to do all those things only because he came to Australia.' She says she could not see any sign of a supportive nature in him.

This contradicts Prekshay's previous statement about her husband's support because as she mentioned, her husband encouraged her to be smart, independent and gave many other positive suggestions, but her perception of him, based on his attitude towards household chores, says he represented the characteristics of a typical Nepalese husband. Although she is not sure when she will go back to Nepal, Prekshay thinks that she will have changed immensely by that time, and she is hopeful of implementing the positive points on her return. She said, 'Whatever restriction it may be, if I feel it is right for me, I will not hesitate to speak in front of my family.'

In the course of the follow-up interview I tried to gauge if there was any change in her husband's support in cooking. Initially she gave the answer with meaningful laughter which meant 'not at all'. I asked her further if it was because of the influence of traditional concepts or because of habit. She said, 'Talking about cooking, he is still the same'. She further said that sometimes he says that he can cook which has not happened yet.

Conclusion

All the respondents gave common perspectives that they experienced a change in the meaning of gender roles upon arriving to Australia. However, they had mixed opinions regarding the cooperation from their male partners in their daily lives. The freedom of wearing the clothes of their choice, doing jobs that they wanted, and also going out without any restriction were some of the common achievements for them after coming to Australia. With regard to the sharing of domestic chores, some of the participants have continued in their roles as they would have done in Nepal. The same husband who performs the task of feeding the baby, did not want his wife to speak loudly the other day. The husband who enjoyed a banking career in Nepal, is found working as a cleaner after coming to Australia, in order to support his wife financially for her study. Moreover, he also performs household tasks at home which he did not do when in Nepal. These circumstances imply a state of 'to be or not to be'. Although they revealed revolutionary changes in their gender roles after living in Australian society, in some cases they were still giving continuity to traditional gender roles. They look quite happy due to the experience of emancipating from the traditional gender norms of their home society, but at the same time, they also look anxious about the challenges of implementing the new-found meanings of gender in the course of living in their home society when they return.

Chapter Five: Dimensions of Mobility: From Household Activities to Going Abroad

The data in this chapter concentrates on the contexts and circumstances of female mobility, beginning from the domestic chores of life in the country of their origin to the changing life patterns in their host country. Based on their lived-experiences, participants narrated the similarities and differences of some of the dominant contexts of gender-based restrictions in both the sending society as well as the host society. Their responses revealed that they had to undergo the experiences of restriction in three different forms of mobility which were within family, society, and their pursuit of an academic career in a foreign country. Their narration of lived experiences in their country of origin speaks about many kinds of prohibitions to their mobility, either within or outside the family. They were also restricted from making their own decisions regarding migration for study abroad.

Referring to social mobility, as I asked Anita how she would compare the gender concept in the host society with that in her country of origin, instead of answering, she remained silent for some time. According to Armstrong (2007), 'the positivist approach has always assumed that silence can be identified and measured' (p.40). Her silent and thoughtful expression implied that she wanted to speak out about some unpleasant experiences of her past. It was an intentional pause before revealing something from her past which she did not like. Parents in Nepal, she said, 'give straight instructions to their daughters not to perform certain tasks because they are females, and that their brothers should do those tasks'. Conversely, in Australia she has observed, "females are allowed to do any jobs that males do if they are capable".

Most of the respondents found their partner encouraging to their change in gender perception after coming to Australia. Buszin (2010) opines, 'Gender is an important factor in understanding migration patterns for several reasons' (p.15). As Anita said, her husband does not discourage her from doing anything she wants now, whereas his reaction used to be different while in Nepal because, 'he used to listen to his parents which is not the case now'. Regarding her husband's reaction towards the change in her gender perception after

coming to Australia, Priya noticed that he still had a preoccupied gender concept of Nepalese society. As a result, 'he sometimes quarrels, tries to keep me under control, tries to impose and expects me to follow whatever he wants, tries to keep me in a lower position.' She gave an example of some minor incidents of conflict due to the difference of choices. When she revealed her interest to eat something, he would suddenly impose his own choice of food, and when she asked him to go somewhere, he would reject abruptly. Although she did not find any changes in him in terms of gender concept, she did find him doing kitchen work by himself which was due to the impact of living in Australia — it is quite unusual for males to cook in Nepalese society.

Subana took a long pause before answering how her husband would react towards her changing gender perception, then referred to their age gap instead. She said it is because of the age gap (her husband is 5 years older) that they have misunderstandings or conflicts sometimes, such as she preferred going to restaurants to eat while he wanted to eat at home and save money. In spite of the considerable change she has found in his behaviour towards household jobs because of the influence of Australian society, she was not sure (her facial expression also revealed the same) that there would be complete change in him. In her opinion, it depends on his understanding Australian society in the course of living.

Subana also mentioned that in Nepal there are many cases of sexual harassment towards female workers. They are not given any respect and are considered inferior, but in Australia, she said, females are considered to be equal to males, and they are treated well at work.

Sumitra recalled her past experiences when asked about the discrimination between sons and daughters:

It's normal discrimination, such as brothers were allowed to go wherever they wanted but whenever I asked them for permission to go somewhere, they would say females can't go out at night, anything can happen, the world is not good at all. They never thought about what we wanted, they never thought that females also have feelings similar to males.

Her reflection shows that parents in Nepal teach about the traditional restrictive gender roles to their daughters from home. Neupane's (2017) study reveals that the character of Nepalese 'indicates an account of moral qualities, good virtues and integrity of a person — all of which are the defining characteristics of a "good" wife and daughter-in-law' (p.93). Nepalese society has certain sets of behaviours for females to prove themselves 'good' from the point of view of family, relatives and the whole society. Sumitra blames Nepalese society as well as a lack of opportunity for education for this situation rather than blaming the parents because if they were educated, they would not follow such a concept. Coming back to her present family life in Australia, she looked very happy to share with me the news that her husband shares the domestic chores with her. She also mentioned that her husband's brother and his wife live with them in the same house. Unlike her husband, her brother-in-law has behaviours that reflect a typical Nepali husband; he does not like to do household chores, saying he is male. She further said, 'My sister-in-law becomes sad when she compares her husband with mine'. But lately Sumitra has noticed changes in her brother-in-law's behaviour to some extent and she thinks it might be that he learnt by observing his brother's activities.

Regarding the impact of changes in gender perception on family life, she believes that it does not create conflict in a nuclear family, but she has seen problems in Nepalese families, even in Australia, which included the parents-in-law. She gave an example of her cousin's sister who lives in Adelaide, Australia. Her changing perception of gender did not disturb their family life until her husband's parents came to live with them. After they came, conflict slowly and gradually began to arise which ultimately polluted their relationship. Sumitra finds that convincing people against the old concept was the main challenge of implementing awareness of gender discrimination. She gave quite an analytical answer to the question of whether it has been easy or difficult for husbands to adjust to the changing lifestyle of their wives due to the changing gender perception. In the case of those couples who come to Australia after having been married for some time, it is difficult for the husbands because, 'in Nepal, wives perform tasks such as making tea at five in the morning, getting the newspaper, washing the clothes, cooking, looking after the children and taking care of the parents'. As she specified the job of looking after the children as the wife's responsibility in Nepal, it reminded me of my own case a few months before. In the initial period of coming to Australia, my wife was

applying for work here and there, but still she was not called up for any interviews. One day when she was talking with our children who are in Nepal on messenger, my eleven-year-old son asked her, 'Mommy job paunu bho? [Mommy did you find a job?]'

'Not yet, dear son', she replied.

He looked thoughtful for a while and said, 'Why don't you try to find a babysitting job, it will be easy for you because you did it for us as well.'

No sooner had he finished his statement, that she became speechless. As I looked at my wife, I could see her tears falling, but at the same time she was smiling too. It was a pleasingly painful emotion which could be experienced by only a mother. After a while, she said proudly looking at me, 'My son understands what I did for him'. In fact, it was a reality that she cared for our children most of the time. It was not that I did not participate in such activities, but my role was simply as a supporter and she was the main performer. Adhikari (2013) gives examples of how Nepalese husbands who migrated to the UK with their nurse wives had to 'share childcare responsibilities which would be normally done by extended relatives and kin and they also had to participate in household work such as cooking and cleaning, which is generally perceived as women's work in Nepal' (p.176). As mentioned by Adhikari, household jobs, as well as taking care of children is considered to be solely female responsibilities. I am also a member of the same patriarchal society where girls and boys, males and females, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers have a different process of socialisation.

Sumitra narrated her experience of gender-based discrimination from her parents. Her parents would allow her brothers to go wherever they wanted but they would deny her request to go anywhere as she said, 'They never thought about what we wanted, never thought that females too have feelings'. Buszin's (2010) study of gender bias in education as well as migration in Ghana reveals that young girls' movements were limited to household tasks while parents preferred to send their sons to schools even without adequate financial resources. Sumitra further continued to narrate her personal experience of being denied from participating in a tour program with her friends.

Once my friends were proposing we go on an outing somewhere for a night stay, and I asked my mum and dad, 'Mum, dad, my friends are proposing I go on a Mustang Tour (a famous tourism destination in Nepal). Let me go for the tour'. But my mum rejected me, saying that it was too far, became worried about with whom I was going, and said it would not be safe for me. I tried to convince her but still I was not allowed to go. I was hurt badly at that time because my brother could go anytime, he was not required to ask for permission. He would simply let them know that he was departing, he did not need permission to go — I was deprived of this.

Sumitra's experience revealed a clear picture of the discriminatory behaviour of parents between their sons and daughters in Nepal. She was speaking about a pathetic part of her life when her parents prevented her from freedom of movement only because she was a daughter. I again asked her if her brother also had to ask for permission. She said he was not required to ask for permission, he would just let the parents know that he was going in case he needed money, but she was not allowed even when she asked for permission one week before.

According to Sumitra, freedom was the biggest achievement after coming to Australia. According to Khadka (2014), 'Apart from economic motives, many other interesting motives pursue: further education, foreign countries' exposure and experience, learning language and culture, independence and freedom came out also as primary motives for migrating' (p.35). It indicates that along with desire for economic prosperity, migrants also have other motives of moving to foreign countries, and freedom is one of the major goals behind migration. Sumitra narrated further how, in Australia, she could come back from work even at night without any restrictions but in Nepal she had a curfew of 7 pm. In addition to this, she also experienced freedom in wearing the dress of her choice which was not the case while in Nepal as her parents would always remind her about what the neighbours or relatives would say. They would also say that she was of marriageable age, so she should be careful in choosing the proper dress. Freedom in choosing a job or profession were other remarkable differences she experienced in Australia. An example of this is she could not work in a call

centre or modelling as both were considered not good by her parents, which is not the case in Australia.

Luxu pointed out a remarkable difference she noticed which other participants did not mention. In Nepal there is an opportunity of being guided by the parents and guardians. However, in Australia many parents live separately due to divorce, or they live in aged care centres. She said that it was quite shocking to her to see no attachment at all amongst the family members, which is contrary to the situation in Nepal.

Economic independence, Laxu thinks, is another big achievement she has made after coming to Australia because of which she has the feeling of equal status. Lokshin and Glinskaya (2009) argue that there will be a rise in the migration trend from Nepal due to the opportunities of earning in neighbouring countries. Economic prosperity has been the main focus of all forms of migration from Nepal. Laxu's husband began to ask for her input before making any plans while they lived in Australia, but he used to ask his mum when in Nepal. It was not that he was unaware of Laxu's freedom before, but he could not support it openly because of the prevailing concept in the family as well as in society. In Nepal she would feel hesitation in asking her husband for help in household tasks but that is not the case after coming to Australia since she goes to work early in the morning, and he prepares some food before going to work. He also helps her wash clothes and other household duties. She could see the sentiments of cooperation in him even in Nepal, but he was not able to help, 'only because of the cultural barrier, or because he did not want to break the respect towards the family'. Responding to the question of restriction on the side of her parents-in-law in Nepal, she remembered how they would ask her not to stay out for a long time. She further added, 'Though they were saying this for my own good, it was still a kind of restriction.'

In the following interview, I asked Prekshay how much independence she had felt after coming to Australia as a married wife. With a sad expression on her face she answered, 'As you asked how much independence I felt as a married wife, independent ...' She took pause for a while and continued, 'I did not have a job before but now I have a feeling that I have a job even if there is nothing.' This nothing reflected the nothingness of her married life but I did not want to ask her further questions regarding this as she could feel it as encroachment

on her private life. She experienced some sort of changes in her husband's behaviour towards her after she got a job, and also, she has a feeling that she can survive on her own.

I also raised the question based on Prekshay's previous response when she said that she was not able to understand her husband. This time she said it might be because of not being able to match each other's expectations. But I wanted to know what expectation she had from her husband. She just closed the chapter saying that she is not interested in speaking about her personal matters. Females in Australia, according to her, are treated equally to males, and are respected at work.

Priya believes that the male dominated social pattern in Nepal has an impact on Nepalese males' reluctance to accept the change of gender perception in females. Towards the end of our conversation, she was quite controversial because on the one hand she agreed that there have been cases of divorce and separation in many Nepalese families after coming to Australia, but on the other and she said it was because of the impact of Australian society on males rather than females. I found myself in Hsu's (2014) position as he states, 'I was also puzzled by the contradictory ways in which the immigrant women positioned themselves and were positioned by others in the mainstream society' (p.75). Priya further continued, 'After mixing with Australian society, they develop the concept that they should follow the pattern of Australian society. They do not give any importance to females and do whatever they want.'

As she mentioned the cases of divorce, I remembered an incident a few weeks before in my office when I was looking at the documents of a female student who was studying a master's degree in accounting. In fact, she came to us to change her current provider because according to her fee structure at that institution, it was a bit expensive for her. After a brief discussion about alternative providers for her, she decided on one of them and I started filling in application for her. Although I knew from her documents that she was married, I just ask her which status she wanted to include in her admission application. To my surprise she said single. I thought she was joking initially but as I looked at her carefully, I realised that her facial expression as well as overall body language was supportive to what she said.

'Yes, I am applying as a single,' she repeated. This time I removed my eyes from her face to look at the marriage certificate in her documents. 'It has a different story,' she continued before I could ask her further questions. She proceeded, saying that although the marriage certificate was genuine, their marriage was fake. Indeed, it was a paper marriage which was arranged during her student visa application to Australia. The man had promised to support her by paying one year's tuition fees. Before getting her visa, he had paid only three month's tuition fees and after a few days of her arrival to Australia, he stopped communicating with her. Despite being deeply shocked from this kind of betrayal, she stood up with a commitment of struggle for survival, got a part-time job too, but unfortunately, she had to quit as it clashed with her university schedule. I felt great empathy for her when she called herself, 'a helpless girl with no one around to support'. She requested her parents to manage the loan and pay another semester fee. Now, as she was sure that she could not afford the tuition fee of her current provider, she came to us with a hope of finding a cheaper institution. She further mentioned that she did not want to include her husband as her dependent because she was planning to divorce him. She could file for divorce in March 2019 since it would be one year of their paper marriage by then. 'During the coming Dashain festival, I am planning to go home for marriage because my parents have found a suitable man for me. Living alone and facing challenges for a girl in a foreign land is so difficult.' According to her, she had a break up with her boyfriend before coming to Australia. Now she would marry according to her parent's choice because she didn't believe in love marriage after observing cases of separation among Nepalese couples in Australia who had a love marriage. Ban, Karki, Shrestha, and Hodgins, (2012) have found that there is a high increase in spousal separation in Nepal because of migration for employment. It is mainly because of lengthy absences of either one of the partners who go for foreign employment opportunities that those marriages in Nepal mostly end in divorce.

When I asked Priya what differences she observed in male-female relationships in Nepal and in Australia, she replied that in Nepal it is believed that husband and wife should live together, and in case of any conflict the wives are expected to compromise, whereas husbands have the privilege of the upper hand. She further continued:

Yes, females are expected to compromise if any quarrel or discussion takes place, even the family and relatives teach the same — it is necessary for you to compromise, whereas it is not like that in Australia because this is the place of independence, people are independent, no one depends on each other. Therefore, here, females need not tolerate or compromise with such things because they can do their work themselves. So, it is a great achievement to be self-dependent.

Earlier, Priya was quite unsure how she would play a role in bringing change in Nepalese society since she did not have support from her husband. Yet she looked optimistic that migrant students who go back to Nepal after completing their studies in Australia can play role to bring changes in the concept of traditional gender relations because they have studied and mixed with Australian culture. According to Tamot (2008), 'Despite being physically located in First world countries and, in many cases, assuming their host country's citizenships, the professional Nepali emigrants continue to consider the problems of their homeland as unfinished businesses of their own' (p.70). Referring to her own commitment Priya said she will educate people not to discriminate between male and female children.

Subana criticised the patriarchal social pattern in Nepal which discriminates between male females. 'Although it is said in Nepal that males and females are two wheels of the same cart, it has never been applied in practice there, while it can be seen in Australia.' Married females in Nepal, according to her, have to face more discrimination than unmarried ones as Neupane (2017) states, 'The bride and her family in most cases are in a subordinate position' (p.93). Even employers in Nepal, for example, give more priority to unmarried females during employee selection, whereas, as she found in Australia, talent is prioritised more.

I conducted a follow-up interview with Subana in order to derive a clearer perspective on her previous responses. When I asked her in what ways she was experiencing freedom in Australia, she answered:

Rather than this or that way, I have been feeling far more freedom in Australia than in Nepal. Since we are only husband and wife here, it has been quite easy for us to decide whatever we want, but when we were in Nepal, we would have to

consult all, such as Dad, Mum and parents-in-law as being married. It is not that we don't need to consult them now, but we give more priority to ourselves.

Her answer implies that the presence of her parents-in-law was a major hurdle which prevented her from enjoying any freedom as Gartaula et al. (2012) express a similar opinion, 'women as heads-of-household would perceive wellbeing differently from women living with in-laws' (p.404).

Sumitra believes that in Australia Nepalese wives go to work and sometimes go out with their friends, while their husbands have to do those household chores which cause them difficulty; whereas the couples who get married after coming to Australia, do not have such problems as they don't have the experience of married life in Nepalese society. Therefore, husbands have no problem adjusting in such cases.

Sumitra is aware of the challenges in implementing change regarding gender concepts in Nepalese society as she said:

The main challenge I think is the challenge of convincing, as fathers and mothers do have prejudice regarding this, for example, what they think is that girls and boys can never be equal. They have old concepts, it is very challenging to change this. This, I think, this is the main challenge, ah ... we have to think about how to convince them which is very difficult.

According to Sumitra, the deep-rooted concept of inequality among parents, in terms of their male and female children, is the major hurdle of implementing changes in traditional gender relations in Nepalese societies. She could not answer when I asked if arranged marriages encourage the continuity of gender discrimination. Yet she believes that females have to sacrifice more in arranged marriages as they are forced to live with a group of unfamiliar people where family interests become more dominant than their own choices. Bohra and Massey (2009) state, 'In Nepalese society, women after marriage migrate to their husband's house from their parents' house' (p.630). This shift from parent's home to husband's home after marriage in Nepalese society infers the sacrifices that a wife has to make in a patriarchal society.

Regarding the challenges of going abroad as a daughter-in-law for further studies, Anita gave an example of how her parents-in-law were not interested in sending her alone for further studies. According to her, it was 'during the period of my visa application, I was not sure that my dependent (my husband) would get a visa. His parents said that I should not be allowed to go alone because I was a married female, either both of you go together or both of you do not go'.

Subana also revealed a similar opinion about the restrictions females have to face with regard to international mobility, both as a daughter and daughter-in-law. Raghuram (2013) opines, 'Mobility also offers students opportunities to experience new places and the excitement and adventure that this may entail' (p.143). Subana further says that it is quite difficult for married females in Nepal to go abroad alone for further studies because, 'before marriage we were required to convince only our parents, while after marriage we have to convince our husband's parents as well as other family members'. On the other hand, they accept it happily if both husband and wife go together.

One couple who came to Australia one year ago have a different story of adjustment for the husband regarding international mobility. When they were in Nepal, the husband used to work as a bank manager. After their marriage, the wife wanted to come to Australia as a student although the husband had no interest to come. It looked as if she wanted to come to Australia not because of study, but because her sister was living in Brisbane. She is now studying an MPA and her husband works as a cleaner in a factory (night shift) and also supports her in household duties. I could see a clear expression of frustration on his face — he would hardly smile. Also, since they were living with his wife's relatives, he looked quite uncomfortable because in Nepal they were living with his parents. He is working hard to earn enough to pay for his wife's tuition fees, for food and accommodation, and repayments on a loan that they had taken in order to come to Australia. His wife once said that they have no plan to live here permanently — the reason being that her parents-in-law are old, and it is their responsibility to take care of them. She also felt regret for forcing him to come to Australia.

Conclusion

From the responses of the participants, we have the impression that traditional gender norms in Nepalese society have imposed visible restrictions on females' mobility. It begins from the patriarchal family pattern where they have to compromise with their freedom of choice, obey their parents before marriage, and obey their husbands and parents-in-law after marriage. Males, on the other hand, enjoy freedom from many aspects to do whatever they want. Even in the case of international migration opportunities, females cannot make independent choices. This speaks about the pathetic aspect of the female condition in Nepalese society as they have to face different types of restrictions on their mobility which begins at their parents' home and continues with some added limitations when they go to their husband's home after marriage. They are deprived of the opportunities of performing activities without permission, either within the family, or in the community. Conversely, their new-found awareness about their mobility, which they have developed as a result of living in Australian society, has given them confidence to live independently in both the domestic and social sectors.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research was carried out foregrounding the theme of changing gender roles among Nepalese migrant student couples in Australia. It has employed the sample interview responses of six female students living in Brisbane, Australia, in order to grasp the real picture of continuing or discontinuing traditional gender roles in the course of living in the host society. The data collected were coded and analysed focusing on two distinct themes and were categorised under two different sections. The first section concentrates on how the migrant student couples position themselves and cope with instances of binary opposition in doing and undoing traditional gender roles. The second part analyses the circumstances of female mobility, beginning from household activities in the country of origin to the changed socio-cultural atmosphere of the host society. Based on the comprehensive analysis of the documented data, it has derived the following findings.

All the participants revealed that they have gained liberating experiences from the yoke of patriarchy, which caused them to perform traditional gender roles, after coming to Australia. This is the common perception among the participants that living in Australian society has changed their previous understanding of the meaning of gender roles. In spite of their commitment to introduce changes in traditional gender relations in their home society, they also revealed the challenges of implementing their new-found awareness about the emancipation from the compulsion of playing gender-based roles in their country of origin.

This study has discovered that upon arriving to Australia, most of the participants have found their male counterparts changed in that they have started performing household duties, such as cooking, washing dishes, washing clothes etc., which they would ordinarily consider to be a female's responsibility in Nepal. My observation of some of the participants' domestic lives is also supportive of this as I witnessed husbands performing household tasks including childcare responsibilities which indicate their cooperation in discontinuing the gender-based roles after arriving in Australia. Obviously, a woman coming out of the imprisonment of traditional gender roles, declaring that she is not prepared to perform the role of taking care of her children as her sole responsibility, symbolises the new awareness about gender

relations that Nepalese female migrants have developed due to the impact of changed socio-cultural contexts of the host country. At the same time, some of the participants mentioned how their husbands were not participating in household duties such as cooking, among others. With some of the Nepalese husbands that I met, it could be seen from their activities that they represented elements of both doing and undoing gender roles. The theme of in betweenness, therefore, is evident in the responses of the participants as well as the activities of their husbands.

Willingness to introduce the changes in traditional gender relations upon returning to home country was an inherent commonality in the responses of all the participants. Yet some had doubt if they could achieve success in doing so. Their own family, according to them, would be the best platform for them to start awareness regarding this change.

All the participants have expressed their concern regarding the restrictions in their mobility mostly within the family. There is a high gender-based discrepancy between sons and daughters even before they are married. From the lived experiences of the participants interviewed, it is revealed that daughters are taught to accept the limitations on their freedom and also to play the gender-based role of being confined within the household. How would a daughter who is young and capable of differentiating between what is right and what is wrong feel if her mother does not allow her to go out with her friends? At the same time, how hopeless might she have found herself when she could see her brother going wherever he wanted without having to ask for his parents' permission? This is not only the story of a particular daughter who was restricted from freedom of choice, it rather represents the untold stories of thousands of daughters in Nepalese society who have been continuing gender roles silently only because they are females. By the same token, even after marriage, they have to undergo the experience of restrictions on participating in external activities from their family. All the respondents had similar perceptions regarding the limitations they had to face as daughters, as wives and as daughters-in-law.

Restrictions on the choice of dress, jobs, going outside of the home, etc. highlight the limitations imposed on female mobility in Nepalese society. Interestingly, husbands, as narrated by the participants, have no objection to any of those choices of their wives

anymore after coming to Australia, while they did not want their wife to make free choices on those things when they were in Nepal. This implies that many of the gender-based restrictions on female mobility in the country of origin have been continuing, not because their husband wants to, but because they have no courage to go against the prevailing social conventions.

Most of the participants who came to Australia in the student category were accompanied by their husbands which indicates a positive change regarding female migration for study opportunities. The other participants changed their status as students after coming to Australia. However, none of them came to Australia before their marriage. Moreover, some of the participants have also mentioned how their parents-in-law did not want them to come to Australia alone. It suggests though that there has been significant improvement in regard to the cases of study abroad migration; however, females still must get approval from their parents or parents-in-law before making decisions to migrate for study opportunities.

All the participants have student status currently in Australia and their husbands are working and supporting their wives financially. This indicates on the positive aspect of migration on Nepalese females because it is quite unusual in Nepal that husbands play supportive roles for the career growth of their wives.

Some of the participants, as well as my own wife, associated the prospect of independence with the opportunity to learn to drive, while others indicated that economic freedom because of employment opportunities have given them feelings of independence. The finding from the response of one of the participants has explored a different side of migration as she believes that males also have learnt to live independently after living in Australian society. Prior to living in Australia, they depended on females for the household duties such as cooking, washing etc., but after coming to Australia, they have learnt to do those things themselves which has made them capable of living independently. This infers that when undoing gender in Australia, Nepalese couples — both husbands and wives — have been emancipated.

In a nutshell, the findings of the research imply that student migration from Nepal to Australia has a remarkable impact on changing traditional gender relations. Nepalese

student couples, after living in Australian society, develop new awareness regarding gender relations. However, there are several socio-cultural hurdles that pose a challenge to the successful implementation of their new-found understandings. The lack of confidence to live with their new perception of gender upon returning to their home country might be one of the main reasons of in-betweenness, i.e., doing and undoing gender among Nepalese student couples in Australia.

This research will a strong platform for future research in the field of gender and temporary migration from Nepal. The respective government authorities and the researchers of gender and migration studies can utilise this research findings as a useful resource in the future. Study abroad education consultancies in Nepal can refer to the circumstances of changing gender roles as experienced by those Nepalese female students for the purpose of counseling other students intending to go abroad. In the course of visiting students and their family, I also had some opportunity to glean the perceptions of their husbands, as well as parents/parents in- law, regarding how changing gender roles has affected Nepalese families in Australia and also upon going back to Nepal. However, given the limitations of this study, the experiences of men could not be explored with such depth. However, the present study will provide a solid platform future research on gender and migration from Nepal to Australia. It will be important to understand the wider web of gender relations that are being negotiated, affected and transformed though the international mobility of students from Nepal.

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