Immigration Integration Policies and Nepalese Migrants' Integration in the UK

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A Thesis Submitted to Goldsmiths University of London, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2024

Declaration:

I herewith declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

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Acknowledgements

Foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Dr Sara Farris, and Professor Les Back, for their vital guidance, encouragement, critiques, and unwavering support throughout this research journey. Their mentorship provided the foundation that enabled me to fulfil this academic endeavour. Both of you, in a real sense, are my Guru. Similarly, I sincerely appreciate the Department of Sociology and the graduate school at Goldsmiths, University of London, for providing a stimulating and nurturing environment during my doctoral studies.

I am profoundly indebted to the participants who openly shared their personal narratives and graciously allowed me to share their real-life experiences in this thesis. Their cooperation was integral in capturing the essence of Nepalese migrants' journeys and granting insight into the complexities of immigration and integration. This manuscript owes its empirical depth to their contributions.

The inspiration for this research originated with my late father, who passed away while I was undertaking this PhD. Recalling his curiosity about my own migration reminds me of the significance of this research. Although he is not here to share this achievement, I hope it honours his memory. I am very proud to share this success with my dearest mother, who is in her late 80s, in Nepal. She always asks me: have you yet to become a doctor? She still thinks I can prescribe her some medicines once I become a doctor. It is difficult to convince her, who never went to school, of the differences between a medical and a philosophical doctor.

I am very proud to mention the unconditional support from my son, who played a pivotal role by backing up financial and familial support, which was only possible for me to pursue this academic ambition. I can hardly exaggerate the continuous support and motivation offered by my beloved wife. Without her manifested support, it would not have been possible for me to focus fully on my studies and achieve this success.

I sincerely appreciate everyone who accompanied me on this journey and helped guide me to this milestone. Your belief in my capability and your insights have facilitated the creation of this manuscript. I am indebted to you all.

Abstract

In recent times, international migration has become a global phenomenon, necessitating specific policies for the immigration and integration of diverse immigrant populations. Considering this fact, European countries, including the United Kingdom, have adjusted their integration policies in response to changing immigration patterns.

Against the backdrop of distinct diplomatic ties between Nepal and the United Kingdom and immigration and integration policies adopted by the UK, my research explores the multidimensional immigration and integration experiences of different visa trajectories of Nepalese in the UK. More specifically, it sheds light on how diverse integration patterns emerge based on factors such as visa categories, ethnicity, gender, age, skills and British integration policies.

I argue that examining the real-life integration experiences of Nepalese migrants can offer valuable insights and address the lack of emphasis on this specific group. This is important for informing policies and understanding the complexities of immigration and integration. The study underscores the necessity of dedicated scholarship on the immigration and integration of Nepalese migrants. It aims to provide insights into multi-level policy approaches targeting the needs and interests of non-colonial ethnic minority groups within broader British society.

The research uses in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method, drawing from the researcher's own immigration experiences. Thematic and narrative analysis reveals significant patterns and insights, while the inclusion of real-life cases adds depth to the investigation. The study contributes to understanding the immigration and integration of Nepalese migrants in the UK, highlighting the need to distinguish different migrant groups and employ intersectional investigations rather than implementing one-size-fits-all policies.

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Introduction

I.   Background of the Study

Recently, international migration has emerged as a pressing global phenomenon, attracting considerable interdisciplinary scholarly attention. Especially, in the last two decades, modern trends of globalisation, in many ways, have lowered the barriers to mobility, and migratory flows have increased exponentially worldwide. As a result, the movement of people across borders has become an evident feature of our age. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), there are currently an estimated 281 million international migrants globally, representing 3.6% of the world's population (IOM 2022). Even though the number and proportion of international migrants are relatively small compared to the overall population, the diverse characteristics of this group and the complexities associated with it, have made the phenomenon of international migration a global challenge.

If we analyse the recent trend of international migration and the complexities involved in it, we can categorise the recent migration patterns into four main streams: labour migration (both permanent and temporary), secondary migration driven by family reunification, humanitarian migration involving asylum seekers and refugees, and irregular migration (Castles 2014). However, in a broader spectrum, this categorisation can be divided into two major categories: economic and non-economic migration (Martin et al. 2008). The prospect of better employment opportunities primarily drives economic migrants, whereas non-economic migrants include categories such as family migrants and refugees. Recognising its global significance, the United Nations has also acknowledged migration's role in the development agenda necessitating a comprehensive and well-managed policy in place to address the complex challenges and opportunities associated with international migrations worldwide (IOM 2022).

In the contemporary global migration landscape, immigrant integration has emerged as a pressing and immediate concern. The accelerated movement of people across borders in the era of globalisation has heightened the need to address how immigrants can seamlessly become integral parts of their receiving societies. The issues surrounding integration extend beyond the surface, encompassing questions of identity, belonging, cultural adaptation, and structural barriers that

emerge as immigrant populations rebuild their lives in new national contexts (Favell 2016; Scholten, Collett, and Petrovic 2017a; Spencer and Charsley 2016). Consequently, immigration and integration have sparked extensive debate, particularly within the field of sociology. Thus, the challenges posed by global migration and the increasing diversity of societies have made 'integration' a prominent and highly discussed concept in sociological discourse.

Considering the significance of integration as a global concern, the receiving countries have focused on integration as a pivotal policy priority to promote social cohesion in increasingly diverse societies. In the United Kingdom, immigrant integration has become a major policy agenda due to the country's historical and contemporary immigration patterns. From its colonial past to the present, the UK has implemented numerous integration acts and legislations aimed at incorporating ethnic minorities, especially those from the Commonwealth (Kymlicka 2018a). Despite these efforts, integrating ethnic minorities remains a persistent challenge, highlighting the complexity and importance of effective integration policies (Phillimore 2012a; Saggar and Somerville 2012a).

By examining the context of Nepalese migrants in the UK, I clarify that an ethnic group is a community bound by shared cultural heritage, language, and often ancestry, distinguishing it from others within a society. Among South Asian immigrants in the UK, groups such as Indian, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani migrants have their own ethnic identities formally recognised in official categorisation. In contrast, Nepalese migrants, who belong to a non-colonial immigrant group, have been placed under the sub-category "Asian and Other," despite their unique linkage with British imperialism exemplified by the Gurkha[1]. This categorisation not only obscures their visibility as a distinct ethnic group but also reinforces their status as a marginalised population within the UK's South Asian migrant communities. As non-colonial immigrants, Nepalese people's specific experiences remain underrepresented in UK society. Thus, in this thesis, terms such as "ethnic," "ethnicity," and "ethnic minority" will be used to emphasise the Nepalese community's unique status and lived realities within the UK context. This approach acknowledges the Nepalese as a distinctive ethnic minority group, highlighting both their contributions and the challenges they face as a non-colonial and marginalised community in the UK.

At this point, I argue that the United Kingdom faces significant challenges in delivering effective integration policies for Third Country Nationals (TCNs), with particular emphasis on the integration of non-Commonwealth migrants. This concern arises from two primary factors. Firstly, Nepal's non-membership in Commonwealth dominions renders existing integration policies tailored for Commonwealth nationals inadequate in addressing the specific needs of different trajectories of

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[1] The Gurkhas are renowned soldiers from Nepal, known for their bravery, loyalty, and exceptional military skills. They have served in the British Armed Forces for over two centuries, earning a distinguished reputation worldwide.

Nepalese migrants in the UK. Secondly, the unique relationship between Nepal and the British Monarchy, exemplified by the Gurkha Soldiers' unwavering loyalty and bravery, necessitates a distinct integration approach to honour their special affiliation and contributions.

Instead of presenting all Nepalese migrants in a single large category, it is crucial to examine different visa categories of Nepalese migration to the UK as it offers a concrete illustration of the economic and non-economic migration categories, as stated above in the second paragraph. Additionally, it is more significant to analyse the policy implications surrounding different visa types because it draws a wider picture of integration outcomes. Highly skilled Nepalese migrants, motivated by the prospect of better employment opportunities and economic advancement, align with the category of economic migrants. Similarly, those who have come to the UK with the motive of higher education, and finally for employment opportunity; also, can be categorised within this category. This statement has been supported by the empirical evidence of a significant presence of Nepalese highly skilled professionals in the UK job market, especially in the sectors of healthcare, information technology, accountancy, and academia. Conversely, the accompanying family members, especially women and children can be considered as examples of non-economic migrants. Their migration is often driven by the desire for family reunification and often influenced by the patriarchal norms of the Nepalese familial system. Although Gurkhas' migration to the UK has its significant category, this also can be listed under the non-economic migration category. Thus, studying four different categories of Nepalese migrants in the UK, on the one hand, aligns with the broader categorisation of economic and non-economic migration trends, and on the other, it analyses the interplay of different integration policies influencing all these categories' integration patterns.

Hence, against the background of the UK's changing landscape of integration policies and Nepalese migrants' specific integration issues, this thesis aims in particular to highlight the multidimensional immigration integration patterns of four different trajectories of Nepalese: (a) Gurkhas (2) those, who migrated on a highly skilled route (c) those on a student visa category and (d) those, who migrated on a dependent visa. Besides that, this thesis highlights the intricate interplay between various migration trajectories of Nepalese migrants and the diverse integration policies within the United Kingdom.

By examining the impacts of multiculturalism as an inclusive policy approach, and at the same time, by analysing the recent trend of civic integration as a tougher policy, on the overall integration of the Nepalese diaspora, this thesis investigates multidimensional policy impacts on Nepalese migrants' integration in the UK. The central argument of my thesis posits that the British prototype of multiculturalism, as an inclusive integration approach, to a considerable extent, has facilitated the integration of these four different categories of Nepalese into the vast societal fabric of the UK.

This has been manifested through the cultivation of a sense of belonging, acceptance, and acknowledgement of Nepalese culture within local communities. However, I don't claim that the British model of multiculturalism is the best integration policy, but it is relatively effective and inclusive compared to recent approaches. Looking at the history of the British integration approaches and comparing it to newer civic integration concepts, multiculturalism has notably helped Nepalese people's integration in the UK. While not perfect, this policy has promoted inclusivity and eased the integration process for Nepalese immigrants. On the contrary, I have critically analysed the adverse impacts of the recent trend of civic integration policy on the overall integration patterns of Nepalese in the UK, as another major argument of my thesis.

By scrutinising these policies through the lens of different migration trajectories, I have tried to unravel the intricate dynamics that underpin the interconnected relationship between migration patterns and integration policies, offering a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted forces shaping the overall integration experiences of Nepalese migrants in the United Kingdom. Chapter 2 of this thesis rests on a broad analysis of the British Prototype of Multiculturalism and its rise and fall as an integration policy approach and its influence on Nepalese migrants' integration in the UK. However, I want to highlight this aspect here in brief.

Multiculturalism as a policy of acceptance and recognition of cultural diversities, compared with other policies, to some extent, has influenced the integration of Nepalese migrants across diverse categories, emphasising cultural, religious, and social aspects. Through cultural festivals, religious celebrations, and community gatherings, multicultural policies have helped to foster a sense of belonging and recognition among Gurkhas, preserving their cultural heritage while connecting them with both Nepalese and British communities. Because of the freedom of celebrating marshal culture and observing their specific heritage, Gurkhas' sense of acceptance has been positive. Additionally, initiatives such as cultural orientation programs, and interfaith dialogues have promoted understanding and respect for Gurkhas and other diverse religious practices, contributing to social cohesion.

Similarly, the highly skilled Nepalese migrants have found avenues for socio-cultural integration through participation in cultural exchange programs, professional networking events, and diversity training, facilitating their engagement with both Nepalese and British societies. Along with the celebration of acceptance of cultural diversities and secular ideology, by establishing various professional organisations, highly skilled Nepalese have been involved in various charitable programmes promoting social cohesion and integration within the UK and across Nepal. Moreover, multicultural policies have supported their integration through cultural exchange opportunities, and platforms for religious expression, nurturing a sense of identity and belonging within the Nepalese

diaspora and with the broader British societal fabric. This has encouraged Nepalese professionals to engage in local activities and promote social cohesion.

In the context of Nepalese students' immigration and integration, the concept of multiculturalism, so far, has fostered their integration by promoting cultural acceptance, religious freedom, social engagement, and sense of ethnicity. Within universities, diverse environments validate Nepalese heritage, enriching the educational experience for all. Religious accommodations ensure freedom of religious ideology, while local communities offer platforms for cultural engagement, facilitating integration through retaining ethnic identity. It offers them freedom of identification based on their cultural diversities, race, nationality and religious values. In sum, the multicultural framework empowers Nepalese students to participate fully in academic and social life, contributing to their personal growth and enriching the broader community diversity.

A similar kind of policy influence has been witnessed in the dependent category. Cultural celebrations and community events, such as festivals and traditional gatherings, help Nepalese women maintain their cultural identity while feeling accepted. Women's groups and diaspora networks offer support and a sense of community, enhancing social engagement. A secular cultural environment allows them to practice their religion freely, by visiting temples and cultural centres. These women feel pride in their traditional attire and heritage, which they can practice freely within multicultural frameworks. Additionally, equal employment opportunities empower Nepalese women to overcome traditional gender roles prevalent in Nepal, making them feel as equal as their male counterparts. This inclusive environment supports their personal and professional growth, strengthening their transnational connection.

To emphasise it again, as another major argument of my thesis, I have contrarily, highlighted the adverse consequences of the contemporary civic integration trend, asserting that it has significantly impeded the diverse integration trajectories of Nepalese migrants within the United Kingdom. The examination conducted in this thesis scrutinises the inflexible parameters embedded within the civic integration policy framework, identifying instances where these tougher requirements have posed substantial obstacles to the immigration and integration patterns among all categories of Nepalese migrants, more especially of the Gurkhas and dependent categories.

This kind of hurdle raises critical questions regarding the historical service of Gurkhas to the British monarchy, as these loyal soldiers served without being subjected to nationality requirements. The subsequent classification of these loyal soldiers as foreigners or immigrants stands in apparent contradiction to the principles of justice and legality, prompting a critical inquiry into the transformation of these dedicated servants into subjects of immigration scrutiny. A sad illustration of this negative impact unfolds in the context of English language tests and interviews mandated

for naturalisation. Despite the Gurkhas' enduring service to British imperialism spanning two centuries, their subjection to difficult language assessments and interviews for naturalisation raises pertinent questions about equity and fairness.

Despite not being the sole indicator of successful integration, economic integration is often viewed as central to complete integration (Anxo et al. 2007; Dustmann and Frattini 2011). It is due to significant financial investments in both pre-entry requirements and post-arrival integration processes, particularly within the context of Nepalese professionals' integration in the UK. Civic integration policies in the UK have imposed formidable barriers for highly skilled Nepalese migrants seeking to integrate into British society, more specifically into the UK job market, affecting their overall economic status. These stringent regulations, marked by complex visa processes and demanding criteria, have notably hindered their economic prospects. Despite possessing valuable qualifications and skills, many struggle to navigate these requirements, resulting in underemployment and not being able to utilise their expertise. Moreover, the emphasis on language proficiency and cultural assimilation negatively promotes feelings of exclusion and embarrassment within Nepalese communities and with broader British societies, especially among those unable to meet these standards (Goodman 2012a). Consequently, these policies not only undermine the economic potential of skilled Nepalese migrants but also exacerbate their sense of marginalisation within Nepalese communities, and British society, hindering their overall integration efforts.

Due to the tougher integration requirements as set in the civic integration measure, Nepalese students encounter numerous hurdles from the outset. Strict visa processes, challenging English exams, and financial constraints pose significant barriers in Nepal before they even set foot in the UK. Once they are here, the pile of problems starts growing. Navigating unfamiliar education systems, cultural differences, and a lack of support networks compounds their challenges. Further complicating matters are unfamiliar pedagogy, frequently shifting higher-education-related policies, limited working hour allowance, expensive health surcharges, and confusing rules in accessing the government's systems like health service, child benefits, housing credit, and the requirements for family reunification. Inadequate academic supports contribute to academic struggles, social isolation, and feelings of inadequacy. Additionally, limited employment opportunity and unfamiliarity with the job market hinder their efforts to secure jobs in the field of their experience. This cycle of difficulties breeds feelings of unwelcome, academic underperformance, and financial instability, fuelling anxiety and depression. As a result, their ability to fully integrate into British society is badly impacted, impeding these youths' personal and professional development.

Additionally, I have critically argued against the stringent pre-entry requisites enshrined in the civic integration policy, particularly regarding family reunification. Notably, the imposition of these

prerequisites has disproportionately affected spouses, predominantly women, who find themselves barred from reunification due to the discriminatory nature of the civic integration requirements. Because of the English language tests and interviews, many Nepalese women have been rejected from joining their husbands in the UK. Consequently, some of the highly skilled migrants, especially the husbands had to return to Nepal to join their families. This has resulted in problems in return migrants' integration as well. Especially, those professionals, who had resigned from their highly-paid jobs and spent a lot of money to migrate to the UK would find it difficult to re-integrate into the job market in Nepal.

More significantly, this thesis propounds a compelling argument elucidating the detrimental consequences of the civic integration policy on the integration trajectories of all Nepalese migrants within the UK, with a specific focus on the disproportionately affected Gurkhas and their descendants. The narrative highlights critical inquiries into the ethical dimensions of such policy implementations, thereby contributing to a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by Nepalese migrants in the context of contemporary civic integration frameworks.

Looking ahead, I will delve into the specific context of Nepal, where internal migration patterns provide a unique lens through which to view broader issues of international migration. The next section presents an overview of Nepal's geographical positioning and internal migration dynamics before situating these aspects within a global framework.

II.   An Overview of Nepal and Its Internal Migration

Understanding the migratory motives, trends and needs of Nepalese people necessitates a comprehensive examination of Nepal's geographical and demographic features, as well as the intricate interplay of its socio-cultural dynamics on both internal and international migration. Why I want to highlight this aspect here, it is because these kinds of diversified ethnic and cultural categorisations not only have influenced their migratory trends but also can be noticed even among the emigrated Nepalese influencing their integration patterns in their destination countries (Adhikari 2012; Gellner and Hausner 2013; Pariyar 2018b). Thus, this section, in particular, initiates by shedding light on these foundational aspects of Nepal's composition and their profound influence on migration patterns.

Nepal is a Himalayan country with a small population of 33 million (0.3% of the Asian population) situated in South Asia between China and India. It has been surrounded by lands from all its sides: east, west, and south sides by India and the north side by China, resulting in no access to the sea.

It covers the topographic variation from high Himalayan peaks in the north, hills, and valleys in the middle and the Terai (the plain areas) in the south. Although Nepal looks small, it has the world's highest mountain - Mount Everest – and 8 of the 10 highest mountains in the world are in Nepal (Paudel, Bhattarai, and Kindlmann 2012). Similarly, Nepal has been known as the origin of Buddhism as it is the holy land where Buddha was born (Coningham et al. 2013). However, religion-wise, the largest number of followers are Hindu (more than 80%), whereas Buddhists represent nearly 10% of the population, with the remaining 10% being Christians, Muslims and Jains (Gellner, Hausner, and Letizia 2016). Nepal is very rich not only in its natural biodiversity and landscapes but also in its caste, cultural and religious diversity. There are more than 110 ethnic categories that speak nearly the same varieties of different dialects, and they celebrate hundreds of distinct cultural festivals.

Nepal's geography, social and cultural diversity have influenced its internal and international migration patterns. The geography of Nepal, with its mountainous terrain and location between India and China, has played a significant role in shaping its migration trends, both within the country's borders and abroad. Similarly, Nepal's social and cultural diversity notably impacts its migration and integration patterns in the countries of destinations. Specifically, the remote regions' minority people of so-called lower caste groups, who are also known as marginalised populations in Nepal, face barriers to education and career mobility, affecting their emigration pathways. This has been evident within the Nepalese in the UK. The Nepalese community in the UK predominantly comprises individuals from higher-caste backgrounds, especially from urban or semi-urban areas. There is a notable underrepresentation of so-called lower caste and marginalised groups from remote areas of Nepal. This highlights a complex interplay of ethnic variations in migration patterns. Thus, my research aims to analyse these diverse integration outcomes among diverse categorisations in the UK, making it a crucial area of social research.

Traditionally, in Nepal most migrations were internal. People from rural areas migrated to the suburbs and then from the suburbs to the cities, and the people from the Himalayas used to migrate to the mountains and from the mountains to the Terai (KC 2020). Due to the vast geographical topography, the Himalayan and mountainous regions have poor roads and social and urban infrastructures, making them hard to access and difficult to live in. Moreover, these remote areas suffer from various natural calamities like droughts, landslides and seasonal famine, forcing people to look for better places, especially the Terai region (Sharma et al. 2014a)(Figure 1)[2].

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[2] The map of Nepal's physiographical regions, as illustrated in section- (3. images) in appendices section of this thesis indicates the southern Terai region.

The southern Terai region of Nepal is known as the "breadbasket" of the country due to its fertile land and extensive agricultural production. This region is also geographically located near the border with India, which has facilitated cross-border migration for many Nepalese workers. The fertile land and easy access to the neighbouring country have made the Terai region attractive for domestic and cross-border migration (Gurung 1998). For Nepalese migrant workers, the Terai region offers a promising alternative to the limited opportunities in other parts of the country. The fertile land in the region allows for more stable agricultural work, which can provide a consistent source of income for those employed in the sector. Additionally, its more developed infrastructure and the proximity to India open up a wider range of employment opportunities, including jobs in the informal sector, such as construction, hospitality and domestic work (Poudyal, et al. 2022).

Traditionally, Nepal and India have a long and close cultural and historical relationship, with a shared Vedic creed based on Hinduism. This relationship has included frequent travel between the two countries for religious pilgrimages (Gurung 1998; Sharma et al. 2014a). Because of the open border policy and cross-cultural relationship, it is hard to trace when Nepalese people began to move to India and vice versa. However, it is known that Nepalese people have travelled to India for work, education, to find a marriage partner, or for settlement opportunities. Thieme (2006) has characterised the Nepal-Indian relationship as 'inter-generational'. There is no requirement for visas or travel documents between the two countries, making it difficult to estimate the number of Nepalese people living in India. However, according to the Nepalese government labour migration report, it has been estimated that nearly 2 million Nepalese people were living in India under various circumstances (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal 2020).

Furthermore, examining the migratory patterns of Nepalese in conjunction with the country's political landscape reveals a clear correlation. How the political instability can significantly influence migration, can be analysed within these migratory patterns. To understand these patterns, it is worth stating here briefly about the political changes in Nepal.

Following Nepal's democratic movement in the 1990s, Nepalese migration began to shift. During the rule of the monarchy, immigration policy did not support migration requiring visas and travel documents to go abroad. As a result, there were very few cases of Nepalese migrants going to countries other than India (Einsiedel, Malone, and Pradhan 2012; Gurung 1998). However, from the beginning of the 2000s, apart from India, the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) and Malaysia also became the prime destinations for Nepalese labour migrant workers (Joshi, Simkhada, and Prescott 2011; Malla and Rosenbaum 2016a). The GCC countries experienced rapid industrialisation and had a high demand for labour, which Nepalese workers could fill without requiring specific immigration requirements such as skills, qualifications, and language efficiencies. This trend has intensified in recent years and the GCC countries have become the first choice for

low-skilled Nepalese migrant workers seeking employment opportunities (Joshi et al. 2011; Sharma et al. 2014b). According to the Department of Foreign Employment (DOFE), over 4 million labour approvals were issued for employment in Gulf countries over the past decade. Unlike in India, Nepalese migration to GCC countries is predominantly temporary due to immigration policies that prevent permanent settlement. Therefore, Nepalese workers migrate to GCC countries exclusively for employment purposes, necessitating them to return to Nepal upon completion of their contracts.

Along with the political movement towards multiparty democracy in the 1990s, Nepal's international connections expanded to include the European and American continents (Bohra-Mishra 2011b; Bruslé 2009a). By welcoming foreign investment, Nepal invited Western investors to work in the country and encouraged young Nepalese professionals to seek job opportunities in Western countries. To facilitate this, the government relaxed its emigration rules, which had previously been strict under the monarchy. This shift not only allowed Nepalese migrants to participate in the international trend of economic migration but also encouraged them to seek settlement opportunities in developed countries in Europe and America (Bohra-Mishra 2011a; Bruslé 2009a). This trend was aggravated during the Maoist Civil War as it caused the closure of industries, academic institutions, and businesses. The closures and uncertainties surrounding the education system in Nepal further fuelled the desire to seek educational and employment opportunities in foreign countries, such as the UK (Pherali 2013).

The Maoist insurgency led to a period of civil unrest in Nepal, marked by violent armed conflicts between Maoist guerrillas the Nepal Army and the Armed Police Force (APF). The conflict resulted in nearly 17,000 deaths and led to social and political uncertainty, leading many Nepalese people to seek opportunities abroad (Nepal, Bohara, and Gawande 2011). During this period, thousands became homeless, with some finding refuge in other countries, such as India. The unrest also led to the closure of schools, offices, and universities, disrupting many students' education and career paths, and forcing both students and their parents to look for opportunities abroad in search of stability, safety, and better prospects (Nepal et al. 2011; Valente 2014). Ultimately Maoist decade-long war resulted in the monarchy's dissolution in 2008 and the creation of a federal republic.

Alongside this political shift, there has been a significant change in the emigration patterns of Nepalese people, extending across the ocean. Consequently, Nepalese communities are growing in countries like Japan, South Korea and China (Tanaka 2019; Yamanaka 2010).
However, their appeal as destinations for Nepalese migrants is limited because these countries lack policies that grant permanent residency and citizenship. In contrast, countries such as Australia, the USA and the UK presented relatively accessible immigration policies offering opportunities for permanent settlement and enhanced quality of life, making them attractive

destinations for Nepalese individuals (Adhikari 2012; Bruslé 2009a; Gellner et al. 2016). As a result, the United Kingdom has recently witnessed significant growth in the Nepalese population.

III.   Nepalese Migration to the UK: A Demographic Insight

The intricacies of socio-cultural dynamics have been pivotal in shaping migration decisions and integration outcomes of Nepalese, particularly evident in the context of the UK. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the overall socio-cultural, religious, ethnic, caste, and vernacular structures of Nepalese migrants is essential in comprehending their immigration and integration journey. The vernacular structure within the Nepalese community—referring to its rich linguistic diversity encompassing various languages and dialects spoken by different castes and regional groups such as Nepali, Newari, Gurung, and Limbu—plays a pivotal role in shaping the cultural identity and social dynamics of Nepalese migrants in the UK. This linguistic diversity is crucial for understanding how the Nepalese community forms cohesive networks, expresses cultural identity, and sustains traditions within the diaspora. Furthermore, awareness of these language patterns is essential for assessing the community's integration with other groups and their access to services in the UK, as language influences both communication within the community and interactions with broader society.

Additionally, historical ties between the two countries also have been important aspects in analysing migration trends and integration outcomes. Therefore, this section magnifies Nepal's distinct and diplomatic bond with the UK, Nepalese people's migration and demographic composition, and its overall impacts on integration patterns. The historic relationship between Nepal and the United Kingdom began immediately after the Anglo-Nepal War (1814-1816) when Nepal signed a peace agreement with the (then) East India Company in 1815. That bilateral peace agreement, on the one hand, opened access for Nepalese nationals (known as Ghurkhas) to join the British army, and on the other hand, it helped Nepal to remain a sovereign nation (Adhikari 2012; Gurung 1998; Low 2015). Despite this long diplomatic relationship, until the late 1990s, it was rare for Nepalese to migrate to the UK for the motive of permanent settlement (Adhikari 2012).

Based on their historic, distinct, and diplomatic ties, Nepal and the United Kingdom celebrated the bicentennial anniversary of their two-century-long historic relationship in 2016. However, the migratory history of Nepalese nationals to the UK is a relatively new phenomenon. There is no historical evidence of Nepalese people visiting the UK before 1850; however, the Gurkhas serving under the British regiments were stationed in various nations outside the UK. The royal appointment of the (then) Nepalese Prime Minister Janga Bahadur Rana has been considered the

first formal visit of a Nepalese national to the UK in 1850. Prime Minister Rana, his two brothers and 19 other members' historic visit to the UK was well known to the rest of the world. East Indian Company's serving men might have visited the UK before Janga Bahadur Rana; however, Prime Minister Rana was the first official authority to make a royal visit to the United Kingdom (Adhikari 2012; Gould 1999; Low 2015).

Before the 2001 census, there was no official record of Nepalese migrants in the UK as they fell under the 'Other Asian' ethnic category (Adhikari 2012; Pariyar 2020; Sims 2008). However, scholars argue that nearly 6000 Nepalese were living in the UK (Adhikary, Simkhada, Van Teijlingen, et al. 2008; Pariyar 2020). Along with the shifts in policies, there have been noticeable changes in the demography of the Nepalese population in the UK, recently. Following the legislative changes of 2004 and 2009, which allowed retired Gurkhas and their families to migrate to the UK permanently, there was a noticeable upswing in the Nepalese population in the country. Thus, considering Gurkhas and their families one of the largest Nepalese migrant categories in the UK, I have highlighted Gurkhas' immigration and integration in detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Similarly, following the new visa route, known as HSMP (Highly Skilled Migrant Program), especially from 2004 many Nepalese professionals and their families moved to the UK. Nepal's political unrest posed challenges hampering overall employability opportunities and compelled potential professionals to seek opportunities abroad. I can portray this as a compelling 'push' factor. Conversely, various enticing factors such as a higher quality of life worldwide recognised education for children, improved healthcare services, and enhanced employment opportunities acted as attractive 'pull' factors. Among all, the motive of making the United Kingdom their home was seen as the main driving factor. This trend gained momentum from 2006 onwards, making this visa category of Nepalese the second-largest category for living permanently in the country. Chapter 5 of this thesis presents a comprehensive analysis of the integration experience of this visa category of Nepalese in the UK.

The Nepalese population in the UK experienced significant growth with the notable influx of Nepalese students arriving under the student visa category, particularly after 2006. The appeal of British education, as advertised in the then Labour Government education policy, as stated by Lomer (2018), many Nepalese students chose the UK as their education destination. Alongside the pursuit of a world-recognised degree, most of the Nepalese students were attracted by the motives of permanent settlement in the UK. The post-study work opportunities, as defined in the policy, and the prospect of utilising their acquired knowledge and skills in the global job market were the enticing factors. During this period, the Nepalese population became one of the fastest-growing non-EU migrant populations in the UK, reaching the total figure of Nepalese migrants living in the UK by 48,497 in 2011 (Office for National Statistics 2013). However, as argued by Griffiths and Yeo

(2021), following the Conservative Government's anti-immigrant hostile policy in education in 2010, affected the visa application process for many potential Nepalese students and slowed down the immigration process. I have presented a detailed analysis of the student visa category of Nepalese migrants' integration experience in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

It is significant to mention that based on the patriarchal norms, traditionally, Nepalese people's migration has been male-dominant. Men have been seen as the primary migrants and women as secondary. This trend has been noticed in the migration trajectories in the UK as well. Additionally, the Nepalese familial structure traditionally follows compound dynamics with patriarchal norms, emphasising strict bonds in marriage and family. Consequently, migration journeys frequently involve spouses, with wives often accompanying their husbands. This familial practice has played a significant role by highlighting the dependent category within the Nepalese population across various pathways in the UK. Chapter 7 of this thesis highlights the immigration and integration experiences of Nepalese women as a prominent trajectory within the larger context of migration to the UK.

Although various categories of Nepalese immigrants have contributed to making the Nepalese population in the UK an emerging and fast-growing migrant community, unlike other South Asian migrant groups – such as the Bangladeshi population of 450,000, the Pakistani 1.2million, the Sri Lankan population of about half a million and the Indian 1.2million – the Nepalese population in the UK has been relatively small (Adhikari 2012; Adhikary, Simkhada, Van Teijlingen, et al. 2008; Pariyar 2020). Although Gellner (2017:1) argues that these numbers are disputable, the Nepalese Embassy in London estimated that 100 thousand Nepalese were living in the UK in 2021 (Nepalese Embassy, UK 2021).

Some diasporic organisations and ethnic communities have surveyed different aspects of Nepalese migrants' lives in the UK. For instance, the Centre for Nepalese Studies UK (CNS UK), one of the leading UK-based academic institutions, conducted a detailed population survey of Nepalese migrants in 2008. Similarly, there is some literature about the health status and health issues of Nepalese migrants (Adhikary, Simkhada, Van Teijlingen, et al. 2008; Roland et al. 2014; Simkhada et al. 2020). In addition to this, Regmi, Naidoo, and Regmi (2009) have studied Nepalese migrants' work-related discrimination issues. However, all these studies have not delved into the immigration and integration policies affecting Nepalese migrants, or the ways these factors forge their integration journeys.

The Nepalese population in the UK is rather heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, caste and religious affiliation. There is a popular say in the Nepali language that states, "Burma Janu Karma Sangai", namely "those who migrate to Burma (Myanmar) carry their fate and luck with them".

Burma (Myanmar) symbolises any foreign land and fate and luck stand for the social and cultural baggage that migrants carry with them. Pariyar (2018b) has addressed this issue in his research about Nepalese migrants' experience of being influenced by their caste and culture in Australia. Bohra-Mishra (2011a) also studied how Nepalese migrants in the US carry their ethnicity, norms, ideology, and caste hierarchy. Similarly, Yamanaka (2010) and Tanaka (2019) have mentioned the sense of cultural, ethnic, social and economic belonging among Nepalese migrants in Japan.

According to Adhikari (2012), there were more than 26 ethnic groups of Nepalese living in the UK until the late 2000s. Gurung, Magar, Rai, Limbu, Brahmin, Chhetri and Newar represented the most numerous ones. Mostly, Gurkhas belong to Gurung, Rai and Limbu ethnic categories, and they are the largest groups of Nepalese migrants living in Britain. As described above, these Gurkhas, who mostly belong to the hilly and mountainous regions, also carry cultural diversities and caste hierarchy determined by Nepal's vast topographic characteristics. These kinds of categorisations also coincide with the so-called lower social caste, as soldiers were recruited mostly from remote hilly and mountainous regions, which were, by nature poorer regions of Nepal. Additionally, along with the Gurkhas and their families, the arrival of other categories of Nepalese from the mid-2000s onwards, such as students and skilled migrants, who were especially from the so-called upper caste and from the urban regions, ethnic and caste hierarchies reproduced in the British context and have made the Nepalese migrant population very diverse (Gellner 2014; Gellner and Hausner 2013; Pariyar 2020).

In terms of religion, too, Nepalese in the UK are heterogeneous. Different types of religious practices can be found among Nepalese people; however, Hinduism and Buddhism are the largest religious groups (Gellner and Hausner 2013). Based on its traditional caste hierarchy and vernacular system, Brahmin and Chhetri are classified as so-called higher and dominant caste groups, most of whom are Hindu. So, Hinduism was still the largest category, but no longer dominant in the UK. Because of the significant number of Gurkhas, most of whom practise Buddhism, the ratio of Hinduism and Buddhism is similar in the UK (Adhikari 2012; Gellner and Hausner 2013). Despite the variations in caste, culture, ethnicity and familial composition, there is religious tolerance and respect among them.

Examining migration tradition and the traditions accompanied by the migration of Nepalese people, I can argue that Nepalese migrants have carried their mixed baggage of religion, culture, caste and ethnic belonging along with them. As a piece of evidence, I can argue that most of the literature highlights the strong sense of religious, cultural, caste and ethnical belongingness of Nepalese migrants in the destination countries (Gellner et al. 2016; Pariyar 2020). However, these studies have not explored whether immigrants' strong sense of cultural belongingness promotes or hampers their integration patterns. In other words, how the ethnic and cultural background of these

Nepalese migrants have influenced their overall integration journey in the destination country; has not been clear.

Apart from these variations, Nepalese communities have been affiliated with numerous small groups and cataloguing. There are more than 400 different diasporic institutions and organisations registered in the UK by Nepalese migrants (Gellner 2017; Gellner et al. 2016; Pariyar 2020). Most of these organisations have been registered based on caste and religion. Buddha Foundation, the Hindu Society, Chhetri Samaj and Tamudhi are examples of religion and ethnicity-based organisations. Similarly, some organisations have been established based on areas of settlement. Bexleyheath Nepalese community, Aldershot Nepalese Society and Royal Greenwich Nepalese Society are some representatives of that category. Likewise, profession-based organisations and communities also have a good influence on their communities. Society of Nepalese Professionals, Nepalese Doctors Association, Nepalese Nursing Association, Nepalese Engineers Association and Nepalese Accountant Association are the major examples of professionally established organisations in the UK (Embassy 2021). These organisations have been viewed as promoters of social solidarity and ethnic unity, and also as transnational agents to manage resources and remittances to support their country of origin (Adhikari 2012; Bohra-Mishra 2011a).

While these organisations, at least in principle, are supposed to foster intra-community bonds and integration, my research interrogates whether the institutional categorisation of Nepalese migrants along ethnic and regional lines has facilitated or hindered their integration. Kostakopoulou (2010) argues that when migrant communities divide into different clusters, it may hamper their community cohesion within themselves and in the receiving society. Similarly, Pariyar (2018b) also has explored caste and ethnic stratification among the Nepalese in Australia. My study also has explored the impacts of such clustering and categorisation, focusing on how they hinder ethnic and communal cohesion both within Nepalese communities and in the broader context of British society. I have explored how such selective group isolations have unconsciously nurtured divisions and obstructed integration by reinforcing narrow caste and cultural identities among various categories of Nepalese in the UK.

IV.   Motive for the Current Research

Being a Nepalese PhD sociology student, my motivation for researching the integration experiences of Nepalese immigrants in the UK comes from a personal and academic standpoint. Having experienced the challenges of adapting to a new culture first-hand, I want to explore and understand the complexities of the integration process. As both a researcher and someone

connected to the Nepalese diaspora, I aimed to uncover insights that can contribute to better policies and a deeper understanding of how Nepalese individuals navigate and integrate into UK society. What kind of policies enable a sense of belonging? How can governments support communities in maintaining their cultural heritage and integrating into British society? My engagement with these questions is not just academic but inherent as I belong to the same community, and I share the same culture and possible fate.

To explain it in detail, Nepalese migration to the UK stems from an interplay of geographic, social, economic, ethnic, caste and other demographic factors in Nepal. This results in Nepalese migrants having different migration pathways to the UK. More specifically, Highly Skilled Migrant visas are predominantly held by Nepalese from so-called higher castes and urban areas. These groups have much greater access to higher education, enabling their competency and status to apply and emigrate as highly skilled workers. In contrast, ethnic minorities, especially from remote villages and hilly regions, like Gurung, Rai, and Limbu have viewed joining in British Armed Forces as a status. Thus, these so-called ethnic minorities in the Nepalese context, represent most of the Gurkhas in the UK. Similarly, other caste groups, who have also marginalised populations from rural Nepal, face barriers to education and career mobility. This can be exemplified by the huge outflow of low-skilled labour migration to India and Gulf countries (Poudyal, et al. 2022). Thus, it is evident that pre-existing socioeconomic stratification and inequality within Nepal, have shaped the emigration patterns of the Nepalese population to the UK. The variance in migrant profiles and trajectories based on privilege and marginalisation in the Nepalese context not only has led to a clustering effect under certain UK visa types but also has influenced their integration experiences in the UK. In essence, traditionally rooted caste hierarchy and vernacular system have played crucial roles in the overall immigration and integration patterns of Nepalese in the UK.

Therefore, it was essential to investigate the multidimensional integration experiences and overall integration patterns of Nepalese migrants regarding immigrant integration policies in the UK. Thus, in light of the immigration and integration policies adopted by the UK, I aimed to explore how different integration patterns result from the interplay between the different cultural, religious and socio-economic characteristics of Nepalese migrants and British integration policies. Examining their multidimensional integration trajectories can provide fresh insights and address the lack of emphasis on Nepalese migrants specifically. For me, it is crucial to investigate their lived integration realities across social, economic, civic and cultural spheres to inform policies and discourses.

V.   Significance of the Current Research

Following the recent trend of international migration, it has become crucial to understand the experiences, challenges, and successes of migrant populations to develop effective policy frameworks and promote inclusive societies (Ager and Strang 2008 and Broadhead 2020). From this point of view, I can argue that studying immigration and integration policies in the United Kingdom and their impacts on the integration of Nepalese migrants holds significant importance in the current socio-political landscape. By examining the specific case of Nepalese migrants, including the migration of martial heritage such as Gurkhas, this research aimed to shed light on the complexities surrounding immigration and integration processes. This also offers a wealth of academic and policy discourse information by informing local, national, and international policy building.

The immigration of Nepalese migrants to the United Kingdom has led to various acculturation processes, influencing their integration patterns. Nepalese migrants have brought baggage full of cultural diversity, caste hierarchies, religious variations, gender-related taboos and other normative factors to British society (Adhikari 2012; Gellner and Hausner 2013; Laksamba, Adhikari, and Dhakal 2016). Understanding the roles of these factors in the integration process offers valuable insights into understanding the dynamics of migrant communities. It has aimed to comprehensively analyse the social systems involved in the integration process. By gaining a nuanced understanding of these factors, policymakers, community organisations, and stakeholders can collaborate to develop initiatives that promote social cohesion and create an environment of acceptance and inclusion for all residents, regardless of their origin.

Additionally, from a sociological perspective, this research serves as an important reference for future studies and illustrates how different groups, castes, cultures, and ethnicities of non-Commonwealth immigrants navigate integration. On the one hand, it sheds light on effective strategies and challenges faced by minority immigrants in the UK and on the other, it provides a model for how a disadvantaged community like the Nepalese can integrate into UK society, highlighting key aspects of immigration and integration policies. In addition to policy development, this study can promote social cohesion by emphasising the significance of cultural diversities in the UK, as argued by Asari, Halikiopoulou, and Mock (2008) and Meer and Modood (2009). The current research, in other words, can help promote the argument that integrating migrant communities has been crucial for fostering a harmonious and inclusive society.

Studying the integration journeys of Nepalese migrants has taught me the huge importance of this migration despite the limited number of studies devoted to it, as compared to Western and

Commonwealth migrant groups. Hence, this study addresses a significant knowledge gap and provides unique insights into non-Western, non-Commonwealth migrant experiences in the UK. In particular, this research explores the nuances of Nepalese integration to inform both integration policy and wider theoretical perspectives on immigration and minority settlement. Examining the multidimensional integration processes undergone by Nepalese migrants in the UK provides an empirical window into the lived complexities of ethnic minorities' incorporation into British society, in particular.

Therefore, the significance of this research has been set in its potential to inform and enhance the development of immigration and integration policies in the UK. By exploring the experiences of Nepalese migrants, who represent a distinctive community within the diverse migrant population, policymakers can gain valuable insights into the barriers and facilitators for these immigrants' successful integration. This research sought to identify the factors that promote or hinder the socio-cultural, civic-political and economic integration of Nepalese migrants in the UK. Thus, the current research has tried to formulate evidence-based policies that can address the specific needs and challenges faced by non-colonial minority immigrants in the UK. The value of this research also rests on its potential to contribute to the existing body of an integration process in the UK. By shedding light on the experiences of this unique migrant group and the policies that impact their integration in the UK, this thesis aims to make a valuable contribution to the existing literature on ethnic minorities' integration in the UK.

VI.   Structure of the Thesis

This research is situated within the field of studies on transnational migrations and integration, particularly in the European context. Therefore, this introductory chapter first defines transnational migration as a global phenomenon. Then, to establish the country's emigration tradition, it presents Nepal's geographical and political context and its influence on domestic and international migration. Subsequently, it highlights the recent low-skilled Nepalese labour migration trends to the Gulf, Malaysia, and other Asian countries. The introductory chapter then focuses on Nepalese migration, specifically to the UK, underpinned by these two centuries' distinct historical ties. This dimension forms the core of the research. More specifically, this introduction contextualises the exploration of the multidimensional integration experiences of diverse categories of Nepalese migrants in the UK as the primary objective of the current study.

Chapter One of this thesis provides an overview of immigration and integration policies in Europe. This chapter offers a comprehensive analysis of international migration and the call for integration,

focusing on different European countries in particular. Through an extensive literature review, the chapter explores the interdisciplinary relationship between immigration and integration, occasionally drawing connections to the experiences of Nepalese migrants in the UK. It concludes by examining policy-driven interpretations of integration, specifically emphasising the European Union's frameworks and their application in the UK context.

Chapter Two of this thesis specifically highlights the immigration and integration policies adopted by the UK. Considering its colonial history and the urge to integrate various categories of immigrants, this chapter analyses various approaches to integration. In this chapter, I explore various approaches to integration, focusing specifically on the British model of multiculturalism as the main argument of my thesis. I then highlight the importance of multiculturalism in promoting the cultural identities of different categories of Nepalese migrants. While I analyse its positive impacts on ethnic minorities' integration, I also uncover negative opinions against multiculturalism, which challenge its effectiveness. Additionally, I discuss the emergence of the civic turn in integration, presenting the recent trend of civic integration as more of an immigration-controlling mechanism than a genuine integration policy, which is another major argument of my thesis.

Considering my personal experience of immigration and integration in the UK as a part of my method, **Chapter Three** provides a comprehensive account of my journey, from my decision to migrate to the UK, to my role as a researcher studying fellow migrants. This chapter presents my positionality as an insider and outsider researcher and discusses the ethical considerations while adapting the reflexive approach in data analysis. In sum, this chapter lays out the range of qualitative research methods I employed in this study to explore Nepalese migrants' immigration and integration.

In line with four specific trajectories of Nepalese migrants and their real-life integration, **Chapter Four** presents a comprehensive analysis of the migratory patterns of Nepalese soldiers, commonly referred to as Gurkhas, to the United Kingdom. This chapter provides an in-depth overview of the relationship between Gurkhas and the UK, as well as their experiences of migration and integration. Drawing on primary data sources, this chapter examines the challenges and opportunities faced by Gurkhas in their settlement and integration process in the UK. By shedding light on the experiences of this unique migrant group and the policies that impact their integration in the UK, this chapter aims to make a valuable contribution to the existing literature on non-British and non-Commonwealth retired soldiers' integration in the UK.

Highlighting my personal experience of migrating to the UK under this visa in 2007 and my 16 years of involvement in the Nepalese diaspora in the UK, **Chapter Five** focuses on the policies associated with the highly skilled migratory visa route and Nepalese highly skilled migrants'

immigration and integration patterns in the UK. Based on the information gathered from the interviews, this chapter, on the one hand, presents HSMP as an opportunity to migrate to the UK for the betterment of future prospects. By presenting some facts and constraints that emerged in the integration process, especially linked with the policies, this chapter, on the other hand, discusses the challenges encountered by these migrants. This chapter critically examines the highly skilled migration as a one-way trajectory, also known as brain-drain, and presents this category as one of the best integrated Nepalese in the UK.

Chapter Six of this thesis first typifies education-related migration as one of the growing global trends and then presents the United Kingdom as one of the most sought-after education destinations for Nepalese students. Considering Nepalese students as de-facto permanent migrants, and analysing the policies associated with it, this chapter highlights the UK's volatile policies affecting Nepalese students' overall integration status. Drawing from the narratives, this chapter rigorously examines Nepalese students' everyday integration experiences in association with multiculturalism and the recent trend of civic integration frameworks and presents their integration status as less satisfactory than that of the highly skilled migrants.

While the primary focus of **Chapter Seven** is to explore the migration trajectory of the dependent visa category within Nepalese migration to the UK, it offers a comprehensive overview of Nepalese women's immigration and integration in the UK. In the case of Nepalese migrants as for other migrant populations, dependent migrants tend to be mostly the spouses (wives) who join the male forerunners. Considering the theoretical perspectives on gender and migration, followed by exploring the recent trends of Nepalese women's migration to various Western nations, especially to the United Kingdom, on the one hand, this chapter presents migration as an opportunity for livelihood enhancement for Nepalese women. On the other, based on the interview data, this chapter highlights the predicaments, faced by Nepalese women, especially due to the tougher measures set in the civic integration policies in the UK.

Chapter Eight concludes this thesis by summarising the research's key findings, contributions, and limitations. It also offers recommendations for policymakers and scholars based on the insights generated through the study. By tying various empirical and theoretical threads developed across the preceding chapters, this concluding discussion synthesises the significance of the research. It reinforces how investigating the case of Nepalese migrants provided unique findings about the intricacies of immigration and integration for diverse, overlooked groups. This summarising chapter highlights potential avenues for further research and action that could translate the study's findings into applied outcomes.

Chapter One: Perspectives on Immigration and Integration

1.1. Introduction

This chapter situates its analysis within the broader context of international migration as an increasingly prominent global phenomenon. It examines recent patterns in global migration trends that have emphasised integration policy building, especially across Europe. The chapter critically evaluates the shifts that occurred in immigrant integration policy and implementation in Europe, specifically focusing on changing approaches in the United Kingdom. By comprehensively analysing these European integration policy developments and the UK's shifting priorities, this chapter provides essential background for examining the integration experiences of Nepalese immigrants in the UK. Assessment of the policy evolution contextualises the contemporary integration patterns that Nepalese migrants encounter. The chapter builds up the theoretical background for the research by establishing integration as a salient global and policy issue before funnelling it down to the implications for the UK. Examining the specific policy context is vital for interpreting Nepalese migrants' lived integration realities.

Thus, this chapter commences by emphasising the importance of 'integration', which introduces the concept as both a public discourse and a policy agenda. The chapter then delves into diverse perspectives on integration, focusing on its multifaceted nature and exploring various models. Through an extensive literature review, the chapter explores the interdisciplinary relationship between immigration and integration, occasionally drawing connections to the experiences of Nepalese migrants in the UK. It concludes by examining policy-driven interpretations of integration, specifically emphasising the European Union's frameworks and their application in the UK context. In essence, this chapter serves as a comprehensive exploration of immigration and integration perspectives.

1.2. Comprehending the Notion of 'Integration'

Immigrant integration is a significant and often vague topic within the broader discourse of international migration, especially in light of the recent trends. The term 'integration' encompasses a multifaceted and intricate phenomenon that requires careful examination. Thus, in this section, I first define 'integration' by drawing on existing literature and subsequently, I explore its

philosophical underpinnings and policy implications. While doing so, I aim to set a solid foundation for the discussion to follow.

The term 'integration' has been employed with diverse connotations across various academic domains, signifying a multi-faceted phenomenon. Essentially, it encompasses a complex and expansive concept that lacks a singular, unanimous definition (Favell 2016; Oliver and Gidley 2015a; Phillimore 2012a). Scholars have provided different interpretations to capture its meaning. It has been characterised as a "vague and highly debated" concept (Oliver and Gidley 2015a:3) and a "dazzling terminology" (Saggar and Somerville 2012a:10). It functions as an overarching term that encompasses numerous subfields of studies. This all-encompassing concept acts as a vortex, drawing in a wide range of terms and attracting extensive analysis from public and policy discourses, particularly in relation to immigration.

In its most straightforward explanation, integration, particularly concerning immigration, encompasses the process by which immigrants actively engage in the receiving society's social, cultural, economic, and political realms while fostering a sense of belonging (Ager and Strang 2008a; Castels et al. 2003; Klarenbeek 2019). According to these scholars, integration involves immigrants' process of language acquisition, education, employment, social interactions, cultural customs, political engagement, and interactions among different groups. Oliver and Gidley (2015) have portrayed integration as a sequence of actions and procedures. They describe it as a dynamic concept that relies on the equation involving immigrants themselves, the receiving society, local communities, and other existing systems. To clarify, integration is ''the process through which immigrants become an accepted part of society" (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016a:14). Integration is a "machine-like system" that aims to enable immigrants to become accepted by participating in the sociocultural, economic, and political life of the receiving country and developing a sense of belonging (Favell 2016:62).

Based on these definitions, I can argue that the term 'integration' refers to the process of enabling immigrants to become accepted members of their receiving society by promoting a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging has been considered as the main mantra of integration outcome. To achieve this, it requires an environment where the immigrants can take active participation across social, cultural, economic, and political spheres. Besides this, as an evolving phenomenon, and also a policy objective, integration may entail negotiating identity, rights, and responsibilities by enabling immigrants to incorporate into the wider national fabric through multidimensional participation. Thus, before delving into its broader theoretical interpretation, I first want to discuss its philosophical dimension briefly.

1.2.1. Philosophical Dimension of Integration

The above section has clarified that 'integration', as a broad concept, refers to many different aspects, and has occupied different disciplines and interpretations. Philosophical discussions are also important to understand what integration stands for. The philosophical dimension of integration refers to both the fundamental beliefs and values that shape the understanding of what it means to integrate within a broad structure of a society and what kind of society is desired as the outcome of integration (Banton 1999; Favell 2016). At this point, what it means for Nepalese migrants to integrate into British society, for instance, can be an important philosophical perspective. Lee (2009) for example, emphasises the philosophical aspects that determine integration theories. For him, the philosophical dimension of integration encompasses the functional principles that guide the integration process and determine the desired outcome. This aspect of integration significantly inherits the design and implementation of integration policies.

The 20th-century Chicago School of Sociology, known as the 'Ecological School,' presented a unique philosophical perspective on immigrant integration (Favell 2016; Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018). Although the core idea of that philosophy was rooted in the study of the relationship between individuals and their environments, particularly in urban settings, the Chicago School proposed the idea of the 'social ecology' (Lee 2009). According to Lee, the main motive of social ecology was to examine how different social groups were distributed within a city and how this distribution related to their behaviour and experiences that maintain an integrated social system.

From the philosophical point of view, the 20th-century Chicago School's intellectual interpretation of integration, which comes from Durkheim's ideology of functionalism, seems to have added much flesh to its theme (Lee 2009). Durkheim's ideas of functionalism are based on the fundamental idea that society is made up of interrelated parts that work together to maintain social order, both in mechanical and organic societies (Barou 2014). The concept of mechanical and organic societies provides a valuable philosophical lens. Traditional societies, exemplified by Nepalese societies, either in Nepal or in the UK, are characterised as mechanical societies. Their structural components, on the one hand, are regulated by cultural norms, religious beliefs, caste systems, and normative ideologies, and on the other, their overall migration patterns are also influenced by such factors. Thus, it is significant to understand how these factors such as caste, ethnicity, religious belief and cultural entities have influenced Nepalese integration and their diasporic relationships in the UK. This distinction requires philosophical inquiries into how immigrants from mechanical societies, such as Nepal, navigate their integration into the vast systems of organic societies like Britain. The study delves into the philosophical aspects of how Nepalese migrants,

settle into mechanical societies with deep-rooted beliefs, ethnic variation, and hierarchies, and negotiate their integration into Britain's comprehensive organisational frameworks and rational-legal structures. This examination yields insights into the interplay between contrasting societal forms and cultural adaptation in the context of immigration.

Durkheim's idea of social solidarity views integration as a way to ensure that different parts of society are working together effectively and that conflicts and tensions between different parts of society are reduced, which helps maintain social order and stability (Barou 2014; Favell 2016). Durkheim focused on addressing the heterogeneity that arises when different individuals mix within a society, despite the lower intensity of international migration and the need for diverse integration policies during his time. He interpreted the functional structure of society by considering diverse individuals as elements of functional entities. Based on functional assumptions, Durkheim considered host population and immigrants as important elements for the system's functioning and suggested that they need to adjust and connect for the society's functioning arrangement (Barou 2014).

By borrowing a wealth of intellectual discussion and interpretation, the notion of integration has gained significant prominence in the field of social science, particularly in sociology. Highlighting the theoretical influence of the then-functionalist theorists, Adrian Favell has discussed much of the deep root of integration. For him, it has come from the American functionalist concept of Talcott Parsons, which synthesised the sociological traditions of Weber and Durkheim. This is what he called a "new institutionalism" in sociology (Favell 2016:32). The sociological point of view of integration believes that successful integration relies on its functional prerequisites of the social system. In other words, the functionalist views assume immigrants as integral elements for the functioning of the institutional system.

Defining integration as 'a process of interaction and fusion' the Chicago School's intellectual discourse helped to establish a new perspective to interpret integration to immigrants' incorporation process (Kostakopoulou 2010b:12). The Chicago School's philosophy of integration emphasised the need to understand and address the underlying structural factors that perpetuate socio-economic segregation and differentiations. This perspective has continued to influence our understanding of integration and how we approach addressing social inequality. As argued by Lee (2009), sociologists, in particular, have a history of interest in patterns of immigrant incorporation. In the tradition of Emile Durkheim, as a fundamental topic in classical sociology, it is important to know how a group or a society, based on an equilibrium between its different structures, constructs its solidarity and promotes its social solidarity. Within sociology, special attention has been directed towards migrant populations, recognising them as significant components of a functioning society. This has led to the analysis of integration as a key sociological phenomenon in understanding how

different groups become part of and contribute to the broader social fabric. At this point, I can argue that this intellectual turn posited that integration was not about separate groups being brought together but rather about the coexistence of different groups within the same physical space, which for now, closely relates to the concept of British multicultural frameworks.

Neill (1996) has written much about scholarly debates on integration. According to him, there has been ideological friction in academia between the commentators who wanted a radical shift in integration ideology and those who recommended analysing integration as an arrangement to maintain the status quo. As Neill has discussed the status quo, for him, the functionalist paradigm has influenced a lot for intellectual debate on integration. "The pure functionalism favoured by some functionalist scholars, although it was not a theory of integration as such, did directly influence the European debate on integration" (Neill 1996:17). Neill has further stated that "neo-functionalism as a scientific mandate led the principal neo-functionalist to regard integration as a more complex, multivariate and indeed expanded process, than the model of political change prescribed in either the federalist or pure functionalist versions of the supranational paradigm" (Neill 1996:48). Like Neill, many other scholars have well-connected integration with Durkheim's functional structure and its regularisation with the receiving society's total structure. Emphasising this idea, Loch (2014) also argued that we address integration as a sociological concept for social cohesion from a historical perspective. This can involve recognising and valuing the diversity within a society and finding ways to reconcile and integrate these differences to maintain a status quo by creating a more harmonious and inclusive society.

In the context of Nepalese migrants, the extent to which British integration concepts have influenced their integration remains a critical issue that this research will explore. This involves examining how the diverse trajectories of Nepalese migrants contribute to the broader societal fabric of British society and, conversely, how the broader social structure of British society has shaped their integration experiences. Understanding these dynamics is essential for comprehending the integral functioning of Nepalese migrants within the changing migration landscape of Britain. This exploration is a crucial dimension of the theoretical debate on integration, highlighting the interplay between individual migrant's experiences and broader societal frameworks.

In the 1960s, social theorists re-evaluated the meaning of integration and began to connect it to other aspects of society. They saw integration as an all-encompassing phenomenon that includes various factors such as race, class, gender, and economic status. This new viewpoint acknowledged that simply focusing on racial integration is insufficient to address the intricate and interconnected nature of social inequality (Favell 2016). Instead, it suggested that integration should be understood in the broader context of structural issues such as economic disparities,

political power imbalances and the issues related to nationality. This comprehensive approach to integration acknowledges that a complex range of factors influences the lives and opportunities of marginalised groups and that addressing these factors is crucial for achieving genuine integration and social cohesion. This new understanding of integration has significantly impacted how we comprehend and tackle social inequality today. As many other socio-cultural factors have been inherited into this terminology, in a real sense, integration has been a widely approached sociological subject, which encompasses immigrants' interaction with the host population, equal rights and legality, transnational status, and full membership and status of nationality (Favell 2016; Lee 2009).

Looking beyond the sociological perspectives, integration reveals various intertwined ideological factors. In a broader sense, the notion of integration becomes interlinked with political aspects within the realm of social science. Some scholars have explored the relationship between political ideology and integration (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2010a; Schain 2010; Spencer and Charsley 2016). For some scholars, as the political elites have tried to define integration as a combined phenomenon by making it "heavily politicised", it can be argued that there is a political and ideological connection in integration discourses (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2017:81). Favell has illustrated examples of political statements and public policy documents which came to Western Europe as a political discourse and promoted integration as a broader concept both in academia as well as in the policy sector. He calls that "amateur political theory" (Favell 2016:15).

Hence, building on scholars' interpretations, I can argue that integration comprises a series of reciprocal processes occurring during migrants' settlement, interaction, adaptation, and socio-cultural recognition within the receiving society. A sense of belonging, again, marks the successful direction of the integration process felt equally by both migrant and receiving communities. Conversely, lacking this shared sense of belonging could signify a failure in the overall process. In sum, integration resembles a complex mechanism where every facet of the host population and migrant societies works constantly to uphold the existing societal equilibrium.

Understanding the philosophical notion of integration is just the first step; it is equally crucial to analyse its policy implications. Policies are believed to serve as essential guidelines that steer the process of integration, helping to achieve its objectives. Immigration and integration are essentially linked, like two sides of the same coin. The following section delves into integration as a policy agenda, highlighting its importance in shaping cohesive and inclusive societies.

1.2.2. Call for Integration as a Policy Agenda

During the post-war recovery (after World War II), many European nations, especially Germany, France and the United Kingdom, witnessed a huge inflow of immigrants from Southern Europe and later from former colonies and other developing nations (Ager and Strang 2008a; Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011a; Joppke 2007a). Most immigrants were war victims and were viewed as temporary migrants; thus, the receiving nations thought they would return once the peace was restored. On the contrary, once they began to settle permanently and owing to family reunification, the issues related to their settlement and integration began to demand appropriate policies to resolve the ongoing immigration issues in the Western world (Carmel, Cerami, and Papadopoulos 2012; Castels et al. 2003). Since then, immigrant integration has been viewed as a European agenda, and this topic has attracted a wide range of debate from the public and especially from the policy sector (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011; Favell 2016; Joppke 2017a).

While integration primarily deals with actions and processes, its true comprehension is closely tied to policy objectives. For these actions and processes to be regulated, effective policies are essential. Integration from a policy perspective involves measures and initiatives aimed at facilitating and promoting immigrants' incorporation into the receiving society (Banton 1999; Oliver and Gidley 2015a). These policies aim to regulate the system to foster social cohesion between the newcomers and the receiving society by promoting integration This encompasses the promotion of social inclusion, addressing issues of discrimination and inequality, and formulating policies that foster immigrants' integration within the labour market and various other dimensions of social and economic existence (Ager and Strang 2008b; Rosenow 2009; Velluti 2007). Hence, for me, the effectiveness of integration policies depends on various factors, such as political will, resources, stakeholders' engagement, and the specific needs and circumstances of each immigrant community and receiving society.

The recent escalating volume of people moving across borders has pressured destination nations to effectively accommodate and integrate incoming immigrants. Therefore, the integration process has emerged as a particularly challenging hurdle for receiving countries (Castles 2014; Favell 2008; Oliver and Gidley 2015a). Furthermore, the influx of immigrants in the welfare states of Europe has increased not only the number but also the diversities based on the place of birth and diverse characteristics exhibited such as by Nepalese migrant populations—including differences in age, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, and economic status—complicates the formulation of effective policies and programs for their integration (Brettell and Hollifield 2015). At this point, considering the upward growth of Nepalese people in the UK and their integration needs, I can argue that it has been essential to formulate a specific set of policies and implement them to address the challenges faced by Nepalese in the UK.

In response to recent international migration trends, European nations have increasingly prioritised immigrant integration as a crucial policy agenda, extensively examining its implications across multiple institutional levels (Castels et al. 2003; Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011a; Favell 2016; Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016a; Goodman 2010a; Joppke 2012a; Phillimore 2012b). However, scholars have mentioned the difficulties in developing a single set of policies that effectively address the integration of diverse immigrant populations (Dustmann and Frattini 2011; Oliver and Gidley 2015b). This is because the integration process itself is very vague, complex and multifaceted and involves a range of challenges and issues that can vary depending on the specific context and circumstances of the immigrant population (Laurentsyeva, Nadzeya; Venturini 2017; Martiniello and Rath 2019a). Considering integration as a pressing challenge, European nations have shifted their integration strategies several times (Castels et al. 2003; Favell 2016; Givens 2007). However, it does not mean these nations have concluded what sort of policies they need to address the integration-related issues. Instead, they have been reassessing how they tried to address the integration issues in the past and how they can comprehend the recent trends of integration issues that appeared in the present context and for future needs.

Thus, given the complexities of integration as a multifaceted policy agenda, I can argue that it is evident that a range of factors—such as linguistic barriers, limited access to education, healthcare, housing, and employment, as well as cultural differences—pose significant challenges to effective integration. Additionally, the interplay of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, and political ideology further complicates the process. This intricate web of elements necessitates tailored strategies and policies to effectively address the diverse challenges faced by Nepalese in the UK.

1.3. Analysing European Approaches to Integration

British integration policies have historically been part of a shared policy agenda at the EU level. Even after Brexit- (31st January 2020), it is clear that these policies continue to be significantly influenced by European integration interests. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the broader European trends and shifts in integration before examining the different integration approaches adopted by the UK.

It is beyond doubt that the integration policies adopted by the European nations cannot be analysed as an isolated phenomenon but need to be analysed in the context of the European Union (EU) and its council (Carrera and Atger 2011; Joppke 2012b; Soja and Soja 2015). The

concept of integration as a two-way process was first introduced in 1985 in EU policy discourse, and since then, it has become a key tenet in the EU integration framework. Based on the EU framework, this new concept of integration has been governed by the doctrine of the (Common Basic Principle) CBP. The CBPs are a set of mutually agreed principles, or governance, designed by the then 27 Member States (before Brexit-31st January 2020) of the European Union to orient immigration and integration policies at the EU level (Carrera and Atger 2011). Therefore, the Council of the European Union contributes to its member states by providing huge financial and policy support to institutionalise integration as a policy-driven objective. This is what is called the European typology of integration, the "Europeanisation of immigrants' integration" (Carrera and Wiesbrock 2009:5). Because of their common interests and the need for a combined approach in integration policy formulation, the European Union and its member states have highlighted the importance of mutual strategies in immigration, which describes integration as a two-way policy approach.

1.3.1. Examining the 'Two-way' Approach in Integration

Based on the CBPs, the European Council has distinctively indorsed to conceptualise immigrant integration as "a dynamic two-way process" (Klarenbeek 2019:7). By defining integration as a two-way process, the EU principles not only helped to establish integration as the mutual adjustment and adaption between the newcomers and the receiving society but also contributed to overcoming the classical understanding of integration as a linear process (Ager and Strang 2008b; Carrera and Atger 2011; Joppke 2012b; Martiniello and Rath 2019a). This significantly contributed to establishing the notion of integration as a process of inclusion, recognition and participation. By recognising the participation of newcomers in the integration process, the two-way policy concept not only helped to set the equal roles to play for the newcomers and the receiving nation but also emphasised the provision of equal inheritance of both parties in the integration (Carrera and Atger 2011; Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016a; Joppke 2012c; Soja and Soja 2015).

Based on this concept, I argue that integration requires reciprocal relationships between Nepalese migrants and the broader British society. Nepalese migrants need to become an integral part of the UK's socio-cultural, economic, and political fabric. Simultaneously, the UK, including its people, policies, and laws, must embrace the diversity brought by Nepalese migrants while maintaining societal cohesion. Integration cannot be achieved through one-sided efforts; it necessitates ongoing negotiations and mutual adjustments between Nepalese migrants and the British people. Ultimately, successful integration hinges on reciprocity, which relies on the mutual acceptance and recognition of each other's culture, identity, and existence.

The two-way concept of immigrant integration, which aims to promote a reciprocal and mutual interplay between the host population and migrants, has not remained uncriticised for its lack of clear definitions of the 'host country' and 'migrant' categories (Broadhead 2020). It has not clearly defined what types of populations are considered host populations. While categorising host and immigrant societies, it has not specified whether all residents fall under the receiving category or only legal citizens. In line with Jacqui Broadhead, I also want to raise questions regarding the categorisation of 'host population' and 'migrants'- the question arises: do any other immigrants coming to the UK consider the Gurkhas as the host population or the immigrant society? Gurkhas consider themselves as the bona fide and loyal citizens of this nation. They assume that they belong to the British monarch and the British people, and don't like to be categorised as immigrants (Gellner and Hausner 2013; Pariyar 2020). On the contrary, from the UK's point of view, they are immigrants. It means that by putting Gurkhas and refugees under the broad umbrella of 'immigrants', the two-way approach overlooks the unique historical and social dynamics that shape Gurkhas' integration experiences.

Similarly, on the one hand, cataloguing diverse migration motives and patterns- such as asylum seekers, economic migrants, students, and family migrants- into a single 'migrant' category oversimplifies the nuanced patterns of different trajectories of Nepalese in the UK. On the other, due to its Eurocentric homogenisation concept as all the Member States implement a similar approach and exert pressure on the immigrants to follow it, in many cases, it fails to address the integration needs of Third Country Nationals, such as Nepalese migrants, who fall in the non-European and non-Commonwealth dominions category (Carrera and Wiesbrock 2009; Laurentsyeva, Nadzeya; Venturini 2017).

Despite the claim that integration is a two-way process, it does not mean to be a symmetric process in which two parties go parallelly together. The power relation between the receiving and the migrant community brings different resources and, thus, different degrees of control over the integration process (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016a). Newcomers barely have any power to influence, contest, negotiate and either refuse or change any terms of integration set in the receiving nation's integration policies. Looking at its improper power relations between the immigrants and the receiving country, it has been criticised by saying "myth and eutopia" (Kostakopoulou 2010b:951). Based on my experience, as mentioned in the introduction chapter, the newcomers barely possess any rights and power to influence the receiving nation's integration process. What roles the migrants can get, what power the migrants can practise and to what extent the migrants can practise their rights in receiving society's civic systems before acquiring their legal status, are unclear. It is often unclear what should come first: acquiring legal status or establishing

one's role in society. This ambiguity has caused significant challenges for many migrants, including myself.

Let me share my experience to highlight the ambiguity caused by the policy.

when I first sought employment, agencies and employers required a National Insurance (NI) number. Without NI it was illegal to get a job. However, when I attended an interview to obtain an NI number (which, in 2007/8, required an in-person interview), I was asked to provide proof of employment. A similar issue arose when I tried to open a bank account; I was asked for proof of income, which I couldn't provide without first securing a job. This policy confusion made the early settlement process extremely stressful and confusing. My experiences highlight the need for clearer policies to support migrants during their initial settlement period.

As stated above, European countries have been evaluating various approaches to integration policy. Upon realising that a two-way approach was insufficient to address the diverse challenges posed by multidimensional factors, they began prioritising a multilevel approach to integration. Hence, the following section provides an overview of this multilevel approach.

1.3.2. Exploring 'Multidimensional Approach' in Integration

Along with the changes that came into the EU-level Migration and Development (M & D) perspective, a significant paradigmatic shift in integration policy occurred in 2011 when the European policies included the sending country into the wider frame of integration policy (Martiniello and Rath 2019a; Morano-Foadi and Malena 2012). This new version of the European agenda, known as a three-way approach, came into force with an initiative of the contribution that the country of origin, for example- Nepal can make for its emigrated population in the nation of destination, such as in the UK (Carrera and Wiesbrock 2009; Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016a; Phillimore 2012b). By shifting the responsibility to the third actor and making it more responsive in this process, this new concept brought the sending nation from marginal to the centre position in policy building (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016a). Additionally, this approach to integration has emphasised the transnational status of migrants. In other words, this approach highlighted that migrants belong to two places: first, where they came and second, where they are now. According to the notion of this approach, although the integration occurs in the latter, migrants still maintain a strong attachment with their country of origin through various linkages. Therefore, to maintain their transnational relationship, the country of origin or its diplomatic bodies in the country of destination can contribute to integration promotion.

Although some scholars like Di, Kalantaryan, and Bonfanti (2015) have analysed this policy shift as a significant development in policy building, I still can argue on the power relations between the country of origin and the destination. The welfare states can be dominant by imposing their global power to influence and manipulate immigration policies according to their interest, which can affect the whole set-up of the integration mechanism. For instance, the United Kingdom can easily influence their immigration policies in immigrants' nations of origin- Nepal. Through the British consular and diplomatic authorities in Nepal, the UK can impose policies in Nepal that can either lower or raise the bar to controlling Nepalese migration to the UK. What role Nepal can play in influencing Nepalese integration in the UK, and how Nepal can be a part of this European agenda; has been overlooked.

Despite my argument, based on the notion of this approach, at least in principle, the sending nation can promote integration both in the country of origin and to the country of destination in three ways:

A) to prepare the integration before the migrants' departure: Since the country of origin has been brought to the wider picture of the integration framework, it can play a vital role in the integration approaches. For instance, the country of origin can offer language and cultural training, education and job training, information on the receiving country, assistance with documentation, and access to support networks (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016a). These kinds of legal and formal support can help migrants to obtain the necessary documentation, build social connections for support during their emigration process, and enhance their capacity to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to better integrate into their new country.

B) to support the migrants in the UK, for example, through embassies: the sending nations are supposed to assist their emigrated population via their authorities and officials such as consular and embassies (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). The delegations and embassies of the country of origin can provide various types of assistance and legal support to their emigrated population in the country of destination. They can offer information and advice on local laws and regulations, facilitate communication with local authorities, and assist in emergencies. They can also support legal procedures related to immigration, citizenship and family matters and provide consular services such as issuing passports, visas, and travel documents. Additionally, they can organise different cultural events and activities to promote the country of origin's culture and traditions in the country of destination. In addition to these, the sending nation can also provide support for the preservation of cultural and ethnic heritage, which is essential for the maintenance of a strong sense of identity and belonging among its emigrants.

C) to prepare the migrants' temporary or definite return with acquired experience and knowledge. Origin countries can implement policies to incentivise and facilitate the return of emigrants, thereby benefiting from their accumulated skills, knowledge, and resources. Measures like offering financial incentives, easy labour market re-entry, and business investment opportunities can encourage the re-migration of successful diaspora members. By tapping into returned migrants' human capital and wealth, origin countries can utilise these resources for national growth and development (Geddie 2012; Ratha et al. 2016). At least in principle, the origin countries play a pivotal role in developing strategic policies and transnational networks to attract their diaspora's potential while supporting returned migrants' resettlement (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016a; Ratha et al. 2016).

Based on the notion of this approach, I can argue that by facilitating the circular return of high-skilled emigrants, Nepal can help mitigate brain drain and foster knowledge transfer, but due to the absence of a dual-nationality provision in Nepal's constitution, neither emigrated Nepalese nor the country has been benefited. It requires Nepal to reconsider and revise its policy to attract its emigrated people and tap their social capital.

Examining the European landscape, both pre- and post-Brexit, France and Germany stand out as influential players in shaping the European Union's immigration and integration policies. Drawing from their extensive immigration histories, these nations have practised varied approaches to tackle the complexities of immigrant integration. Despite the UK's departure from the EU, the integration strategies of France and Germany remain vital, bearing substantial implications for Britain. Thus, providing an overview of the integration policies adopted by France and Germany sets a crucial foundation before I delve into the British context.

1.4. Analysis of Immigrant Integration Policies in France and Germany

Like the United Kingdom, Germany and France have a long-standing history of receiving diversified immigrants (Ager and Strang 2008a; Castels et al. 2003). Especially after World War II, these countries have attracted many immigrants from former colonies, encouraging immigration to address labour shortages (Barou 2014; Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016b; Joppke 2017a). As a result, immigrant communities have increased, and this trend has attracted more immigrants recently necessitating effective integration policies.

France, in particular, has a long history of being an immigration country and has extensive experience in integrating diverse immigrants from its former colonies and African and Asian nations. With extensive experience integrating diverse immigrant populations, France has traditionally adopted a republican approach rooted in principles of secularism and shared national

identity (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011b; Favell 2016). The republican model promotes assimilation into a unified French society based on universal values like liberty and equality, which transcend particularities of culture, religion, or ethnicity. This vision traces back to the French Revolution and emphasises secularism over faith-based differences. The republican philosophy underpins policies focused on cultural and linguistic assimilation into the French mainstream (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011b; Favell 2016; Joppke 2007a). The emphasis is on forging a common national identity and allegiance to France above other loyalties. Known as the 'one nation, one culture' approach, the French integration policy has historically prioritised the adoption of the French language and the promotion of a singular French identity over diversity. In sum, under the banner of shared universal republican principles, immigrants are expected to assimilate into the mainstream national culture. This longstanding model continues to shape French integration priorities focused on cultural cohesion and a common national identity.

French republican model, based on its democratic value- ''jus soli'', emphasises the importance of assimilation and encourages immigrants and their descendants to adopt the French language, culture, and way of life (Favell 2016; Goodman 2010b; Joppke 2007b). Jus-soli commonly refers to birthright citizenship, so second-generation immigrants automatically become French. The policies focus on language acquisition, civic education, and job training to help immigrants integrate into the workforce and society. To regulate the promotion of assimilation, France introduced a policy in 2003 prioritising the knowledge of the rights and duties of citizenship as one of the criteria for assimilation into French society. Examining the French approach, I can presume that the British introduction of mandatory Life in the UK tests for civic integration in 2005 must have been influenced by the French policy of 2003.

Along with the change in policy in 2005, an essential aspect of this assimilation evaluation includes a 20-30-minute interview conducted in an Assimilation Evaluation Office, where proficiency in the French language is assessed (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2010a:36). These policies underscore France's commitment to promoting its cultural and linguistic identity as central components of the integration process, reflecting a distinctive approach within the broader context of European immigration policies. Notably, France banned wearing headscarves in schools for Muslim students, a policy that recently sparked debates about religious freedom and cultural assimilation (Bleich 2005; Ersanilli and Koopmans 2010). Additionally, the model requires first-generation immigrants to reside in the country for five years before applying for naturalisation, which has been seen as proof of the demonstration of sufficient assimilation into French society.

However, it is important to note that the Republican model has been subject to debates and criticism, particularly regarding its impact on cultural diversity and preserving minority rights (Barou 2014). In other words, the French approach has been criticised for ignoring the diversity of

immigrant communities and imposing a one-size-fits-all model of integration that fails to consider the specific needs and cultural backgrounds of different groups.

While analysing the German approach to integration, relatively Germany has taken a more pluralistic approach to integration than France, recognising the diversity of its immigrant population, and promoting coexistence and mutual respect. The country's experience with guest workers post-World War II, seems to have influenced the recent trend of the German approach to integration. The German government has implemented policies such as the Integration Act of 2005, which provides integration courses and language classes for immigrants and aims to promote their integration into the labour market for their spatial integration (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2010b). The act also aims to promote the participation of immigrants in political and social life and to foster a sense of belonging. Some scholars have mentioned that Germany, to some extent, has adopted a multicultural integration model, recognising immigrants' cultural diversity and allowing them to retain their cultural identity (Joppke 2012a; Kymlicka 2018a). This model is based on equality, tolerance, and mutual respect, which, in my view, is like British multiculturalism in integration.

Despite its strengths, Germany's integration policies face criticism. The approach, while inclusive in principle, often falls short in practice. Critics argue that language courses and integration classes, though beneficial, are insufficient without addressing systemic barriers to employment and social mobility. Furthermore, the emphasis on mutual respect and cultural diversity can sometimes blur underlying issues of discrimination and social exclusion. The integration model, though more effective and inclusive compared to France's assimilationist approach, is still inadequate in integrating immigrants into the societal fabric. Thus, while Germany's integration policies look good in their pluralistic principles, they require changes to address practical shortcomings and ensure true inclusivity and equality for immigrants, especially to the TCNs.

In sum, France has adopted a more assimilationist approach, which aims to incorporate immigrants into the dominant culture and values of the receiving society. In this approach, the emphasis is on integrating the immigrants into the receiving society rather than on preserving cultural identity. In contrast, Germany has adopted a more multicultural approach by recognising immigrants' cultural diversity and promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual respect. This approach focuses on preserving the immigrants' cultural identity and providing them equal opportunities to participate in the receiving society. Hence, on the background of these two nations' approaches to integration, I present a broad analysis of British approaches to integration in the next chapter.

1.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive theoretical exploration of the broad concept of integration. By examining integration as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, it highlighted various debates surrounding this topic. The chapter presented both philosophical and policy-oriented discussions on integration before delving into its role as a European agenda, including 'two-way' and 'three-way' integration concepts. Through a critical analysis of the French and German approaches to integration, this chapter established a solid foundation for discussing the British approach to integration.

In line with the worldwide migration patterns, the concept of integration has evolved as a global phenomenon. Receiving nations, faced with the challenges of managing a diverse range of immigrants from various backgrounds, recognised the necessity of establishing regulatory mechanisms. Consequently, the concept of integration came to the forefront. This idea gained momentum in public discourse, drawing inspiration from philosophical principles. Notably, within this context, the sociological ideologies of the 20th century, particularly influenced by Emile Durkheim's thoughts, have played a pivotal role. Scholars have borrowed from Durkheim's sociological theories to interpret integration as a functional mechanism to preserve the structural integrity of human society and maintain its status quo.

Especially after World War II, European nations such as Germany, France and the UK experienced a huge inflow of immigrants from their former dominions and the European subcontinents, such as Italy, Spain, Poland and Scandinavia. Initially, these migrants were regarded as temporary labourers, with the assumption that they would eventually return to their countries of origin. However, as they began to seek permanent settlement and family reunification, this shift in their status became a common concern for receiving nations. Consequently, the receiving nations emphasised the need for regulated mechanisms to manage the settlement and accommodation of the immigrant population. Thus, immigrant integration soon became a policy agenda for the receiving nations.

Along with the rise of immigrant integration as a prominent policy concept, it sparked extensive debates across various academic and political domains. Scholars from philosophical and political backgrounds engaged in in-depth discussions on this subject. They began to view immigrant integration as a multifaceted and complex phenomenon, often comparing it to a concept of a vortex that sucks all other subjects. Consequently, the term integration gained significant attention as a prominent political concern.

Once immigration integration became a common policy issue for the receiving nations, especially in the European context, this phenomenon soon became a European agenda. Thus, based on the European Union's integration agenda, known as the Common Basic Principle, the receiving nations began implementing similar approaches to integrate diversified immigrants. The receiving nations then emphasised the concept of integration as a two-way process in which the migrants and the receiving society have an equal role in integration. On the one hand, this concept identified the immigrant communities as equal role players and have equal responsibility for successful integration. On the other hand, by shifting the integration responsibility to the immigrant community, the receiving nations made the process more complex. However, this approach lacked the concept of not only what role the newcomers could play but also when to play- before or after legalisation.

By bringing the sending nation into the core frame of policy mechanisms, the European nations again defined integration as a multidimensional or a Three-way process. In this multidimensional approach, along with the immigrant population, the sending nation as a key actor, also has a role to play in their integration into the destination country. Based on this notion, the embassy and diplomatic office have been viewed as the representatives to play the role of integration promotion. Although the European policy agenda prioritised the role of sending nations, there was still a gap in power practice and power imbalance between Western receiving nations and countries like Nepal.

Thus, considering the nature of the global trend of international migration, the receiving nations have shifted their integration policy approaches several times. France and Germany have adopted different models of integration. In examining integration policies in France and Germany, distinct approaches emerge, reflecting differing philosophies toward immigrant incorporation.

France has historically pursued an assimilationist model, emphasising the adoption of a singular French identity and culture by immigrants. Rooted in republican principles, this approach prioritises linguistic and cultural assimilation, promoting a unified national identity transcending ethnic or religious differences. Policies such as the 2003 assimilation law underscore France's commitment to cultural cohesion, requiring immigrants to demonstrate proficiency in the French language and civic knowledge as criteria for integration. However, this model has faced criticism for its perceived disregard for cultural diversity and minority rights.

On the other hand, Germany has embraced a more pluralistic approach, recognising, and respecting the cultural diversity of its immigrant population. Influenced by its experience with guest workers post-World War II, Germany's integration policies aim to foster mutual respect, equality, and tolerance. The Integration Act of 2005 provides language courses and integration measures while acknowledging immigrants' rights to retain their cultural identity. This multicultural approach

promotes intercultural dialogue and aims to facilitate immigrants' participation in social, political, and economic spheres.

In sum, the differing approaches between France and Germany highlight contrasting perspectives on integration, with France prioritising assimilation into a singular national identity and Germany advocating for multicultural coexistence and equal opportunities for immigrant participation.

Finally, by drawing extensive theoretical arguments about the various concepts and models of integration that emerged as European agenda, this chapter not only served to prove integration as a policy objective but also laid a strong foundation to specific discussion of the UK context.

Chapter Two: Immigrants' Integration in the UK

2.1. Introduction

Building on the foundation established in the previous chapter, this chapter delves deeper into the theoretical aspects of British integration policies, with a particular focus on multiculturalism and the recent trend towards civic integration approaches.

A central argument of my thesis is that multiculturalism serves as a wide-ranging approach to integration, fostering a sense of identity, belonging, and diversity among ethnic minorities in the UK. In this chapter I argue that by recognising and celebrating cultural variations, multiculturalism, to some extent, promotes integration through the acknowledgement and encouragement of diversity, enhancing a sense of belonging and cultural cohesion within British society. I argue that the idea that multiculturalism emerged as a policy framework designed to recognise and celebrate racial and ethnic diversities, ensuring that different cultural groups could coexist harmoniously within British society. My argument underscores that significant legislation such as the British Nationality Act, the Race Relations Act, the Commonwealth Act, and the establishment of the Commission for Racial Equality exemplify the UK's attempts to institutionalise multicultural values. Thus, along with the analysis of these notable legislation and initiatives, that have historically influenced immigrants' integration in the UK, this chapter lays out the foreground for the exploration of various approaches to integration adopted by the UK.

I present a brief examination of the historical evolution of these Acts and related legislation in subsections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, highlighting how they have historically offered ethnic minorities a platform to express their cultural identities while cultivating a shared sense of belonging within the wider national framework. Drawing from historical context, I begin by establishing the backdrop for the emergence of the British prototype of multiculturalism and examine its importance in cultural integration. By portraying multiculturalism as an inclusive approach to integration, I underscore its positive impact on the integration of Nepalese migrants in the UK.

However, as another major argument of my thesis, this chapter also explores the retreat of multiculturalism and the growing criticism against it, which has led to its perception of an inadequate integration approach. This chapter presents critics' arguments that multiculturalism, instead of fostering integration, has contributed to social fragmentation and community segregation. This perspective often aligns with public and right-wing political sentiments, which view multicultural policies as aggravating divisions rather than promoting unity. The rise of social tensions and the perception that multiculturalism accommodates rather than integrates immigrants

have fuelled widespread backlash. Consequently, public opinion has increasingly favoured integration approaches that emphasise common values and societal cohesion over the celebration of cultural differences.

In this chapter, thus, I highlight these criticisms and analyse their implications, focusing on how public opinion and political sentiments have shifted away from multiculturalism. By examining the rise of social tensions and the backlash against multicultural policies, in this chapter, I aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving perspectives on integration. This chapter, then, emphasises the increasing preference for approaches that promote common values and societal cohesion, setting the stage for a critical analysis of these new trends in integration policy. In response to the perceived failures of multiculturalism, the UK has seen a shift towards civic integration policies. These policies stress the importance of immigrants adopting British values and norms as prerequisites for social inclusion. Civic integration initiatives often focus on language acquisition, knowledge of British history and institutions, and active participation in civic life.

Although these policies are framed as mechanisms to promote integration, this chapter critically scrutinises the trend of civic integration policies as tools for immigration control rather than genuine efforts to integrate immigrants. Thus, I profoundly argue that that civic integration policies are designed to manage and regulate immigration flows by imposing stringent requirements on newcomers, rather than facilitating their smooth integration into society. This shift reflects a broader trend towards securitisation and control in immigration policy, prioritising regulatory measures over inclusive integration strategies.

In light of its colonial history, the current trends in integration policies in the United Kingdom can be better understood by looking at the historical policy measures that have been taken to accommodate diverse immigrants (Hansen 2016a; Panayi 2014). These early policy initiatives, despite their ad hoc nature, have significantly shaped the trajectory of British approaches to integration. They provide crucial context for understanding the complexities and nuances of current integration strategies. The following sub-section explores one of the foundation policies: the British Nationality Act. This Act represents a pivotal approach to integration and serves as a key example of how the UK has handled the questions of nationality, belonging, and diversity in its journey towards a more inclusive society.

2.1.1. British Nationality Act (BNA)1948

Although the British Empire declined since the First World War, its colonial relationship continued via reciprocal migration between the metropoles and the colonies. So, to address the integration issues of the colonial immigrants, Britain has practised different approaches and strategies

(Kymlicka 2018b; Panayi 2014; Scholten, Collett, and Petrovic 2017b; Vicki Squire 2005). In light of its colonial past, British integration policies have been shaped by their focus on managing ethnic diversities through race relations Acts, legislations, and strategies. From this point of view, the British Nationality Act (BNA) has been considered a milestone in the integration policy approach.

The British Nationality Act of 1948 stands as a pivotal moment in the UK's journey towards a multicultural integration framework. Enacted in response to the post-war labour shortage and the changing dynamics of the British Empire, this legislation granted citizenship rights to all subjects of the British Empire and Commonwealth. By creating the status of "Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies," the Act effectively opened Britain's doors to millions of colonial subjects, particularly from the Caribbean and South Asia (Hansen 2016b). This legal recognition of imperial subjects as British citizens laid the groundwork for the diverse, multicultural society that would emerge in subsequent decades. Although not explicitly designed as an integration policy, the BNA became the foundation for future multicultural approaches by acknowledging the equal status of colonial subjects and setting the stage for large-scale immigration to the UK. This legislative action marked the beginning of Britain's transformation into a multiracial society and necessitated the development of more comprehensive integration policies in the years to come.

According to (Aschroft 2019:27), "there was no legal definition of citizenship in the UK law until the British Nationality Act 1948 came into effect". The 1948 Act aimed to simplify and standardise the process by creating a single class of British citizenship and defining the criteria for obtaining it. The Act also established the concept of "Commonwealth citizenship," which granted certain rights and privileges to citizens of the UK and its colonies. This helped to link the notion of citizenship with the concept of subjecthood. By introducing citizenship law, as defined in the BNA, Britain was able to set two important categories of citizenship: citizens of the United Kingdom and colonies (CUKCs) and citizens of independent Commonwealth countries (CICC).

On this occasion, the BNA not only allowed the UK to legally protect mass immigration from the predominantly non-white countries of the Commonwealth, but it also helped the United Kingdom to secure its place as the head of the Commonwealth (Favell 2016; Hansen 2016). By eliminating racial discrimination through promoting equality based on British subjecthood, at least in principle, BNA promoted a sense of equality and belonging amongst the diversified ethnic migrants (Aschroft 2019; Saggar and Somerville 2012a). Even though the socio-economic and cultural integration of South Asians (mainly of those who arrived after the 1950s) was highly complex because of the diversity of groups concerned, the BNA worked as a legal act of integration. From this point of view, the BNA-that was aligned with multiculturalist values, served as a catalyst for ethnic minority integration in the UK by providing equal identity and recognition to colonial subjects (FitzGerald 2014; Hansen 2016a). In sum, the BNA brought an immense constitutional revolution and an entire

alteration in the British integration approach, which has been considered a legal foundation for the transformation of Britain into a broader multicultural society

However, the increased immigration resulting from the British Nationality Act of 1948 led to concerns about social and economic pressures, cultural integration, and growing public anxiety (Aschroft 2019; Saggar and Somerville 2012a). As a result, the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 was introduced to address these concerns and aimed to regulate immigration from Commonwealth countries. It introduced entry controls and restrictions, establishing a voucher system for employment purposes (Consterdine 2017). This act sought to manage the number and composition of immigrants entering the UK and address the perceived strains on public services and the job market. On the one hand, the British Nationality Act of 1948 granted British citizenship to individuals from British colonies, leading to an increase in immigration, but on the other, the subsequent Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 was implemented to regulate this immigration, address concerns about social and economic pressures, and manage the integration of immigrants from Commonwealth countries. Now, I can argue that, together, these legislative measures shaped the landscape of immigration and integration in post-war Britain, balancing the nation's labour needs with concerns about social cohesion.

2.1.2. The Race Relations Act of 1965

The Race Relations Act of 1965 was enacted in response to rising racial tensions in the UK, particularly affecting Commonwealth immigrants. As an integration policy, it prohibited discrimination based on colour, race, or ethnic origins in public places, and made the promotion of hatred on the grounds of 'colour, race, or ethnic or national origins' an offence. The Bill received Royal Assent on 8 November 1965 and came into force a month later on 8 December 1965 (Bleich 2010). The Act helped to integrate immigrants into the UK by making it illegal to discriminate against them in housing, employment, and public services. This helped ensure that immigrants had equal access to opportunities and resources essential for integration. The Race Relations Board also played a key role in promoting good race relations by investigating and addressing discrimination incidents, which helped create a more inclusive and welcoming society for immigrants. In other words, the Act promoted integration by recognising and addressing racial and cultural differences in the UK, signalling acceptance of diversity and paving the way for a more inclusive society (Saggar and Somerville 2012b).

To impose the law effectively to all levels of institutions, this Act was enacted in three major rounds in 1965, 1968 and 1976, which helped to document general rules and policies in all levels of official units (Hansen 2016a). Following the legislative shift, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was also implemented as a quasi-governmental organisation, which began to generate

demographic statistical data from the various migrant communities who shared distinct cultural heritage (Parliament 1968). This helped the government to generate region-based integration strategies, which directly could target the minority migrants' integration. From this point of view, CRE, for the first time, embraced diversity and acknowledged the existence of cultural plurality in the UK.

Despite the above-mentioned arguments, in comparison to Commonwealth migrants, the integration issues of Nepalese migrants—who have never been Commonwealth citizens—have been largely overlooked. Nepalese migrants were not recognised under any specific race categories until the 2011 census (Adhikari 2012). This trend persists, as Nepalese migrants continue to face identity issues because they have been classified under the 'Asian and others' sub-category instead of having their own distinct category. Consequently, based on arguments made by some scholars, I also argue that there has not been sufficient clarity in analysing the politics of race and racism, despite race relations being a key focus of political parties and bureaucratic bodies at the time (Back et al. 2002).

To conclude, these historic Acts and legislations, at various points, have promoted the principles of ethnic diversity, thereby reinforcing Britain's identity as a multicultural society. Building on this foundation, the next section of this chapter explores British multiculturalism as a broader approach to integration.

2.2. Multiculturalism in the UK: An Overview

Although earlier Acts and strategies promoted integration, the UK's formal adoption of multiculturalism as state policy was marked by Home Secretary Roy Jenkins' influential speech. Jenkins (1920-2003), a prominent British politician, held various parliamentary positions and later served as European Commission President (1977-1981). Jenkins' advocacy for cultural pluralism has been considered a politically manifested state-led idea of accepting and recognising cultural pluralism in the UK (Kymlicka 2018b; Mathieu 2017a; Panayi 2014). Addressing the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants in 1966, Secretary Jenkins declared, "Integration is perhaps a loose word... I do not think that we need in this country a 'melting pot'…I define integration, therefore, not as a flattening process of assimilation but …mutual tolerance", as quoted by (Mathieu 2017a:46). This "state-led reformist project", a new insight into the integration policy domain, not only created a foundation for cultural pluralism in the UK but also helped establish the idea of integration on the assumption that an integration process is to be created and governed between distinct but equivalent groups, whose identity is to be defined by culture rather than race (Kymlicka 2018c:98). FitzGerald (2014:127) has further emphasised the inclusivity of ethnic variation within its framework, and he has stated that multiculturalism came as a "state-sponsored

celebration of ethnic differences" in the UK. Scholars, in common, have argued that the formal journey of British multiculturalism gained higher speed along with the official statement of the then Home Secretary Roy Jenkins.

Now, the question arises: What does 'multiculturalism' in integration mean? The answer is not straightforward. From a sociological point of view, the term 'multiculturalism' itself is very broad and complex. There is no definite definition and simplest meaning of this vast term, which has been broadly used as an integration policy term (Pitcher 2009). However, as argued by Rosado (1997), multiculturalism as an immigrant integration approach can be defined and interpreted concerning four binary concepts. 'Beliefs and behaviours', 'respect and recognition', 'acknowledge and values', and the fourth pair, 'encourage and enable', are the basic features of multiculturalism. From this point of view, this policy's conceptual and theoretical background is directly linked with the assumption of acceptance and recognition of cultural diversities. It can be clarified by quoting it as "the theories of multiculturalism consequently call for the recognition and accommodation of migrants and minorities" (Bloemraad, Korteweg, and ¨ Okçe Yurdakul 2008:160). Likewise, according to Mason (2018:24), "multiculturalism is best characterised as the public recognition or accommodation of minority cultures". Similarly, defining multiculturalism as a mutual response to the challenges affiliated with cultural variations, Tahir (2017a:71), argues that "the idea of multiculturalism in contemporary political philosophy is about how to understand and respond to the challenges associated with cultural and religious diversity". These scholars have prioritised cultural diversity while defining the basic concept of multiculturalism. However, for other scholars, multiculturalism in a broader sense invokes demographic, political, legal, and more significantly British nationality in the accommodation of immigrants (Jacqui Broadhead 2020; Mouritsen 2013; Spencer 1997; Uberoi and Modood 2013).

These definitions of multiculturalism lead to a crucial argument. In my opinion, the core tenet of multiculturalism asserts that the successful integration of minority immigrants, such as Nepalese, fundamentally depends on recognising, accepting and promoting their cultural identities. Along with this, for me, multiculturalism can manifest itself in various ways, including society's laws, policies, institutions, and cultural practices. It also refers to how different cultural groups interact with and relate to one another within a society. In essence, a multicultural society functions through a dynamic interplay of diverse socio-cultural, religious, ethnic, and institutional factors that contribute to social cohesion and cultural balance.

Looking at it from a broader perspective, I can further argue that the growing trend of international migration has turned the UK into a diverse melting pot necessitating a multicultural approach to integration. In response, multiculturalism emerged as an alternative policy, rejecting the notion of a single dominant culture. This inclusive approach emphasises protecting minority cultural rights and

fostering mutual understanding and respect among different groups, including the receiving. By valuing cultural diversity, multiculturalism aims to create a cohesive society where various communities can coexist and contribute to the nation's social fabric.

2.2.1. Mapping Multiculturalism: The Nepalese Context

The empirical chapters of this thesis explore in detail and synthesise the integration experiences of diverse categories of Nepalese in the UK. However, to provide context and establish a foundation for this detailed exploration, this section aims to situate the Nepalese community within the broader framework of British multiculturalism. By mapping the presence and contributions of Nepalese migrants within these multicultural frameworks, this section sets the stage for a comprehensive analysis of their integration experiences.

There are widespread understandings and arguments that multiculturalism promotes attachment and engagement in the larger polity through recognising and accommodating minority cultures. It also facilitates institutional relationships amongst different ethnic groups, promoting socio-cultural and civic-political integration (Bloemraad 2011; Modood 1994). Both the migrants and the receiving society can benefit from the acceptance of cultural diversities because it promotes a reciprocal relationship between the receiving and migrants' communities via their cultural exchange, as discussed integration as a two-way approach. Both parties can enrich each other's socio-economic, cultural-religious, and civic-political features. It means that multiculturalism, on the one hand, facilitates immigrants' integration into the broader societal fabric, and on the other, the receiving society can benefit significantly by tapping into the immigrant communities' knowledge and resources. This exchange not only enriches the cultural landscape but also enhances the overall functionality of the receiving society. In essence, the successful functioning of a multicultural society hinges on the mutual relationship between host population and immigrant communities.

The United Kingdom has a rich history of immigrants contributing to nation-building, exemplified by the Gurkhas' military service and the professional expertise of highly skilled Nepalese migrants. Gurkhas' sacrifice and their patriotic sense of belonging can be taken as a well-known history of how these loyal migrants have sacrificed their lives to build Britain better (Adhikari 2012; Gould 1999; Laksamba, Adhikari, et al. 2016). By recognising Gurkhas' bravery and the loyalty they demonstrated to protect British imperialism, until today, 13 Gurkha soldiers have been rewarded with the honour of Victoria Cross (VC) in the UK. The Victoria Cross (VC) is the highest and most prestigious award of the British honour system. It is awarded for valour "in the presence of the enemy" to members of the British Armed Forces and may be awarded retrospectively. This kind of

recognition, to some extent, has enhanced Gurkhas' sense of belonging promoting their integration in the UK.

To illustrate some other contributions made by the Nepalese migrants in the UK, we can take the recent examples of the Master Chef champion, Mr Santosh Shah (Yogi 2020). Along with Mr Shah, hundreds of other Nepalese chefs have added taste and flavour to the British food culture, making Nepalese cuisine famous in the UK. Additionally, the Guinness world record holder mountaineer Mr Nirmal Purja (Nimsdai),[3] who has recently been awarded MBE (Member of the Order of British Empire), also has exemplified the contribution of Nepalese in the UK.

Similarly, the skills and social capital of Nepalese migrants have been invaluable to the UK, as these individuals have continuously enhanced the country through their unwavering creativity and contributions (Kostakopoulou 2010a; Nowicka 2014; Panayi 2014). Thousands of Nepalese professionals working in academic, financial and health sectors have flourished in the name and fame of the UK (Roland et al. 2014). As Nepalese health professionals have demonstrated their highest level of service in the National Health Service (NHS), recently the British Government has announced to offer visas to 10,000 Nepalese health workers to migrate to the UK and contribute to the NHS. However, it remains to be observed what specific immigration rules will be applied in their entire immigration process.

Nepalese migrants have increasingly enriched the socio-cultural fabric of the United Kingdom through linguistic, cultural, and artistic traditions that have broadened the diversity of British societies. Especially, along with the arrival of the Gurkhas, the local communities have witnessed the cultural richness in the local boroughs and communities. On the one hand, the local communities have opportunities to celebrate the martial heritage of Gurkhas, and on the other, the Gurkhas and their families also have opportunities to blend with the livelihood patterns of the nations they have served for more than two centuries. As the British public and institutions validate symbolic ethnic markers like faith gatherings, attire, cuisine, and global ties expressing hybrid national-diasporic identities, it has helped Nepalese migrants to develop a substantive sense of belonging. Gradually, the Nepali cultural fingerprint has begun to intertwine into the national tapestry. Nepalese economic behaviours including occupational mobility, entrepreneurship and consumption/circulation of ethnic goods also have helped foster wider engagement.

By considering immigrants' contribution to promoting British culture and borrowing the idea of Alibhai-Brown, Kymlicka (2018c) has mentioned 3S: Sari, Samosa and Steel Drum. According to

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[3] Nirmal Purja (known as Nims or Nimsdai) MBE is a Nepal-born British mountaineer, who holds the Guinness world record in mountaineering.

him, Indian Samosa, Bangladeshi Sari, and Jamaican Steel Drum have enriched British food, costumes, and music. Similarly, Berg, Gidley, and Sigona (2016) and Pitcher (2009) also mentions immigrants' food culture, adding taste and values to the contemporary British kitchen. This kind of culture has not only helped to promote minority integration through the food culture in the UK but also has created a strong bond between the minority immigrants and the majority group of white consumers. These types of cultural enrichment have made Britain popular in India, Bangladesh, and Jamaica and made the immigrants feel a sense of belonging and pride in acceptance. These illustrations prove that immigrants have built Britain better by enriching its multidimensional socio-cultural spheres.

Although immigrant societies have helped Britain flourish in many ways, from the natives' point of view, "immigrants come to share common identities without having to assimilate fully" (Rainer 2002:13–14). The majority of the receiving population still considers them insiders and categorises migrants as outsiders. This preconception has changed the established conceptions of nationhood among the native majority population. Because of such misconception, the migrants' communities are often blamed for disturbing receiving society's mono-cultural identity. In addition to this, the British multiculturalism policy concept is still delivered mainly in terms of non-white immigrants' incorporation rather than accepting it as a holistic approach of integration wherein both the white British and non-white immigrants can be integrated (Kostakopoulou 2010a; Kymlicka 2018c; Mason 2018).

At this stage, I can argue that, along with the sense of mutuality and unity embedded in multiculturalism, we must also find local interpretations of what integration entails because considerable local knowledge is required to develop minority integration policies at the local levels. In addition, the key to a successful multicultural society lies in the reciprocal acknowledgement of the importance and values of both receiving societies and immigrant communities. This mutual understanding fosters social harmony, allowing immigrants to develop a profound sense of belonging and the freedom to celebrate their cultural heritage.

I again argue that it has been the policymakers' responsibility to exemplify immigrants' enormous contribution and convince the locals that migrant communities also contribute significantly to nation-building. Policymakers must clearly show how immigrants help our country grow and succeed. By sharing real examples of immigrants' contributions to our economy, culture, and communities, they can help everyone understand why immigrants are important for building a stronger nation. Canada and Australia have broadly applied this sense in their national-level integration policy approach by recognising ethnic minorities' cultures as national property and immigrant communities also strongly feel they belong in these nations (Bloemraad 2011; Kymlicka 2018c; Syed 2010). The United Kingdom, at some point, has also signalled multiculturalism in its

national-level integration policy; however, scholars argue that the UK has not yet officially recognised multiculturalism as its national-level integration policy agenda (Saggar and Somerville 2012a; Tahir 2017b). Thus, by genuinely adopting multiculturalism as its national integration policy framework, the United Kingdom can forge a more cohesive, dynamic, and prosperous society that celebrates diversity while fostering a shared sense of national identity.

Although some have argued that the country's history of colonialism and immigration has contributed to a diverse and vibrant culture (Macmillan and Bauböck 2000; Modood 1994; Tahir 2017a; Uberoi 2017a), others believe that it has led to social and cultural divisions (Fomina 2006; Joppke 2004a; Mathieu 2017a). Even though the British prototype of multiculturalism was formed over the foundation of race relations and ethnic cohesion, like its forerunners, multiculturalism has also been considered a controversial concept. The scholarships, which have argued for multiculturalism's failure, are also very rich and vast. Against the backdrop of these scholarships, in the subsequent section, I briefly analyse some major causes for retreating multiculturalism from the UK.

2.2.2. The Pitfalls of Multiculturalism in Integration

From the early 21st century, multiculturalism—once hailed for its emphasis on preserving and promoting cultural diversity—faced increasing scrutiny and criticism. The integration model's effectiveness came under question as critics argued that it fell short in addressing key societal challenges (Fomina 2006; Joppke 2004b). Specifically, they pointed out its failure to tackle social inequality and segregation, issues that often persist in diverse societies. Furthermore, they claimed that multiculturalism lacked a cohesive framework for fostering genuine integration and social cohesion. This growing scepticism marked a significant shift in attitudes towards a policy approach that had previously been widely embraced (Banting and Kymlicka 2013).

Scholars have mentioned the deep-seated ambivalence about immigrants, especially the non-white immigrants in British society, which helped to erode multiculturalism in the UK. They have stated the longstanding anxiety of the local people against the immigrants' religious-cultural characteristics fuelled the negative consensus of the white British. Another aspect of the backlash against British multiculturalism has been linked with the rise of far-right and nationalist parties, such as the British National Party (BNP) and the UK Independent Party (UKIP), which gained support by promoting an anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalism agenda in national political debate (Mason 2018; Saggar and Somerville 2012b). Scholars have furthermore explained that this extremely right-wing political doctrine, which targeted especially Muslim migrants, helped to make multiculturalism an unpopular concept in the UK.

This kind of anti-migrant political consensus led to the rise of Islamophobia and hate crimes against ethnic immigrants including Nepalese. It contributed to the climate of fear and mistrust amongst most British public. Consequently, far-right nationalist parties have consistently portrayed British multiculturalism as causing social fragmentation and excessive diversity within British society (Mason 2018; Meer and Modood 2009; Uberoi 2017a). Scholars have pointed out that this kind of political discourse promoted a negative consensus that multiculturalism disrupts social cohesion and violates democratic principles and national unity leading to the segregation of communities and ethnically based conflicts.

In this ethnic minorities model, migrants have been seen as different from existing societies. They are defined in terms of ethnicity and their nation of origin, which is believed to have been unable to create social harmony (Han Entzinger and Renske Biezeveld 2003; Meer and Modood 2009; Tahir 2017a; Uberoi and Modood 2013). It has been criticised for promoting and safeguarding ethnic minorities rather than a cohesive integration policy model (Scholten et al. 2017b). Multiculturalism was always presented as the property of immigrants rather than the locals because it failed to include a larger proportion of white British in its fundamental norms. Similarly, it has been characterised as an "inadequate" policy approach as it could not address the heterogeneous issues of super-diversified cultural communities of the 21st century (Fomina 2006:420).

In some cases, multiculturalism has been blamed for widening economic inequality gaps between migrants and receiving communities (Fomina 2006; Joppke 2004a; Mattei and Broeks 2016; Panayi 2014). In other cases, it also has been blamed for creating sociocultural insurgencies in British societies. For instance, the race riots in the north of England in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in the summer of 2001 were viewed as an initial trigger for a reassessment of multicultural policies. The 7/7 London bombing accelerated this process, and the events of the American twin-tower attack on 9/11 were also linked with the negative impacts of multiculturalism (Aschroft 2019; Kostakopoulou 2010a; Tahir 2017b). The then (the new) Labour government was believed not to be able to constitutionalise racial identity and rights of the ethnic minorities, which fuelled making multiculturalism an issue of political saliency (Aschroft 2019; Back et al. 2002; Pitcher 2009; Tahir 2017b).

Consequently, national and international voices stood against multiculturalism, especially against Muslims (Aschroft 2019; Martiniello and Rath 2019b). By 2004, many publications and institutions, including the Guardian, Channel 4, and the British Council had held seminars and produced special publications with titles like 'Is Multiculturalism Dead in the UK?' (Aschroft 2019; Meer and Modood 2009). By publishing a series of provocations declaring that the London bombings and racial riots had killed multiculturalism, media and public rhetoric brought multiculturalism under strain (Bagley and Al-Refai 2017; Mason 2018). Joppke (2004:237) has pointed out a "chronic lack

of public support" for multicultural policies, which aligns with its critics' arguments of growing public scepticism. Furthermore, Bloemraad et al. (2008:160–61) have articulated a critique that also resonates with the perceived failures of this policy. They blamed the policy for ''fostering cultural segregation and hampering migrants' integration into the labour market and education thereby generating economic burden and inequality''.

Consequently, European leaders like German Chancellor Merkel, British Prime Minister Cameron, and French President Sarkozy have expressed their furies against multiculturalism (Farrar, Robinson, and Sener 2012). Chancellor Merkel, speaking to a meeting of young members of her party, claimed, "This (multiculturalism) approach has failed, utterly failed" (Banting and Kymlicka 2013:578). She blamed multiculturalism for creating a parallel society (Joppke 2017b). British Prime Minister Cameron launched a devastating attack against British multiculturalism and famously declared in 2011 that the "state doctrine of multiculturalism" had failed (Aschroft 2019:35). Citing multiculturalism as a cause for weakening British identity and causing domestic terrorism, Cameron advocated instead the need for a 'muscular liberalism' that asserts 'British values' (Mason 2018; Tahir 2017b). As a result, the civic turn in integration has been framed against the hazard of too much diversity and cultural plurality (Larin 2020).

As some of Europe's radical right-wing political parties began to reframe their nationalist rhetoric in civic integration concepts focusing on democracy, nationhood, nationalism and citizenship, this kind of "civic zeitgeist" was presented to fix the problems created by previous policies of diversity and cultural pluralism (Halikiopoulou, Mock, and Vasilopoulou 2013:5). The nationalist discourse both from the public as well as political levels forwarded the civic integration approach as a fixture. So, the European nations, which once emphasised multiculturalism in integration swiftly abandoned their commitment to multiculturalism. They held multiculturalism responsible for failing to achieve their economic integration goals through its approach. Similarly, scholars have argued that the Netherlands, which once embraced multiculturalism explicitly, eventually shifted towards an alternative integration approach (Joppke 2004a; Kymlicka 2018c). As the Netherlands began promoting the acceptance of Dutch norms and values within the framework of civic integration, this Dutch approach gained popularity. It diffused throughout Europe, ultimately becoming a model for integration across the continent.

In the context of the UK, as mentioned above, the series of provocations against British multiculturalism indirectly helped to portray the policy as a failed approach to integration. From the state's point of view, as argued by its critics, multiculturalism promoted disintegration and segregation by hindering integration. So, following the series of anti-multiculturality rhetoric both from the public and political levels, the long-served integration approach initiated by former Home Secretary Jenkins; has been officially challenged by another Home Secretary-David Blunkett.

Home Secretary David Blunkett's white paper policy of "secure borders, safe haven", introduced in 2001, has been believed to have worked to limit non-white immigrants in the UK by avoiding the practice of multiculturalism (Back et al. 2002; Pitcher 2009). The White Paper agenda declined the importance of cultural pluralism. They proposed modernisation of the British citizenship procedures including the current oath of allegiance, a citizenship pledge and the introduction of new citizenship ceremonies (Office 2002). It impacted in overall principles of naturalisation and the citizenship acquisition process. By indicating the influence of Blunkett's ideology in the integration approach, the scholar has also stated, "Britain moved beyond multiculturalism since David Blunkett took office as Home Secretary" (Joppke 2004a:45). Blunkett's ideology was the opposite of Jenkins' ideology of cultural pluralism. In other words, Blunkett exemplified a populist strand of New Labour rhetoric rather than confronting the blame put forward against the immigrants, especially by the nationalist parties such as BNP (Back et al. 2002; Mathieu 2017a).

Along with the series of anti-immigrant rhetoric, hostile environment policy approach also played a crucial role in tightening ethnic minorities' settlement and livelihoods in the UK. The hostile environment in the UK was a government policy aimed at creating a "tougher" environment for illegal immigrants (Griffiths and Yeo 2021b). The policy aimed to reduce illegal immigration by making it more difficult for unauthorised migrants to live and work in the UK. It led to increased checks on people's immigration status in areas such as employment, housing, and access to public services. This policy shift towards a more restricted integration policy was seen as a response to concerns over immigration levels and the perceived impact of immigration on communities. The hostile environment policy was criticised for its negative effects on migrants and the wider population and its contribution to shifting integration policy towards restriction.

Among all, the failure of multiculturalism also rests on its weakness of overlooking the necessity of equal participation from the white majority (Mathieu 2017b). It primarily focused on addressing the needs of ethnic minorities, rather than highlighting its notion of co-existence and equal recognition of all cultural groups. It was against the European notion of defining integration as a two-way process. Furthermore, multiculturalism's failure to grasp the local level's interpretation of integration and its achievement contributed to its downfall. Instead of incorporating the consensus and perspectives of local communities, multiculturalism was implemented as a top-down directive, failing to effectively engage the local level and rendering it an ineffective approach to integration (Asari, Halikiopoulou, and Mock 2008; Kymlicka 2018).

On this occasion, I argue that the decline of multiculturalism was partly driven by far-right political concerns. These groups, in my view, feared that allowing minorities to maintain strong cultural identities might lead to them gaining significant political power in the future. I believe this worry pressured mainstream parties to rethink multiculturalism and look for alternatives. As a result,

Western democracies began exploring a new approach called civic integration. Ultimately, the new integration model was presented as a more effective way to promote social cohesion and integration. This new model emphasised the importance of shared values and a common identity and sought to promote the integration of immigrants into the wider society through measures such as language classes, civic education, and civic participation. In my analysis, this shift wasn't just a natural policy change, but a strategic move to address perceived threats to national unity and existing power structures.

The following section presents another key argument of my thesis: a comprehensive analysis of the civic integration model and its negative consequences for immigrant integration in the UK. This detailed examination forms a critical foundation for understanding the subsequent shifts in integration policies and their impacts on Nepalese migrants' integration in the UK.

2.3. Analysing Civic Concept in Integration

Along with the turn of the 21st century, a new development in immigrant integration, popularly known as 'civic integration' has come into practice amongst European countries, and for the last 20 years, this approach has become a dominant integration policy model (Goodman and Wright 2015b; Mouritsen, Kriegbaum Jensen, and Larin 2019). The civic integration policy approach, which was first pioneered in the Netherlands during the mid-1990s, comes from the Dutch word's originality: inburgering, whose literal translation into English would mean 'naturalisation' or 'becoming a citizen' (Goodman 2012a; Kostakopoulou 2010b). In 'civic integration', the adjective 'civic' illustrates the degree of incorporation the liberal states require newcomers into their receiving societies (Farris 2016). This often involves passing tests about the receiving country's language, culture, history, and norms and participating in its social, economic, and political life. These tests and exams designed in the civic integration policies have been interpreted to ensure that immigrants can fully integrate into the mainstream of society. In other words, civic integration refers to the series of legal processes by which immigrants become legal citizens.

Scholars have tried to interpret this concept linking to its Dutch originality (Farris 2016). According to Joppke (2017a), on English-language websites of the Dutch and Flemish-Belgian governments, inburgering has been translated as 'civic integration'. This 'Dutch policy model', which was embedded with the essence of nationality and the concept of social cohesion in integration, soon mutated all over Europe. Joppke (2017a) has illustrated three different phases, such as pre-entry, post-entry, and citizenship acquisition; that the newcomers must go through in the process of becoming full and legal members of the receiving nation. Prioritising nationality as an essence of civic integration policy, (Larin 2020:127), has stated that "civic integration is the expression of civic nationalism". Newcomers have to go through a series of processes to become legal nationals of

the receiving country. Unlike multiculturalism, the concept of civic integration has been expected to promote integration through nationality, civicness, individual autonomy, and a sense of national belonging. It expects migrants to comply with the main motto of nationality and citizenship. Unless one gains the recognition of the receiving nation's citizens, one cannot be fully integrated, which is the basic benchmark of this policy.

Following the recent approach of civic integration, several European nations have adopted policies of mandatory integration, requiring immigrants to pass receiving country- language and history- knowledge tests as the condition for immigration, settlement, and citizenship (Carrera and Wiesbrock 2009; Goodman and Wright 2015; Joppke 2017c; Koopmans 2009; Kostakopoulou 2010b; Larin 2020). All these processes and legalities have been set as the main markers for integration, and immigrants must go through these processes to meet the requirements of inclusion. Considering the vastness of these legalities, some have characterised it as a "jungle of different rules" (Joppke 2017b:1157), and others, as "civic hardware", (Goodman 2010b:754). The receiving nations implement 'civic hardware' in their integration policy mechanism. Based on the civic integration policy index (CIVIX), Goodman has tried to analyse how this 'civic hardware' plays a role in the integration process. Based on this civic hardware tool, the level of immigrants' 'incorporation' is measured through receiving nations' language and history knowledge proficiency and with the evidence of attainment of citizenship. Hence, the idea of successful integration rests on individual commitments to achieving nationality and citizenship in the receiving country.

The civic integration concept requires the immigrants to gain nationality and citizenship rights as "a claim to be accepted as a full member of the society" (Bloemraad et al. 2008:157). So, immigrants are expected to commit to fulfilling the requirements set in the receiving nation's civic integration policy and comply with the agreement for integration (Larin 2020; Mouritsen et al. 2019). More significantly, in this process of "citizenization," access to national citizenship has been presented as complementing the extension of rights and opportunities as a necessary step towards full inclusion (Larin 2020:128). The concept of full inclusion is linked with access to political rights and social inclusion. So, the newcomers are urged to demonstrate the ability to pass mandatory assessments of civic tests required to acquire citizenship and social inclusion. At this stage, I can argue that civic integration policies express the idea that the successful integration of newcomers to their receiving nations rests on individual commitment to characteristics typifying national citizenship, specifically country knowledge, language proficiency and liberal and social values. This idea of integration completely differs from the idea of integration as perceived in multiculturalism.

In some cases, civic integration has been interpreted as a wholesale retreat from multiculturalism which has been considered to have come into force to fix the weaknesses caused by previous policies (Banting and Kymlicka 2013; Goodman 2010b; Joppke 2004a, 2017b; Kostakopoulou

2010b). At some point, the arrival of civic integration policy has been presented as an outcome of the departure of multiculturalism (Joppke 2004a). However, as Kymlicka (2018c) has argued in his article about the rise and fall of multiculturalism, it can be viewed as an advanced form of multiculturalism rather than a departure. He has explained this shift as post-multiculturalism.

However, it remains unclear whether the civic turn in integration has been brought to the fore as an alternative to multiculturalism or completely as a new development in integration. Some scholars have not yet accepted civic integration as an entirely new integration model because it continues an old policy with new layers on top of it (Kostakopoulou 2010b; Larin 2020; Martiniello and Rath 2019b). Banting and Kymlicka (2013) also have stated that in many European countries, efforts to strengthen civic integration are being layered over older programmes recognising and supporting diversity by building a multicultural version of civic integration. The ideological and nationalist toppings have been analysed as extra layers on top of the old policy. Some scholars have analysed civic integration practices conjoining with the political ideologies of the receiving nations (Favell 2016; Michalowski and van Oers 2012; Mouritsen et al. 2019). Arguing civic integration as 'old stuff in a new container (a popular Nepali cliche)- a nationalist rhetoric in integration', I want to shed light on its UK context in the below section.

2.3.1. Civic Integration: A Nationalist Approach to Integration in the UK

In line with the major argument of my thesis, portraying civic integration as an immigration-controlling measure, in this section, I comprehensively examine the emergence of the civic approach to integration in the United Kingdom. Through a detailed analysis of these policies and their effects, I argue that the current UK civic integration trend primarily focuses on controlling immigration rather than promoting true integration and social cohesion.

Following the recent legislation on immigration and citizenship based on civic integration policy in Europe and the EU framework in the early 2000s, the United Kingdom also began to inherit the European model of integration embedded with nationality and citizenship. I have already stated the European influence in shaping integration policies in the UK. Based on this new European agenda, the United Kingdom also began to require the migrants to pass the mandatory English language and history knowledge tests for permanent settlement as well as family reunification (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2010a; Goodman and Wright 2015; Joppke 2008). Since then, much emphasis has been placed on tailoring a nationalist model of civic integration policies, which supposedly promote social cohesion rather than cultural cohesion as in multiculturalism. This process was further intensified by the British Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, which strongly urged the provision of mandatory civic requirements of English language and history knowledge tests (Office 2002). Apart from the EU consensus, in the UK, the concept of civic integration has been closely

tied to the legal process of naturalisation, by which newcomers are supposed to convert into British citizens.

As stated before, the then Home Secretary Blunkett's white paper policy also seems to have put significant pressure on providing English language and British history knowledge for the immigrants (Back et al. 2002). At the start of the (new) Labour government's second term in 2001, David Blunkett served as a Home Secretary. In the name of reform and better immigration policy, he launched a so-called robust concept in integration from school curriculum and education policies (Pitcher 2009). For him, English language proficiency was a must for newcomers to learn. Blunkett's white paper policy clearly stated that "there is no compulsion to apply for nationality; that part is voluntary, the part that is not voluntary is knowing the English language" (Kostakopoulou 2003:108).

Consequently, as a mandatory requirement, the United Kingdom first introduced its citizenship test in November 2005, which contains 24 multiple choice questions based on the government's publication, 'Life in the UK' (Goodman 2012b; Kostakopoulou 2010a; Saggar and Somerville 2012b). Migrants who want to obtain British Citizenship either have to pass a computerised multiple-choice test or if their English language skills make this difficult, they are obliged to complete a level three course in ESOL (English for Speakers for Other Language) with citizenship content (Office 2009). English language proficiency and knowledge about British life are thus seen as the bedrock of national identity. The United Kingdom, as a reforming step in the immigration system, introduced the Border, Citizenship and Immigration Bill in 2008, which got approval from the House of Lords in 2009 (Office 2009). Its basic premise was that the newcomers 'must earn' their residency and other rights in the UK. The Home Office, the only government body which has full immigration policy rights, seems to have planned to achieve integration through the English language test's result, but for me, only the English language test's result is not a key to integration. Instead, other socio-cultural, religious, and normative factors are crucial to promote integration.

Even though Britain implemented the mandatory provision of its civic requirement in all domains of immigration, for some scholars, British civic integration requirements and policies are more refugee-focused (Jacqui Broadhead 2020; Phillimore 2012a; Saggar and Somerville 2012a; Yi Cheung and Phillimore 2013). Britain has set refugee target integration strategies to bring illegal immigrants and refugees into mainstream society. According to Saggar and Somerville (2012b), a formal immigrant integration policy has been applied in the UK to only one subcategory of migrants: recognised as 'refugees'. At this point, I can argue that, in reality, Britain has not adequately addressed the integration issues of economic, educational, and skilled migrants, despite these being important immigration pathways

British nationality and citizenship are often viewed as privileges that must be earned by adhering to liberal-democratic values and virtues (van Houdt, Suvarierol, and Schinkel 2011). Migrants are expected to demonstrate their commitment to these values by obtaining British nationality, which is a marker of national identity and civicness (Goodman 2010b; Jensen and Mouritsen 2019; Joppke 2017c; Kostakopoulou 2010b). To become fully integrated into British society and be considered good citizens, newcomers must go through various stages of temporary residence, probationary citizenship, and full naturalisation (Goodman 2010b; Kostakopoulou 2010a; Saggar and Somerville 2012b). This process raises the question of which comes first: becoming a British citizen or integrating into British society. At this stage, I want to argue that Nepalese migrants' socio-cultural inclusion should be prioritised, and citizenship should be left to the discretion of Nepalese people rather than the UK because the choice of nationality is an individual's right rather than a compulsion.

I further argue that these policies are designed to promote immigrant integration by helping individuals develop the necessary language skills to communicate effectively in English. This is particularly crucial for those who may not have spoken English before arriving in the UK, as it facilitates their access to essential services such as employment, education, healthcare, and more. However, imposing such requirements on highly skilled migrants, who have already passed advanced English proficiency tests like the IELTS, undermines the motives of this policy. Instead of promoting integration, the mandatory requirements set by this policy have created difficulties by requiring unnecessary legalities for many Nepalese individuals, hindering their social cohesion. For me, this is the counterproductive nature of these policies in their current form. So, I suggest a more nuanced approach that considers the varying levels of language proficiency among immigrants, rather than imposing a standardised set of tests.

2.3.2. Examining Civic Requirements as the Measures of Immigration Control

Again, as my major argument, this section examines civic requirements and their influence in regulating immigration within the United Kingdom. It precisely examines the various civic requirements that have been instituted in recent times, including language tests, visa application fees and duration, naturalisation process and citizenship oaths and overall financial costs involved within it. It evaluates their intended and unintended effects on the assimilation of immigrants into society. Furthermore, it scrutinises the frequent shifts in policy and their tougher requirements, how these requirements may be employed to control immigration and the potential complications of such policies. By comprehensively examining the present state of civic requirements in the UK, this section signals their impacts on Nepalese migrants' integration.

My arguments are closely aligned with the scholars who also have posited that the civic integration policies implemented in the United Kingdom are closely intertwined with mechanisms for controlling immigration (Jacqui Broadhead 2020; Joppke 2017b; Kostakopoulou 2010a). Joppke (2017a) has clearly stated that civic integration is about stretching integration into the mainstream using mandatory language and civic courses and tests, which are the tools of immigration controlling policy instruments. Larin also notes that in the UK, civic integration policies are often more focused on controlling migration rather than facilitating integration and highlight the role of these policies in tightening border controls before granting entry clearance. By exemplifying the concept of 'immigration from abroad' in the UK, he has stated that civic integration policy often functions as a "form of migration control rather than integration" (Larin 2020:134). I have acknowledged Larin's argument and analysed how the implementation of the ''immigration from abroad'' concept has hampered all different trajectories of Nepalese immigration to the UK. My acknowledgements will more comprehensively resonate in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

In 2007 the UK introduced its mandatory civic requirement in the domain of family migrants, for instance, the spouse visa category of Nepalese. Some scholars have viewed this type of condition as nothing more than a subtle form of immigration controlling measure (Koopmans 2009; Kostakopoulou 2003). Although this type of policy has been primarily presented as a way to protect women against illiberal practices such as forced marriage and illegal workforce trafficking, these days such provision has been misguided and imposed to restrict women from reuniting with their family members living in the UK. For some scholars, the neoliberal states have applied this type of feminist idea aiming to control certain family migrants, especially those of Muslim background. Farris (2012) has interpreted this type of idea under the phrase of 'femonationalism'. In sum, this gender-biased and spouse-targeted transformation of the tests to the country of origin follows unsuccessful performance which either prevents or limits the entry of family migrants (Kofman 2005a). This has been the case with many Nepalese migrants' spouses, especially with the women because the result of failing the English language test has stopped them from coming to the UK to join their husbands. I will highlight this issue in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

Additionally, if I debate the concept of 'integration from abroad', in which civic requirements and conditions have been made mandatory in the country of origin before the entry allowance, I can align civic integration policy as a matter of control and switch to the family migration journey (Ahlén and Boräng 2018; Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011a; Goodman 2012b). Vicki Squire (2005:62), has analysed these requirements as "more visible measures" undertaken by the states to control entry before departure or arrival. Additionally, by shifting the responsibility of integration to the immigrants, receiving nations are defining integration as immigrants' duty for integration rather than their rights to integration. By borrowing the idea of Desmond King (1999:18), Joppke has argued that civic integration is a shift in policy from "right to duties," which are restrictive and obligatory.

The transformation of integration requirements to the country of origin can be interpreted as the most extreme expression of civic integration policy (Joppke 2007b). In his article, Joppke describes the paradoxical fusion of integration and immigration control as the "biggest novelty of civic integration" (Joppke 2017b:1155).

Also in the context of English requirements, how much knowledge of the English language and British history one has to have is not clearly stated in the clause of civic requirements (Böcker and Strik 2011). In other words, the test standard does not clearly state how much knowledge about the English language and British society to pursue a good citizen's livelihood. Can one argue and conclude that non-naturalised residents in the UK are less knowledgeable and less integrated in comparison with naturalised citizens? As argued by Asari, Halikiopoulou, and Mock (2008) and Kostakopoulou (2010a), there are many painters, artists, sports persons and traders who have been better integrated and well-settled into British society without having been naturalised. It means that without being naturalised, one can still fully adapt to British norms and serve the nation well. In the same line of these scholars, I also can argue that, apart from these requirements, there are several other factors to promote integration that the Home Office has not paid any attention to.

For me, integration may fail not because of a lack of English language proficiency or the insignificance of citizenship but because these factors alone are insufficient for integration. To clarify it, integration in the United Kingdom cannot solely rely on English language proficiency or acquisition of citizenship, as these factors alone are insufficient for achieving meaningful integration. A more holistic approach that prioritises cultural understanding, fostering a sense of belonging, and respecting individual choices regarding nationality; is necessary. Encouraging cultural exchange, can bridge gaps between diverse cultural heritage and promote mutual respect, while initiatives that enhance community participation help individuals develop connections and sense of belonging (Back et al. 2002; Pitcher 2009; Uberoi and Modood 2013). By recognising and celebrating the diversified characteristics of rich ethnic backgrounds that contribute to enrich British culture, we can combat discrimination and promote social cohesion. By addressing these factors, alongside English language proficiency, the United Kingdom can achieve better integration outcomes.

Since I have considered my own immigration and integration experiences as my methods, for me, it is worth citing my experiences of attending a naturalisation ceremony in the UK. In my opinion, Britain practices a very traditional way of naturalisation and oath ceremony. One has to go through the oath of allegiance (or an affirmation if one prefers not to swear by God) and be able to pledge (Goodman and Wright 2015; Joppke 2017c; Kostakopoulou 2010a; Pitcher 2009). In an oath ceremony, one who wishes to take an oath reads like this: "I will give my loyalty to the United Kingdom and respect its rights and freedoms. I will uphold its democratic values. I will observe its

laws faithfully and fulfil my duties and obligations as a British citizen" (Home Office 2010). Looking at this, I can argue that British naturalisation and oath ceremonies reflect republican nationalism rather than individual autonomy, which is against the notion of civic integration that is supposed to enhance individual autonomy via English language tests and training.

As per my knowledge, I can further argue that such classical oaths and naturalisation ceremonies have no functionality in the 21st century. Stating his own experience Pitcher (2009) also has written about the unproductivity of naturalisation and oath ceremonies in the UK. Goodman (2010a) also has stated that integration requirements, as stated in civic ideology, do not primarily serve a functional role. Further, the UK English language and country-knowledge requirements seek to enhance the significance of Britishness rather than integrating the immigrant because British civic requirements are presented as a nationalist obligation to become British (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011a; Pitcher 2009).

Based on this argument, I can now claim that one can fully integrate into British society without being a naturalised citizen. We can take the example of the Gurkhas, who served loyally and patriotically for Britain and its empire for 200 years without naturalisation. However, when they migrated to the UK and sought citizenship, they were compelled to go through the difficult and costly process of obtaining British nationality for full inclusion. This problem is compounded for Nepalese nationals, who are not allowed to hold dual nationality according to Nepalese government policy. Many Nepalese who lived in the UK for decades face a dilemma: if they become British citizens, they risk losing their identity and rights in Nepal, but if they remain Nepalese immigrants in the UK, they are restricted in their access to certain systems and opportunities, such as political rights.

The United Kingdom's decision to exempt mandatory civic requirements for migrants from English-speaking countries, such as Australia, Canada, the United States, and New Zealand, demonstrates a clear intention to limit migration from the global south. These civic requirements, including tests, are primarily imposed on migrants from South Asian countries like Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, as well as African countries like Nigeria and Ghana (Joppke 2017b). However, the United Kingdom never required any tests and examinations for these nationals to come to live in the UK when it needed migrants to rebuild its industrial economy. The British Nationality Act 1948 (BNA) welcomed its former dominion members under the notion of subjecthood and brotherhood. In contrast to this Act, in the name of civic integration, the recent trend of integration policies denies this subjecthood to enter their motherland- the UK. Thus, it can be argued that recently, the United Kingdom has purposively imposed such mandatory rules to limit the low-skilled and family migrants (Goodman 2012b; Kostakopoulou 2010b). This signals that the UK only welcomes economically active migrants, who can contribute to the nation's economy and can easily journey through the

jungle of muddling policies to achieve citizenship, but not the family dependents and economically passive ones, who can barely complete the citizenship journey.

Scholars have argued that the recent trend of civic integration, with its mandatory requirements, primarily expresses civic nationalism rather than a genuine mechanism for integration (Farris 2016; Paparusso 2016). This interpretation suggests that these policies are driven by the nationalist rhetoric of radical right-wing political parties rather than a true commitment to integration. From this point of view, civic integration policies are both "politically and ontologically problematic" (Larin 2020:127). Problematic in this sense that these policies serve better the political interests rather than integration needs. The mandatory requirements set out in these policies have been characterised as "more stringent than ever" (Ware 2010:318). Ware contends that concepts such as earned citizenship and point-based systems, are ill-suited for the context of the UK.

Since the civic requirements are made mandatory in the domain of spouse and family reunification, especially in the category of TCNs, civic integration tools have better performed to tighten the immigration door by stopping them from entering the UK, rather than fixing integration here (Carrera and Wiesbrock 2009; Goodman 2012c; Kostakopoulou 2010a). The provision of civic requirements targets both families: a) those who tend to invite spouses and other members to join in the destination country and b) those who tend to migrate to reunite with their families must demonstrate their civic requirements. As such a restricted set of rules affects both parties, civic integration policies are characterised as "double conditionality", which work vigorously to limit unwanted family migrants (Borevi, Jensen, and Mouritsen 2017:9).

Scholar, like Permoser (2012b), has exemplified the Austrian concept of civic integration, which is very similar to the British concept, which for her, is more an immigration-controlling mechanism than an integration policy. Similarly, it is worth mentioning here the negative effects of mandatory requirements, such as those implemented in the Netherlands, which have led to decreased naturalisation rates in the Netherlands (Koopmans 2012). These requirements can also act as barriers for certain groups of migrants, especially the TCNs, who are considered difficult to integrate (Carrera and Wiesbrock 2009; Paparusso 2016). Additionally, I can argue that the citizenship reform and civic integration policies in the UK prioritise cultural homogeneity and nationality, which are not sufficient to integrate diversified Nepalese migrants.

Following the recent trend of civic integration requirements trajectories, the theme of earned citizenship moved to a higher gear in 2009 as Britain introduced a point point-based integration system (Office 2009). Based on this new condition, apart from the Irish citizens, all others coming to the UK under the point-based system must earn 70 points to be able to work and stay in the UK. Along with the basic requirements of English language and history knowledge tests, migrants are

still required to score these points. The points are distributed from various categories like skills, income, education, and the work profession. The Home Office site states that this system offers flexible arrangements for UK employers to recruit skilled workers from different professional routes. However, it does not say how these points promote integration. Besides this, from an analytical point of view, due to this highly competitive selection process, those migrants who cannot meet the score are prevented from entering and remaining in the UK. Thus, it clearly signals that "the concept of earned citizenship" gives the government more control over the number of people permitted to settle in Britain permanently, with the bar raised or lowered according to the needs of the UK (Kostakopoulou 2010a:836).

Because of restricted and constrained requirements of English language and history knowledge tests set in the British civic integration policy instrument, many Nepalese, especially the family migrants have experienced negative outcomes in integration. Instead of assisting in integration, civic requirements have made the process more complex leading to disintegration. By rejecting entry allowance to spouses and family migrants in Nepal's country of origin, the civic integration policy mechanism has led to family separation and disintegration. Many Gurkhas and their families have been going through the constrain of separation.

Highlighting the flaws in the British approach, (Kostakopoulou 2010a:829), characterises it as a "politically outdated and normatively deficient", a sentiment reinforced by (Griffith and Morris 2017:10), those who describe it as ''a muddle''. In my opinion, these critiques underscore the irrationality and shortcomings of civic integration policies, which fail to adequately address the complexities of Nepalese migrants in the UK. Considering the context of Nepalese immigrants in the UK in conjunction with the challenges they face in terms of integration and the effects of civic integration policies, I have highlighted some points below:

a. Difficulty in passing language tests: Language tests are often used as a civic requirement for immigrants in the UK, but these tests can be difficult for some, especially family migrants, Gurkhas, and their spouses. This can make it difficult for them to gain citizenship or other legal status and limit their work and education opportunities.

b. Stigma and discrimination: Nepalese subject to civic requirements may face stigma and discrimination from those who view them as less educated or less intelligent in their family circles and community. British citizenship, especially the British passport is viewed as the symbol of status. Failing to acquire British nationality can make it difficult for them to form connections and build community relationships. Those who have not been able to pass the language test, feel hesitation to talk about this issue.

c. Negative impact on family life: Civic requirements can also have a negative impact on family life, as some of them may be separated from their loved ones due to their inability to meet the requirements, either to migrate to the UK or to meet the legal status once in the UK. It can result in a break-up in families and relationships.

d. Limit social mobility: Failing to acquire British citizenship can have several impacts on various aspects of Nepalese migrants such as limiting their employment opportunities, financial constraints, restricted travel allowance, exclusion from voting rights and deviation from social integration.

Depending on the migrants' interests, socio-cultural background, visa categories and motives these implications can be varied. However, I have discovered that failing to meet civic requirements has left many Nepalese on the brink of integration.

2.4. Chapter Summary

Considering the United Kingdom's colonial history and subsequent immigration patterns, this chapter offered a comprehensive discussion on various integration approaches adopted by the United Kingdom to manage its diversified immigrants. By evaluating different approaches, such as the British Nationality Act, Commonwealth Immigration Act and Race Relation Act as the foundation for developing British prototype multiculturalism, this chapter highlighted the importance of those Acts and legislation in integrating ethnic minorities from its former dominions. Analysing the historical shifts in integration policies, this chapter then explored how the essence of cultural diversity was prioritised for diversified immigrants in the UK.

Interpreting multiculturalism as a comprehensive approach to integration, this chapter presented the range of discussions associated with its emergence, its backlash and finally its retreat for an alternative approach known as civic turn in integration. Considering multiculturalism as an ethnocentric practice for an integration approach, this chapter highlighted the importance of multiculturalism that not only accepted the cultural plurality but also recognised the value of cultural diversity for a cohesive approach to integration.

Additionally, this chapter contextualised Nepalese migrants' integration experiences in line with the concept of multiculturalism and interpreted this approach as a positive effort in integration. By citing some examples of Gurkhas and other trajectories of Nepalese migrants, this chapter explored how Nepalese migrants have added value to cultural pluralism in the UK and vice versa. This also highlighted how Nepalese have developed a sense of belonging while adapting to the British cultures and integrating with broader communities.

Based on the theoretical discussion, this chapter further explored how the British prototype of multiculturalism became the subject of public as well as policy debate and criticism. While doing so, I presented the right-wing nationalist parties' political ideologies and leaders' voices as the main causes for making multiculturalism an unpopular approach. Although they have blamed some ethnic minorities and their religious ideology, especially the Muslims in association with the terror attacks, the main reason was linked with the fear of parallel political power that ethnic minorities may claim in the UK. At this stage, I strongly argued and highlighted that the right-wing nationalist political consensus and the anti-immigrant populist parties and their leaders' advocacy made multiculturalism unpopular, rather than public sentiment itself.

Along with the so-called failure of multiculturalism, from the beginning of the new millennium, another new approach to integration known as civic integration emerged as a dominant concept. Looking at its Dutch origin, scholars have interpreted it as a nationalist ideological approach to integration. Further to the discussion, I interpreted the measures and requirements set in the civic integration approach as immigration-controlling measures rather than integration policy. By highlighting my personal experience of naturalisation and the cost involved in this process, I critically examined the mandatory assessment of Life in the UK test and other requirements set for the acquisition of British citizenship proving them having no functionality in the modern era.

I have further emphasised that the government should educate and inform immigrants about the importance of British history, its values, and heritage through free education, training, workshops, and community events rather than imposing compulsory language tests and exams. By encouraging immigrant communities to participate in local activities and engage in community and civil practices, the government can foster a stronger sense of belonging among immigrants. A strong sense of belonging is the bedrock of social cohesion and integration. To develop social cohesion and promote integration, the government needs to engage immigrants in local activities instead of imposing language and history tests.

In this chapter, I portrayed the civic integration policies as mechanisms for immigration control rather than genuine efforts at integration. By examining the strict measures within civic integration requirements, I argued that these tough pre-entry conditions function as immigration control tools. These tools benefit policymakers by screening out undesirable immigrants in their country of origin. Additionally, I argued strongly against the mandatory tests and exams imposed for naturalisation, especially in the visa category of the Gurkhas, who have a well-known history of serving the UK. This raises important questions: why did the government not require the Gurkhas to become British citizens before asking them to fight for British imperialism? And why now does the government demand that the Gurkhas acquire citizenship before they can engage in civic practices? These

questions seem simple, but their answers are hidden by the underlying interests embedded within civic integration policy measures.

Thus, against the backdrop of a policy practised in the UK, in this chapter, I have profoundly argued that the nationalist ideologies embedded into civic policies favour one culture over others, similar to practices in France. The UK also seeks uniformity, promoting its nationalist ideology through civic integration measures.

Furthermore, drawing from extensive theoretical literature, personal experience, and information gathered from interviews, I have argued that the civic integration approach in the UK is primarily intended to minimise the number of immigrants. Recent changes in integration policies, such as the introduction of a Tier system in visa categories, the abolition of Post-Study Work (PSW) visas for international students, the ban on student-dependent visas, and the increased income thresholds and screenings in family reunification, all are the evidence to support this argument. In conclusion, I have highlighted the detrimental impacts of civic integration policies, demonstrating that these measures serve more as tools for controlling immigration than for genuinely promoting integration.

Chapter Three: Research Methodologies

3.1. Introduction

My experience as a Nepalese migrant and my journey to integration in the UK has played an important role in the choice of this dissertation's topic and has informed my methods as a researcher who studies fellow-country migrants. In this chapter, along with the research methods, I discuss the opportunities and constraints arising from occupying the researcher's dual position within this research. Like Pierre Bourdieu's approach when he studied the academic world in his work- Homo Academicus, I also want to situate my research in the context of my journey (Bourdieu 1989). Similarly, my method can be viewed as an autoethnography intertwined with my lived experience and intellectual accountability in a similar way as Avtar Brah did when reflecting on her life and work (Back and Brah 2012). Thus, my journey from a high-skill migrant to a migrant researcher closely aligns with the real-life integration journey of the research subjects signifying the liveliness of my methods (Back 2007).

This chapter outlines the methodological approaches I have employed to explore the immigration and integration experiences of Nepalese migrants within the context of UK immigration and integration policies. Drawing on my personal experiences of over 16 years as an immigrant, including the adaptation to the multicultural environment of the UK, the processes of naturalisation and acquiring British citizenship, this chapter critically examines the policy constraints and their impacts. To enhance the rigour of this research, I have incorporated two case studies: one detailing the tragic suicide of a fellow migrant and another describing the forced deportation of my roommate. These case studies have been carefully presented to highlight the early challenges and policy constraints faced by fellow migrants during their integration process. By grounding the methodology in both personal experiences and real-world contexts, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and complexities inherent in the immigration and integration journey of four different visa categories of Nepalese in the UK.

In addition to this, the chapter delves into the immigration pathways from Nepal to the UK, covering various trajectories including those of Gurkhas, highly skilled individuals, students, and dependents, while also considering factors such as age, ethnicity, education, caste, gender, and visa status. It explains the rationale behind employing purposive and snowball sampling techniques, chosen for their effectiveness in identifying and reaching specific individuals within different visa categories. By conducting 36 in-depth interviews across different categories of Nepalese migrants and interviewing the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Nepalese Embassy in

London, this chapter underscores the significance of these methods in capturing a diverse range of migration experiences and perspectives.

Furthermore, the chapter details the data-gathering techniques and the use of analytical tools such as thematic and narrative analysis. I used these techniques to systematically analyse and interpret the rich narratives collected through the in-depth interviews. The thematic analysis allowed me to identify the common patterns and themes across the interviews, while narrative analysis provided a deeper understanding of individual migrant stories and real-life integration experiences. By combining these analytical approaches, the chapter demonstrates a comprehensive exploration of the migration and integration journeys of Nepalese individuals in the UK, reinforcing the qualitative research methodology underpinning this research.

As mentioned in the first paragraph of this chapter, my dual role as both researcher and research subject has significantly influenced this study. To fully grasp the rationale behind this research, it is essential to understand my entire migration journey and the motivations driving this inquiry. Therefore, it is important to link my present research to my migration motives from 16 years ago in Nepal, particularly the unforgettable conversation I had with my late father. This reminiscence provides a meaningful context that bridges my personal experiences with the objectives of this research, highlighting the deep-rooted motivations and personal connections that have shaped this study.

3.2. Recalling the Reminiscences

My father, who died at the age of 86 in December 2022 while I was working on this thesis, had been anxious hearing my decision to emigrate to the UK for a permanent settlement in 2007. His main concern was whether I could settle in a foreign land, where none of our families and relatives was there. He was particularly concerned with how I would adapt to a new life vastly different from our own and whether I could find adequate support in that new society.

'What about the others?' His interrogation was towards my wife and my son. He seemed to have been more concerned about them. Giving him some assurance, I said they would join me once I settled there. 'Are you going on your own then?' he asked. 'Yes, for now', I replied. Yet, I could see his unease persisted.

I did not know what he had thought of me, but during our family meetings, he turned the table to me with serious questions: 'How can you live with Gore?' The term 'Gore' is used in Nepal to

describe Western white people. Gore means white in the skin. His questions were related to how I would reconcile the cultural and societal differences that would inevitably arise in that new place.

I remember answering many questions and concerns raised by other family members. They were unconvinced but somehow confident that I would be okay. Yet, my father had not been convinced at all. His major concern was how I would mix up with unknown people in an unknown land- the land of Gore, whose language, culture, food, and life would differ entirely from ours. He had asked me about the language the Gore speak, the food they eat, the religion and culture they follow, and the support I would get from them.

He had warned me, 'Think it very seriously before you plan ahead'.

I explained to him that Nepal had fewer opportunities and was going through a tough time, while the UK would offer a better life with more opportunities and financial freedom. He disagreed with me but had no choice but to accept my decision. I briefly explained to him everything that I had learned. He had nodded his head to my remarks about my confidence in the language; however, he had yet to be satisfied explaining the work, religion, and cultural norms I would be following and the facilities I could access.

My father had no experience crossing the country's border. However, he had migrated from his birthplace- the mountainous region to the southern part- the Terai, and from there to the capital-Kathmandu. Not only my father, but our entire family, had never crossed the border for any reason. They had lived their tradition and their way of life within the country. As an exception, among the siblings of our grandparents, I was the one who was planning to migrate to a foreign land, the land of Gore- the UK.

Although they had heard about the British army (the Gurkhas) and some traders travelling to the UK, they were unaware of the people migrating to the UK for permanent settlement. On the one hand, those days were different from today as access to the internet was not everyone's cup of tea. On the other, my father's generation was not very keen on migrating across the ocean for any opportunities.

Those 16 years-old conversations are still fresh in my memory. My father's contemplations against my decision are still echoed in my ears. I can still vividly remember what he had been after. I still remember convincing my father by giving examples of his migration. I explained his progress by migrating from the mountain to the Terai and then to the capital city. I had served the examples explaining how we all had opportunities to access better education, health care, employability, and wider communities in new places we had migrated. I tried to convince him that migration offers

better opportunities, though it is full of challenges. I tried to convince him, arguing that my migration would lead to greater prosperity, improved living conditions, and advanced educational opportunities for myself and my son.

'How much do you want to study? There are also good universities and institutions in Nepal, no? He seemed so curious about my study-related interest that what I said would be better in the UK. Then, gesturing to my achievement in MA (the king of Nepal awarded me the gold medal for being the first in MA Sociology at university), he asked me what next, I wanted to do. I was unclear, but I blurrily told him I would study further. How further was not clear to us. It was unclear until 2020, even a decade or more after I arrived in the UK.

Although I have encountered numerous difficulties along the way, I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to pursue higher education in the United Kingdom. It seems more than a coincidence that I not only migrated to the UK but also subsequently chose to study migration within the UK. Occasionally, particularly since my father's passing, I contemplate whether my aspirations were inevitable and rooted in a deeper, intrinsic desire!

Although I could not answer all the questions raised by my father about my migration plan; by posing similar questions to the interviewees in my research, I have aimed to fulfil the objectives of the current study. However, the one question from my father that I could not answer was regarding the nature of my continued studies. Had I been able to share with him the successes I have achieved in my education, it would have eased many of his concerns about my life in this foreign country. But sadly! It is now too late to provide him with those answers.

I realised that the questions and concerns my father had raised before my emigration held significant relevance and validity in light of my experiences after immigrating to the UK. It emerged to me that my father's experiences with migration, even within our home country's borders, formed the basis for his migration experiences. These memories later manifested as inquiries he directed towards me, primarily centring around the initial settlement and integration hurdles I may encounter in the UK. This connection between my father's inquiries and my post-immigration encounters has fuelled my determination to research this topic further. It struck me that while his questions may not have been unique to him, they resonated with many fellow Nepalese immigrants in the UK. These shared concerns and uncertainties during the early stages of integration provided a compelling backdrop for my research.

In the following section, I intend to establish a link between my father's reservations and the broader landscape of integration uncertainties experienced by Nepalese immigrants like me in the UK. This linkage has been crucial as it has underscored the significance of my research and

highlighted the common thread in the experiences of my fellow migrants. By analysing how my father's queries and worries aligned with Nepalese immigrants' broader challenges during their initial settlement and integration in the UK, I aimed to uncover general themes and patterns within this context.

3.3. Early Integration Predicaments

The answers to why and how I was motivated for the current research stem from the initial immigration and integration challenges faced by myself and the Nepalese communities in the UK. These challenges spanned from a combination of various factors ranging from the visa categories, motives for migration, and the policy requirements set for pre-emigration in Nepal to post-immigration in the UK. The most common challenges everyone underwent were related to the unfamiliarity with the local culture, inefficiency in the English language, employability, financial crisis, lack of support, family separation, coping with feelings of isolation, and managing the mental stress that came with it all.

Along with the familial and financial pressures, specifically, the policies and requirements for essential tasks such as opening a bank account, obtaining a National Insurance number (NI), registering with a local healthcare provider (General Practitioner or GP), acquiring a mobile phone contract, and finding suitable housing proved overwhelming. The mandatory annual income threshold of £36,000 and pursuing a "high-skill" job presented significant challenges, especially to those who came on a highly skilled visa. The "No recourse of public funds" stamp on this category of visa, further hindered the ability to access financial assistance from the public sector (Office 2009).

In my personal experience, as a highly skilled professional, who came to contribute to the British labour market, it felt as though I was barred from fully participating in the country's workforce. These hardships extended to various aspects of daily life, including my social mobility, and navigating a new culture. In these moments, I often recalled my father's curiosity about adapting to a new place, further amplifying the emotional and financial burdens. As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, the cases of suicide and forced deportation resulted from challenges that failed to cope.

I must acknowledge that my experiences were not unique; many of my fellow immigrants shared their experiences of encountering various challenges depending on their visa categories. While I have discussed their real-life integration stories in chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 of this thesis, in the below section, I present some narratives to highlight the early predicaments of the settlement

process that most of the respondents underwent. This illustration aims to enhance understanding of these individuals' journeys while adapting to their new lives in the UK.

Mr B shared his frustration, expressing that had his wife agreed, he would have chosen to return to Nepal within two months after they arrived in the UK. He expressed his difficulties in tasks such as locating suitable schools for their children, finding employment opportunities for both him and his wife, navigating the process of registering for general practitioner services, and finding accommodation and schools for their daughter. He admitted that he had come close to booking a ticket back to Nepal due to these challenges.

If my wife had agreed, I would have returned to Nepal within 2 months of our arrival. I struggled so much with things like finding schools for kids, working for myself and my wife, registering for GP and so on. Honestly, I almost booked a ticket to return to Nepal- Mr B.

In Chapter 6, I have extensively documented Ms C's case, providing a detailed account of her experiences. According to her narrative, her husband, who arrived in the UK on a student visa, tragically took his own life due to difficulties adjusting to life in the country during his settlement period. Additionally, she recounts the distressing ordeal she faced with the Home Office, which almost drove her to self-harm. This period marked a profoundly challenging and deteriorating situation for her.

I can't tell you how I felt when the Home Office tried to deport me after my husband committed suicide. They said the dependent has no right to remain when the main applicant does not exist. They gave me unnecessary tension that I thought once to commit suicide, you know- Ms C.

Apart from this tragic story, I want to present two specific case studies- suicide and deportation. Both were related to the highly skilled visa category.

In 2007, the Nepalese community in the UK, particularly highly skilled individuals faced a tragedy. An IT engineer, who had come to the UK on a highly skilled visa committed suicide for facing challenges associated with the settlement process. This despair reflected broader struggles within the community, especially among the highly skilled Nepalese. In a parallel incident in 2010, a highly skilled Nepalese migrant (who used to be my roommate), was arrested in Belfast for doing a low-skilled restaurant job. He was arrested, blindfolded, handcuffed, and put in a deportation centre. Despite holding a highly skilled visa, he was unlawfully deported after a two-year legal battle.

Those two incidents sparked concerns about the acceptability of low-skilled work for such visa holders. These cases prompted fear and revaluation among Nepalese skilled migrants, urging a shift in settlement strategies. Witnessing these incidents first-hand fuelled my desire to research my fellow migrants and their everyday integration experiences. These stories, coupled with my personal experiences, catalysed my research motivation. I became driven to delve deeper into the complexities of immigrant integration, aiming to shed light on the various factors contributing to successful or challenging integration experiences among Nepalese immigrants in the UK.

Considering the Gurkhas' plea, the government implemented special policy changes in 2004 and 2009, allowing retired Gurkhas to migrate to the UK. With high expectations for a better future, improved healthcare, and superior retirement plans, many Gurkhas embarked on their journey to the UK. However, their hopes were soon dashed upon arrival. They encountered numerous obstacles, including challenges with English language proficiency, unfamiliarity with local culture and laws, and difficulties accessing major services such as housing, healthcare, and education for their children. Additionally, issues related to family reunification compounded their struggles.

The frustration and disappointment experienced by Mr L, who found himself far from the promises he was given, deeply resonated with me. His stories of unmet expectations and the hurdles that he faced became a powerful catalyst for my research into the integration of Gurkhas in the UK. By emphasising this factor, I was driven to explore and address the complexities and barriers affecting their integration journey.

When my nambaries said that the British listened to our plea and that now we could migrate to the UK and have a better-retired life, I was so excited and overwhelmed. Not only me, but my wife and son and son-in-law were also so excited. We all wanted to come together, but unfortunately, my son and son-in-law were not qualified to migrate with us. Only my wife and I made this journey to the UK, hoping to get more. More pensions, better health care, and other facilities. Now, I realise that our hopes have been dashed and we have been betrayed. Where is a better house for us? This is an old council flat; it is like a small prison for us. We don't know English, so we don't mix with others. Don't ask about the health services. We need to wait ages to get one GP appointment, yet we cannot show all our illnesses at a time. I am fed up with this. My son has applied several times to join us, but every time he applies, his visa gets rejected. So, you can imagine how the two of us at this old age must be living in this unfamiliar world. I regret my decision to migrate here- Mr L.

Apart from these, it is worth stating a frustrating experience of Dr Chhetri, a senior paediatrics consultant from Nepal, who moved to the UK in 2020 as a dependent of his nurse wife. He echoed his frustration regarding the stringent policy requirements for obtaining a license to practice as a

health practitioner. As stated in Chapter 5, he expressed his belief that his qualifications and extensive experience should be sufficient to establish him as a senior doctor, emphasising that the mandatory English language examination hindered his opportunity to find a job in his area of expertise. He pointed out that many individuals, including himself, had been unable to secure employment due to the challenging English language requirement set for this category of visa holders. According to him, being a doctor and passing an English language test are separate aspects that should not be equated.

I don't understand why they need such high scores on the English language test. And this is only for the licence purpose. Because of this rule, many health professionals, like me, have been unable to serve NHS, which still needs many health professionals- Dr C.

Based on the information gathered from interviews and case studies, it is evident that many Nepalese immigrants faced numerous difficulties. As mentioned above, this sparked my curiosity and made me question the prospects and integration of this community in the UK. This curiosity, which ultimately became the bedrock of the present research, originated from my personal experiences regarding the process of immigration and integration in the UK. Curiosities concerning the Nepalese community in the UK, employment prospects, potential language barriers, treatment of immigrants by British people and policies, and the integration concern for my family always occupied my thoughts and have continued to do so until today. As argued by Marvasti (2004), this innate curiosity resonated strongly within me, driving my interest in understanding and explaining the everyday integration experiences of Nepalese migrants in the UK. At this point, I can argue that my research curiosities were not any less effective than my father's curiosities, both of which have equally motivated me for the current study.

Additionally, over the past 16 years, my active involvement within the Nepalese diaspora has enabled me to cultivate strong personal and professional relationships. Through these connections, I've gained valuable insights into the settlement and integration experiences of various categories of Nepalese migrants in the UK. My engagement with Nepalese organisations, coupled with close collaboration with the Nepalese embassy in the UK, has facilitated me to build up extensive professional networks across various sectors and understand ongoing settlement predicaments. Furthermore, during my PhD journey, I identified a significant information gap in research regarding the integration of Nepalese migrants. These all fuelled my motivation to delve deeper into understanding the real-life integration experiences of my fellow migrants in the UK.

From this perspective, considering my dual role: as a research subject and a researcher, as argued by Bourdieu (1989b), my positionality can be seen as an important dimension of this research. The subsequent section contextualises my dual role positionality.

3.4. Negotiating Dual Roles as a Migrant and the Migrant Researcher

As both the subject and the object of this study, I play a unique dual role in this research. As the object – a Nepalese migrant living in the UK –, my research focussed on the integration experiences of other Nepalese migrants. This allowed me to gain a first-hand insider perspective within the community I was studying (Bourdieu 1989a). Simultaneously, my position as the subject of the study – as a sociological researcher – also offered me a broader perspective from outside the community, enabling me to view the topic from different angles (Merton 1972).

This subject/object, insider/outsider dichotomy has become very important in interpretive social research, especially where interpretation of the sociocultural phenomenon is required (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012b). My positionality helped me to interpret, analyse and understand the perspectives of different categories of Nepalese migrants regarding their common experience. It also helped me to analyse the various perspectives of different groups, and the intersectionality of various factors intertwined in the social phenomenon. This is what Bourdieu describes as ''necessary perspectivism'' (Kenway and McLeod 2004:531). For example, speaking the same language (Nepali) as most of the research participants, sharing similar socio-cultural norms and values, knowing taboos, and understanding caste and ethnic hierarchy and their informal power structure offered plenty of ease to me while conducting this research (Chavez 2008). As an insider in the community, my experiences and insights brought a valuable perspective while interpreting different factors, such as different pathways of Nepalese migrants to the UK, their background, education and employability status, gender roles and age effect in migration decisions. In a way, my positioning in the current research has been very similar to Pierre Bourdieu's positioning when he studied the academic world in Homo Academicus (Bourdieu 1989), a world he was also part of.

Moreover, my positionality as an insider allowed me to establish rapport and trust with the participants more easily. As I shared a similar background, culture, and language with them, an immediate sense of familiarity facilitated open and candid discussions during the interviews (Sinha and Back 2014). Apart from Gurkhas' wives, most of the participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences and challenges, knowing I could relate to their journey. This insider status deepened my understanding of their integration process and ensured their voices were accurately represented in the research (Merton 1972). At this point, I assumed my research participants as my co-researchers and co-investigators because, with their sense of sharing real-life experiences, it has been possible to conclude this qualitative investigation.

During the interviews and informal conversations, I not only asked the questions and listened to their answers, but I closely observed their expressions and body language to gain valuable insights into their unique journeys. Through interviews, I captured their words and interpreted their emotions and actions, which proved crucial in understanding their experiences holistically (Skinner 2012). Listening to their voices, typing their words, and reflecting on their emotions alongside facilitated a deeper understanding of their stories. Then I realised the importance of the art of listening (Back 2007). The strong rapport and constructive relationships between myself as the researcher and my fellow migrants- my interviewees enriched the interpretation of their experiences. This approach enabled me to connect authentically with their immigration and integration journeys, unveiling the challenges, successes, and emotions that underpin their stories.

However, addressing potential biases and maintaining objectivity was crucial (Connor, Copland, and Owen 2018). Scholars have argued that a researcher's reflexivity is vital in social research because it helps enhance the quality and credibility of the study by acknowledging and addressing the researcher's biases, assumptions, and subjectivity. Since I followed such an approach in this research, it was important to keep reflecting on my position as a Nepalese PhD student when I encountered and interviewed Nepalese migrants, as I gathered data and later when I analysed them. I considered reflexive analysis the first step to obtaining further insights into how my position as the researcher and the research impact the production of knowledge (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012a). I tried to neutralise the possibility of influences, as the qualitative researcher, like me, is more interested in the respondent's views than in reflecting a respondent's concerns (Bryman 2021a).

In the meantime, I was also conscious of unknowingly imposing my values, beliefs and perception of biases on the research participants (Merton 1972). While my shared background with the participants provided valuable insights, I consciously tried to set aside my personal experiences during data analysis and interpretation, employing a reflexive approach to ensure objectivity and rigour. By constantly challenging and addressing my subjectivity, I aimed to produce a balanced and nuanced understanding of the immigration and integration experiences of Nepalese migrants in the UK while maintaining the integrity and validity of the study. To do this, I constantly engaged in self-reflection and critical examination of my own biases and preconceptions throughout the research process (Sinha and Back 2014). I made a conscious effort to set aside my personal experiences during data analysis and interpretation, employing a reflexive approach to ensure the objectivity and rigour of the study. By acknowledging and addressing my subjectivity, I aimed to produce a balanced and nuanced understanding of the immigration and integration experiences of Nepalese migrants in the UK. These practices helped me to enhance the validity of my data and the ethical rigour of my work.

3.5. Use of Qualitative Methods and In-depth Interviews

The choice of which method to employ depends upon the nature of the research problems (Creswell 2009; Hashemi and Babaii 2013). Depending on the subjectivity of the research problem and the objective of the research, social researchers can adopt qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods. However, social phenomena like migration and integration, which are often complex and influenced by many interconnected subjective factors, such as individual motives for migration, age, gender, religion, sense of belonging, ethnicity and nationality, suit within the subjects of qualitative research. In my case, in this specific study, to reach the depth of how culture, ethnicity, gender, geographical region, and visa categories have influenced the overall immigration journeys of different categories of Nepalese; it was very important to employ qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods, and tools such as interviews, case studies and ethnographic observations, allowed me to delve deeply into various intersections affiliated with their migration experiences, emotions, sense of belonging and attachments of Nepalese migrants. This in-depth exploration helped me understand and comprehend the complexities and nuances of their integration process (Hammarberg, Kirkman, and De Lacey 2015).

Specifically, qualitative interviews have been widely used tools in migration scholarship, enabling researchers to explore the migrants' perspectives on integration (Robinson 2009; Valentin 2012a; Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz 2018). Highlighting the significance of interviews, Donald A. Ritchie has stated, that ''the oral history provides an opportunity of deeper understanding that leads to action and ultimately helps change the world'' (Ritchie, Thompson, and Bornat 2018:179). Similarly, according to Bryman and Back, in-depth interviews are important techniques to collect every nuances of verbal data (Back 2007; Bryman 2021a). Emphasising the importance of uses of interviews in qualitative research, many scholars have signalled towards the in-depth interviews as the main tools for data collection especially to study the new and under-researched areas, such as Nepalese migrants' integration experience in the UK (Creswell 2009; Peters and Halcomb 2015a).

As stated by Tim May, ''interviews yield rich insights into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings'' (May 2001a:120). In line with Tim May's argument, I also needed to reach into the depth of Nepalese migrants' emotions, sense of belonging, expression, and experiences, thus, from this point of view, I considered the interviews the best-fit data collection method for this research. Additionally, this method allowed my interviewees to respond openly to questions while providing a structured framework for better comparability, distinguishing it from structured and unstructured methods (May 2001b). Thus, using interviews was crucial for me as it allowed me to maintain a balance between allowing participants

to share their insights freely while ensuring reliability in comparing and analysing the data effectively.

I conducted all together 36 in-depth interviews focusing on different trajectories: Gurkhas, individuals who migrated under the highly skilled visa category, and those who migrated to the UK through the student visa route. Additionally, I interviewed with Nepalese women on dependent visas, recognising the distinct significance of their migration and integration experiences. To ensure proportionate representation based on the relative population sizes of each group, I employed a strategic participant selection process. Specifically, I interviewed 11 Gurkha men, 9 men who migrated under the highly skilled visa, and 9 participants (7 men and 2 women) from the student visa category. Regarding the dependent visa group, I conducted 7 interviews—2 with Gurkha women, 3 with dependents of highly skilled migrants, and 2 with dependents of students. This careful distribution of interviews across different visa categories aimed to provide a balanced and representative sample, thereby enhancing the reliability and robustness of my qualitative data. In this way, the sampling strategy was designed to capture a diverse and proportionate range of experiences, reflecting the varied visa routes through which Nepalese migrants have entered the UK, contributing to the overall reliability and validity of the study's findings.

In addition to the 36 interviews conducted with Nepalese migrants across various visa categories in the UK, I also conducted an interview with an official at the Nepalese Embassy in London. My aim was to explore the role of the embassy as a diplomatic body in supporting the integration of Nepalese migrants into UK society. For this purpose, I interviewed the Deputy Head of Mission at the Nepalese Embassy in London to gain insights into the embassy's involvement in this process.

To conduct interviews with the Gurkhas, initially, it was not easy to establish contact with them for several reasons. Firstly, many of them were old- over 70s and owned old handsets with pay-as-you-go sim cards and were not interested in responding to calls from unfamiliar people, the ones out of their close circles. They normally did not want to give a call-back, which was linked to the cost. Furthermore, some of them had poor hearing issues making it even more challenging to establish contact via phones. On top of these all, as many of them lived in council buildings or in social housing, it was not easy for me to reach them because gaining entry to these areas required navigating administrative barriers and local restrictions. Overall, at some stage, these factors posed significant obstacles in reaching out to the Gurkhas for interviews. Despite these initial challenges, by using my personal linkage, social networks, and the benefit of speaking the Nepali language, I established a good relationship with them, managed to visit their homes, and organised frequent informal meetings for familiarisation, then I could conduct interviews.

Being an active member of a Highly Skilled Nepalese Society, which has been recently registered as a charity under the name of the Society of Nepalese Professionals-UK (SONP), I was able to establish good linkage within the highly skilled Nepalese community and strengthened our diasporic network. As a dedicated member of SONP, I've had privileged access to fellow migrants struggling with common challenges such as employment, housing, education for children, visa extensions, and family reunification. Our shared experiences have fostered meaningful dialogue and support, enhancing our sense of belonging and resilience in the face of migration and integration hurdles. This active participation not only enabled me to collect first-hand stories and insights associated with highly skilled migrants, but it also helped me to establish a good linkage with Nepalese students, especially males.

However, among all categories, connecting with women was relatively harder due to pre-existing cultural barriers especially due to gender variation. Because of traditional cultural intricacies, it was not easy for me, as a male to meet with the female. There was hesitation, stigma and privacy always posed difficulties in reaching them and conducting interviews. Despite the challenges, by visiting their homes when their husband or any other members were present, I managed to meet with them frequently to familiarise myself and the subject of my research with them. In my initial meetings, I just opened up informal conversations and won their trust (Peters and Halcomb 2015a). By visiting them more frequently compared with other interviewees, I established a good connection and became able to conduct interviews with them. In this way, despite the obstacles, female respondents also openly shared their experiences associated with their immigration and integration journeys.

The interview protocol consisted of open questions based on common themes such as **a)** motives for migration, **b)** everyday life in the UK, **c)** sense of integration and belonging, **d)** access to health, housing, education and employment, and **e)** acquisition of identity as a British citizen. Apart from these, by utilising the freedom and flexibility of types of questions, as argued by Bryman (2021a) and May (2001a), many other questions were asked which were linked with the religion, caste, ethnicity and cultural practices, discrimination, as well as their transnational relationship, diasporic network and local connections.

However, depending on the migrants' categories, in some cases, I changed and modified some interview questions. Apart from some introductory questions, other questions, such as qualification, skills, and training, were given less priority while interviewing Gurkhas and their families. In contrast, these were the major focus while interviewing other categories like students and highly skilled migrants. Similarly, the questions about family reunification were not very common with education-related migrants because most were either single or had already been accompanied by their partners. So, while asking such questions, I intended to design a tentative

framework that provided the freedom to focus on the research objectives and capture meaning during the interviews (Mills 1959). While doing so, on the one hand, I examined the temporal, personal, familial, and social factors that influenced their migration decision. On the other, I focussed on the integration patterns influenced by the integration policies in hand.

Social researchers face the challenge of identifying appropriate informants and initiating contact with them for interviews, and they have noted that qualitative researchers often implement sampling techniques to tackle this issue (May 2001b; Turner 2010). I also chose to employ purposive and snowball sampling techniques because they allowed for a targeted selection of participants who possess the specific knowledge and experiences relevant to my research questions, ensuring a depth of insight and understanding within the studied community. The subsequent section highlights the use of sampling, and the types used for selecting the respondents for interviews.

3.5.1. Use of Samples

I employed purposive and snowball sampling through the established links with respondents through my networks and relationships (Abubakar, Etikan, and Alkassim 2015). Since the history of Nepalese migration to the UK is very short compared to other migrant communities, I considered only the first-generation migrants in the sampling. As discussed by Abubakar et al. (2015), by employing personal, professional and public networks and chain referral, I selected the most suitable Nepalese migrants who could contribute to exploring the real-life integration experiences in the UK. To identify potential respondents for interviews, firstly, I made initial contact with individuals who were deemed likely to align with the objectives and scope of my research (Gill et al. 2008). During these initial interactions, I interviewed them and asked for their recommendations on other potential respondents with relevant experiences. Based on their recommendations, I proactively phoned them (in most cases), reached out to the suggested individuals, and explained the purpose and significance of the research. I then requested their participation in the study through interviews. The decision to arrange interviews was based on the relevance of their insights to the research objectives and the potential value they could add to the overall findings. This technique helped me to find information-rich respondents who could provide reliable sources of answers to the research questions. Additionally, it eased me to select information-rich participants who could share their real-life experiences about their motive for migration, an adaptation to the British culture, feeling of belongingness, opportunities they got and the challenges they faced, and many other factors involved in their incorporation process in the UK.

As argued by Abubakar et al. (2015) and Luborsky and Rubinstein (1995), to make my sampling more reliable, I have tried to match their representation based on the different characteristics of the

participants. I aimed to ensure their proportional representation by considering factors such as age, caste, culture, place of origin in Nepal, and employment status. On top of that, I have tried to represent different categories of Nepalese residing in various boroughs and counties in the UK. Taking into account, the settlement patterns of the Gurkhas, I selected participants from different garrison areas where retired Gurkhas have settled. Similarly, recognising London as a prominent hub for labour market participation, I focused on interviewing skilled migrants residing in and around the areas of London. Furthermore, I considered the proximity of universities and job opportunities in London, and then I chose a higher number of education-related migrants who were living near the city.

I tried to include diverse respondents with varied backgrounds and perspectives. Moreover, by using my own existing network with different Nepalese organisations and stakeholders such as the Non-Resident Nepalese Association (NRNA), Society of Nepalese Professionals (SONP), Nepalese Embassy and Britain Nepal Chamber of Commerce (BNCC), I gathered information from the organisational level as well.

My initial aim was to interview at least 15 participants from each visa trajectory. However, during my upgrade examination (from MPhil to PhD), the examiners advised me that about 30 participants, in total, would be ideal for my type of research. Along with their suggestion, while conducting interviews, I realised the repetition of similar information from my respondents. Then I realised the situation of saturation of the information (Bryman 2021b). Saturation, in the context of my research, meant that no additional information was being found. In other words, the responses to the questions related to their motives for migration, settlement experiences and integration process in the UK were similar in many ways with many respondents and their answers were repetitive.

3.6. Analysing My Data

Depending on the nature of the data, social researchers can apply different analytical tools and techniques because there is no fixed set of rules which can be used in a common (Braun, Virginia and Clarke 2013; Bryman 2021b). Giving the freedom of choice in analytical tools and techniques to the researcher Silverman (2011a:58) also has stated that a ''host of competing approaches can be employed in analysing qualitative data''. Based on this consideration, in my process of analysing interview data, I followed a dynamic approach that acknowledges the absence of a fixed set of rules for social researchers; however, I adopted thematic analysis and narrative analysis as my main techniques.

According to Bryman (2021) thematic analysis is often used in an imprecise way without a clear method of data analysis. However, I meticulously followed the thematic analytical process to analyse my data. To begin, I took the first step by keenly immersing myself in the life stories shared by my participants. I repeatedly read the field notes and my diary. Similarly, I repeatedly listened to the audio that I had recorded during the interviews.

This extensive listening, repeating, and re-listening process highlighted the significance of enhancing the skill of attentive listening as an essential quality for a social researcher (Back 2007). As argued by Back, I also argue here that by listening to their narration deeply helped me to focus on their real-life stories, and personal accounts shared by my participants. This method not only helped me to understand how they made sense of their experience and their everyday life in the UK but also enhanced my capacity to recognise the themes that emerged from their stories. This aligned with the insights of scholars who emphasise the iterative process of familiarisation with data, initial code generation, theme identification, review, evidence gathering, and data presentation (Braun, Virginia and Clarke 2013; Charmaz 2006). By adhering to these systematic steps, I ensured a rigorous and structured analysis of my data.

In parallel, I recognised the importance of data reduction, which involved selecting, simplifying, and transforming data from transcripts and notes (Crotty 1998; Taylor and Trujillo 2001). This process, encompassing activities like coding and discovering themes, commenced before data collection and persisted during and after it. Alongside data reduction, I used data display techniques to efficiently organise and present the information assembled from the stories. This involved employing diverse tools such as extended texts, tables, flowcharts, and networks to convey the patterns and connections within the data visually (Crotty 1998). Another important aspect of my data analysis was to display the data in an organised and compressed format so that the information gathered about the feelings, experiences, and other information about the real-life experience helped me understand the phenomenon (Blismas and Dainty 2003; Srivastava and Hopwood 2009a).

Moreover, as I progressed, I realised that the interpretation of the theme was pivotal. I immersed myself in the data and identified significant patterns and recurring concepts. Delving into the meaning of patterns, causal flows, explanations, and intentions aided me in uncovering deeper insights from the data (Adorjan and Kelly 2016). By contextualising the themes within broader social and cultural frameworks, I ensured my interpretations were grounded in the participants' actual words and stories. Comparing and contrasting different themes that emerged from different categories of narratives also allowed me to draw meaningful conclusions about various categories of migrants' experiences. This interpretive approach facilitated my understanding of the data and also contributed to testing the robustness, credibility, and confirmability of the derived meanings

thereby enhancing the overall validity of my analysis (Silverman 2011). Finally, this rigorous approach provided a nuanced understanding of the integration challenges faced by Nepalese immigrants in the UK.

Throughout this iterative process, I recognised the cyclic nature of the activities involved while analysing my data. Drawing and verifying conclusions became an ongoing task, spanning from the initiation of data collection and persisting until I finally submitted this thesis. This cyclic approach allowed me to continually refine and validate my interpretations by re-reading field notes, cross-referencing them with transcriptions, and ensuring the coherence of the narrative and thematic insights.

Here's a detailed description of how I analysed the data:

a. Transcription: Initially, I transcribed the recorded interviews or other data sources to ensure an accurate representation of the participant's narratives. The transcriptions were later translated into English, as all of my participants used Nepali as the communication medium during the interviews.

b. Coding: After transcribing the data, I coded, systematically assigning labels or codes to data segments. These codes captured important ideas, concepts, or themes from the participants' narratives.

c. Familiarisation: I familiarised myself with the coded data once coding was complete. This step involved immersing myself in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts, coding notes, and other relevant materials. This process helped me become intimately familiar with the data.

d. Theme identification: Next, I identified common themes from the coded data. The thematic analysis involved identifying recurring patterns, topics, or ideas that provided insights into the experiences of Nepalese migrants in the UK. These themes included motives for migration, challenges faced, cultural adaptation, social support, employment opportunities, or other relevant aspects.

e. Categorisation and interpretation: After identifying the themes, I categorised them into meaningful sets or groups. This step allowed me to organise the data coherently and facilitated further analysis. As I categorised the themes, I interpreted their significance by examining the connections, relationships, and implications they had for the experiences of Nepalese migrants in the UK.

This interpretive approach allowed me to capture the participants' nuances, complexities, and individual stories, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

3.7. Ethical Considerations and Limitations of the Study

As social research is an integral part of human societies and their everyday phenomenon, social researchers, at some point, may address the ethical issues during their research work (Crotty 1998; Silverman 2011a). It is also important that the individual researcher as well as the research institution, should follow ethical guidelines from the beginning of the research to the end of research publication. Additionally, while conducting research, a social researcher should be aware of society's norms, values, and belief systems. Many socio-cultural factors, such as caste, ethnicity, religion, and social hierarchy, must be considered. Particularly in ethnic minorities, like the Nepalese socio-cultural system, these factors have a high value. Considering this factor, for me, it was very important that I must follow research ethics to make any decisions which are right or in the interest of all who are directly or indirectly involved in my study (May 2001a).

The British Sociological Association has also highlighted ethics' need and significance in social research. Based on the Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee (REISC) requirements, the Goldsmiths University of London has set clear guidelines regarding maintaining the highest level of integrity and ethical responsibility. Therefore, based on these guidelines, I conducted fieldwork, gathered the information, stored the data, and published them by abiding by the law of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Thus, the research was planned to ensure integrity, transparency, and confidentiality.

In accordance with institutional guidelines and with sensitivity to participants' caste, ethnicity, political affiliations, and religious beliefs, during my field visit, I first obtained informed consent from all participants. For families whose experiences with suicide and deportation have been discussed in this thesis, I first explained my intention to include their cases and how these would be presented to demonstrate the challenges of integration. Regarding other participants, given the commonality of surnames within the Nepalese caste system, anonymity was largely preserved by using family names. However, even with consent, I have avoided revealing detailed personal information. So, I have anonymized their identities by using only the first letter of their family name, such as Mr. G or Ms. K. Since no participants with other gender identities were involved in the interviews, other than Mr and Ms, no additional initials were used. Despite the diverse backgrounds of Nepalese migrants presenting certain ethical challenges, I made efforts to address and mitigate these concerns in my research. These ethical considerations shaped the conduct of my PhD study.

In the context of highly skilled Nepalese migrants in the UK, I became acutely aware of the impact of their employability status (especially those engaged in so-called low-skill work) on their transnational hierarchy and relationships. Despite their expertise and qualifications in Nepal, many worked in ordinary jobs that didn't align with their skills and qualifications. For instance, a university lecturer from Nepal might do manual labour in a factory, and a first-class government official in Nepal might be working as a security guard. In such cases, they hesitated to reveal the status of their work to their families and relatives in Nepal. Even in the UK, these individuals felt uncomfortable discussing their work nature along with their relatives and friends, especially if they were involved in low-skill jobs. For this reason, I have tried to respect their confidentiality and not disclose their original identity. However, I have highlighted this kind of labour market opportunities, accessibility, and consequences of spatial integration status among these migrants.

Similar situations were also observed among Nepalese students who had obtained higher degrees in Nepal. Still, many were found engaged in low-paid manual work in the UK for many reasons, such as lack of recognition of their qualifications, skills and training, restricted working hours, and limited networking and socialisation time. Many students were involved in cash-in-hand daily wage work within small businesses owned by fellow migrants. Similarly, I realised power imbalance on some occasions while interviewing the young students, which is inherent among Nepalese cultures and relationships. While I have provided examples of such employability situations and possible discrimination, I have managed to minimise any potential legal implications that could affect their ongoing visa process and their settlement status.

During the interviews, I encountered challenges related to gender differentiation, particularly highlighted in Chapter 7 concerning the Gurkha women. As a male researcher, direct approaches to female respondents were not culturally appropriate. That needed the involvement of a mediator. As described in Chapter 7, when approaching and interviewing Gurkha women, I sought assistance from their male relatives. It was because, first those women were not fluent in the Nepali language, and second, they were hesitant in talking with an unfamiliar male individual. So, to facilitate the interview by translating Nepali, the interview language, into their local dialect and to make them feel safe and assured, I had to rely on the mediator. Although this kind of cultural barrier occasionally caused delays in the research progress, it finally provided valuable insights into the sociocultural status of these women.

During the entire research process, I was quite alert and aware of my positioning, including my experiences and philosophical standpoint (Creswell 2006; Holden and Lynch 2004; Wall 2015). To avoid my influence while interpreting and analysing the data, I have tried to remain neutral (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012b). From this aspect, there could be a minimal risk of interpersonal influence in this research. However, to avoid ethical issues, as Bryman (2021a) have

argued, I have been neutral in my positionality and tried to avoid my influence during the entire research journey.

3.8. Chapter Summary

In conclusion, in this chapter, I outlined the methods and tools employed in investigating the varying immigration and integration experiences of four different categories of Nepalese in the UK. Throughout this study, I discussed different conceptual frameworks of integration as a process and a policy. I connected my personal immigration and integration journey with the distinct trajectories of Nepalese migration to the UK. Drawing upon the reminiscence of nostalgic conversations with my father as the seed of my research motive, I tried to align my personal circumstances with fellow Nepalese migrants. Additionally, I illustrated how early integration and settlement challenges motivated me to study fellow migrants in the UK. In presenting my double role status as a migrant and a migrant researcher, I highlighted the transition and the delicate balancing of my positionality.

I articulated my philosophical standpoint and research approach. While doing so, I placed emphasis on the interpretive approach in social research. Based on the assumptions that knowledge is generated through the analytical interpretation of social phenomena, I signified applying the interpretive approach in the current research. This philosophical foundation justified applying the interpretive approach in my research methods and data collection techniques. To address the research objective effectively, I formulated multiple research questions and conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method.

The interviews focused on five main themes, including migration purposes and the sense of belonging in the UK. To thoroughly explore these themes, I conducted 36 in-depth interviews, using audio recording and note-taking tools to capture detailed and accurate data. I approached the respondents through various networks and personal relationships, making use of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. These methods were chosen for their effectiveness in identifying and accessing specific respondents within the Nepalese migrant community, ensuring a comprehensive representation of diverse experiences and perspectives.

In this chapter, I clearly stated my data analysis process, which involved transcribing the audio recordings, organising the information, and systematically coding and categorising the content to identify relevant themes. The use of thematic and narrative analysis allowed me to a nuanced interpretation of the data, connecting the identified themes with the multidimensional aspects of integration for Nepalese individuals in the UK. The thematic analysis helped me uncover common patterns and recurring themes across the interviews, while narrative analysis provided deeper

insights into individual stories and personal experiences, enriching the overall understanding of the integration process.

In this chapter, I emphasised the paramount importance of ethical considerations in my research. I adhered to the standard guidelines established by the British Sociological Association and the Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee (REISC), along with complying with GDPR requirements, ensuring that all aspects of the research process were conducted with the highest ethical standards. These guidelines provided a robust framework for addressing issues of confidentiality, informed consent, and the respectful treatment of participants. Despite rigorously following these ethical protocols, I encountered several unexpected ethical challenges. Particularly notable were the difficulties I faced when interviewing Gurkha women. Gender differences and language barriers presented significant obstacles, requiring a sensitive and adaptive approach. These interactions highlighted the complexity of ethical research in cross-cultural settings, where standard guidelines might not fully account for the nuanced dynamics of gender and communication.

I discussed my dual positionality in this chapter. As an insider researcher, my dual role added another layer of ethical complexity. While this position allowed for deeper insights and a more empathetic understanding of participants' experiences, it also necessitated a careful navigation of power imbalances. Maintaining a neutral and balanced approach was crucial in ensuring that my presence and preconceptions did not unduly influence the research process or outcomes. I consistently reflected on my positionality, striving to mitigate any potential bias and uphold the integrity of the research. By addressing and overcoming the ethical challenges encountered, particularly those related to gender and my positionality as an insider research dynamics, I not only adhered to established ethical standards but also contributed to the broader discourse on ethical practices in migration research.

Finally, the chapter concluded with my commitment to ethical rigour ensuring that the research was conducted with respect, integrity, and a deep consideration for the well-being of all participants.

Chapter Four: A Journey from Joining the British Army to Settling in Britain: Gurkhas' Migration and Integration in the UK

4.1. Introduction

I want to begin the introduction of this first analytical chapter by presenting a heart-touching narration of one of the Gurkhas. As said by him, for me it is crucial to first exemplify the historical context of the Gurkhas, before presenting their recent migration to the UK.

Well, before I tell you why we came to the UK, it is crucial to understand who we, Gurkhas, are. You must first understand our affiliation with the British Armed Forces, our sacrifices and our patriotic bonds with this country. I sacrificed 17 years of my life fighting for this country and its people. Without knowing this context, you may think we, Gurkhas migrated to the UK for nothing- Mr L

Yes, before we mistakenly think Gurkhas came to this country for nothing and their entire migration journey is not any special, for us, it is necessary to delve into the history. For 200 years, the United Kingdom and Nepal have had diplomatic relations based on the bravery and patriotism of the Nepalese soldiers known as the 'Gurkhas'. These soldiers have made a distinguished contribution to the British armed services, and many have given their lives in major wars and battles. The Gurkhas' loyalty to British imperialism and its people has been well known to the rest of the world, and they have been central to British rule. Considering Gurkhas' historic ties with the United Kingdom, this chapter delves into a comprehensive analysis of the historical context surrounding Gurkhas' recruitment into the British armed forces and their subsequent immigration to the UK.

The chapter commences by defining the term "Gurkha" to familiarise readers with its ethnocentric connotations and historical origins. It also explores the historical connection between British imperialism and Gurkhas' service in the British armed forces. Through a synthesis of information derived from an analysis of existing literature and the historical ties between Gurkhas and British imperialism, this chapter offers a comprehensive overview of Gurkhas' service in the British armed forces, their retirement scheme, recent policy changes, and their subsequent migration and integration in the UK. More specifically, as the main objective of this chapter, in light of the legislation change that allowed the Gurkhas to migrate to the United Kingdom, on the one hand, this chapter examines Gurkhas' immigration to the UK. On the other, against the backdrop of

integration policies- multiculturalism and the civic integration concept adopted by the UK, this chapter presents an in-depth exploration of Gurkhas' multidimensional integration experiences.

Drawing from in-depth interviews and their narratives, the chapter vividly depicts Gurkhas' real-life experiences as they settle in the UK and adapt to a new way of life, including their everyday livelihoods. By closely examining the Gurkha community, their sense of ethnic identity, and their integration patterns in the context of multicultural frameworks of the UK, the chapter analyses the positive effects of the policy on their integration journey. While doing so, this chapter then highlights the Gurkhas' heritage and celebration, sense of belonging, diasporic networks and ethnic connection which have helped to foster their integration within the Nepalese diaspora and also with the British societal fabric.

On many occasions, Gurkhas were found to participate in their cultural celebration through their ethnic organisations and enjoy the freedom of religious observation. Following secularism and religious tolerance in the UK, along with the initiation of other Nepalese diaspora, Gurkhas have been able to set up Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples, where they practise their religious values freely. Similarly, by practising their ethnic culture and martial heritage with their fellow Gurkhas, they have maintained their communal relationship, which has been essential during special occasions, for instance, to observing marriage ceremonies and also the death rituals. Through these, they have developed a good sense of belonging and ethnic cohesion, which was a positive signalling towards their integration.

Despite these all, due to their age, health condition and poor communication skills, most of them were found to have limited access to the broader social services and suffer from various disparities. Apart from this, the chapter critically evaluates the impacts of civic integration policies as the potential obstacle to Gurkhas' successful integration in the UK.

For many reasons, compared with other visa categories of Nepalese in the UK, Gurkhas were found to have slower and poorer integration outcomes. English language inefficiency has been seen as one of the major obstacles for them which has hindered their everyday livelihood at the local level and also has restricted them from acquiring British nationality. This has banned them from practising their political rights and accessing the major government services. In their own words, this situation has made them of nowhere- neither of Nepal nor the UK. The denial of citizenship choice has led to discrimination, and social stigma, and undermined the prestige of their sacrifice. These kinds of social barriers have persisted in their social mobility affecting their mental health status. Additionally, similar to other trajectories, the stringent civic requirements imposed on family reunification have adversely impacted Gurkha families, particularly their grown-up sons and daughters who wished to come to the UK to join their retired parents and be with them in the UK.

As stated above, without understanding the connotation of the term Gurkha and their affiliation with the British Armed Forces, it is not possible to navigate their entire migration to the UK. So, the subsequent section helps to familiarise with this context.

4.2. Understanding the Connotation of 'Gurkha' and Their Bond with Britain

The term 'Gurkha' is thought to have derived from "Gorkha," which was the name of one of the kingdoms in western Nepal where the late King Prithvi Narayan Shaha ruled nearly 220 years ago (Golay 2009; Pariyar 2020). The military force known as the 'Sainik' (soldier) in the Nepali language which served under the late King Prithvi Narayan Shaha in the Gorkha Kingdom, became known as the Gurkhas. They are still referred to as 'Gorkha Sainik' or 'Gorkha Army' in Nepal, and there has been a brigade of Nepalese army having the name (Gorakhanath Gana) or Gorkha brigade in Nepal. Thus, to highlight Gurkhas' bond with Britain, it is crucial to trace the history of when the British started recruiting Gurkhas into their armed forces during the colonial period in India.

The recruitment of Gurkhas into the British Army was rooted in a treaty signed between Nepal and the East India Company in 1815 (Adhikari et al. 2022; Gould 1999). The British East India Company first encountered the Gurkhas during their campaign in the Nepal-India War also known as the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-1816. As the Nepalese soldiers defeated the then East India Company, the British were impressed by their bravery and fighting skills. The then East India Company signed a treaty with the Nepalese authorities in 1815, which established the principle of Gurkha service in the British Army. The treaty allowed for the recruitment of Nepalese soldiers into the British military, where they proved to be valuable and trustworthy troops. Since being recruited into British regiments, Gurkhas have played a key role in the British armed forces by demonstrating their bravery and patriotism, making them highly respected as well as the most feared fighters (Gould 1999).

During their time in the military, they have participated in numerous battles and conflicts in India and worldwide. From the side of British allies, Gurkhas took part in wars in Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, and also in the Falklands. During the two World Wars, Gurkhas served on the front lines alongside their British allies, demonstrating their bravery and commitment to protecting the British flag and its land. The Gurkhas' front-line involvement in these and other battles proved to be a historical truth to their patriotism and their willingness to put their lives on the line in service of their country. Limbu (2015) argues that Gurkhas prefer to die than live a cowardly life. Limbu's argument has been proven true with the examples of the historical evidence of how Gurkhas sacrificed their lives for Britain and its people. During the First World War (1914-1918), over 120,000 Gurkhas

fought for Britain and its allies. Similarly, during World War II, Gurkhas were deployed in various capacities, including as jungle fighters in Burma and as part of the British fighters in Italian-occupied Ethiopia. Additionally, Gurkhas have served under the British flag in other notable battles and conflict zones. Especially, in the Second World War, a total of 131,000 Gurkhas were stationed in various infantry battalions (Gould 1999). Following the end of British rule in India in 1947, the Gurkhas became part of the British Army, and since then until today, they have been in service in the British armed forces (Kochhar-George 2010; Pariyar 2020).

Apart from the major wars and battles, the Gurkhas have demonstrated their high standard skills in peacekeeping as well. Their contributions to UN peacekeeping efforts in conflict regions in Asia and Africa further showcase their fighting skills and patriotism. The news of the (then) British prince Harry serving with the Gurkha battalion in Afghanistan in 2008 and his interest in becoming a Gurkha soldier received widespread media attention (BBC 2008; Lyall 2008). The Gurkhas' reputation for loyalty was also a major factor in their recruitment, as the British valued their commitment to duty and their willingness to lay down their lives for their country (Golay 2009). In fact, ''Gurkhas remain a much-celebrated part of the British Army'' (Kochhar-George 2010:44). This has been recognised and celebrated by various authorities and organisations, such as the British government and the Gurkha Welfare Trust.

They acknowledge the immense sacrifices made by the Gurkhas, who have shed their blood, sweat, and tears to protect the British monarch and its imperial interests. As a result, many Gurkhas have developed a deep emotional attachment to the UK. While I was working on my thesis, a significant number—4010 Gurkhas—were serving in various regiments of the British army, reflecting their strong bond with the country. The sacrifice of over 20,000 Gurkhas who died fighting for Britain and its empire further underscores their dedication to the UK and its people.

Scholars have argued that the Gurkhas have earned a reputation for their bravery and unwavering loyalty, contributing to their status as one of the most respected and admired groups of soldiers in the world (Gellner 2017; Pariyar 2020). To this day, the tradition of Gurkha service in the British Army continues to be seen as a testimony to the strong relationship between Nepal and the UK, which has reflected deep cultural and historical ties between the two countries. The close relationship between the Gurkhas and the British has often been cited as evidence of the bravery and loyalty of the Nepalese people, and the treaty between Nepal and the East India Company remains an important part of their shared history. As Adhikari et al. (2013) and (Kochhar-George (2010) have noted, the Gurkhas are a powerful symbol of the cultural exchange and cooperation that has characterised the relationship between the UK and Nepal for over two centuries.

Although the term "Gurkha" originally referred to Nepalese soldiers in the British Army, it has become a general identifier for Nepalese nationals in the UK, especially since the arrival of retired Gurkhas and their families (Adhikari et al. 2013). The arrival and settlement of retired Gurkha soldiers in the UK has further cemented this association. It is important to mention that the use of the connotation- "Gurkha" vividly reflects the deep historical and cultural ties between Nepal and the UK, underscoring a unique bond formed through military service and mutual respect (Gellner 2017). This widespread recognition means that many British people now use "Gurkha" to refer to all Nepalese migrants, regardless of their military background. Media portrayals, public commemorations, and personal interactions have reinforced this perception, making "Gurkha" synonymous with Nepalese identity in the British context.

From this perspective, the term Gurkha carries multifaceted meanings. And Gurkhas' migration to the UK also offers multidimensional avenues in migration research (Adhikari et al. 2013). It is, thus important to study the integration patterns of the Gurkhas as they represent a unique example of cultural exchange, and colonial ties with British imperialism through their involvement in the Armed Forces and migration in the UK. Despite the significant contributions that Gurkhas have made to this country, their settlement and integration issues in the UK have not received adequate attention in sociological research. Among many aspects, for me, it is crucial to understand how the soldiers of a non-Commonwealth nation happened to build up such distinct ties with the British flag, and how their entire migration has been shaped by any policies adopted by the UK.

Ware (2010) has argued that studying the settlement patterns and integration experiences of Gurkhas in the UK is a significant area of research when viewed through a sociological lens because Gurkhas' journey from becoming British soldiers to British residents offers researchers a wealth of information. In line with Ware, I also can argue that for sociologists and social researchers, the term 'Gurkha' provides an interesting lens through which to examine issues of transnationalism, dual identity, sense of belonging, and cultural exchange, particularly in the context of military service and cross-cultural relationships. From this aspect, presenting an overview of Gurkhas' migration to the UK opens an avenue for the current research.

4.3. Navigating Gurkhas' Migration to the United Kingdom

The changes in integration legislation in 2004 and 2009 allowed the Gurkhas who retired after 1997 – when the Gurkha Brigade headquarters moved from Hong Kong to Britain – to settle permanently in the UK. Although there have been a series of dialogues, negotiations and decisions between the two parties- (Nepal and the UK), these changes in the sectors of immigration and integration can be regarded as significant milestones towards Gurkhas' settlement process in the UK (Adhikari et al. 2013; Pariyar 2020). The migration of retired Gurkhas, their widows, and

families, including children under the age of 18, to the United Kingdom to make it their permanent home gained significant momentum, especially after the policy change of 2009 (Adhikari 2012; Gellner 2014; Laksamba, Adhikari, et al. 2016). As stated by these scholars, these individuals, who had served the British Empire with distinction, saw the UK as a place to spend their retirement, start a new life and provide a better future for their children. This was particularly true for the second generation of Gurkhas, who were born and raised in Nepal but held aspirations of living and building a life in the country where their parents had served (Pariyar 2020).

Understanding the complexities of the Gurkhas' migration and integration into the UK was essential for several reasons. Their journey was influenced by a variety of factors, including the duration of their service, age, retirement plans, ethnic background, and family networks. Each of these elements has played a significant role in shaping their unique experiences. The diverse motives for migration, the impact of policy interventions, and their settlement issues all contributed to the variation in their integration patterns and overall sense of belonging. Thus, by comprehending these intricacies, we can better appreciate the challenges they face and the resilience they demonstrate in their integration journey, ultimately informing more effective support and policies to aid their successful integration.

I was deeply interested in understanding the factors that motivated these elderly, retired, and physically ill Gurkhas to relocate to the UK, rather than spending their retirement with their families and relatives in Nepal. I was curious to discover what drove them to leave behind their wealth, property, social prestige, and familial ties and migrate to the UK to start their life from scratch again.

Drawing from the narratives shared by 11 Gurkhas, it was evident that their entire journey—from joining the British Armed Forces to retirement, motivations for migrating to the UK, visa processes, and subsequent settlement and integration journey, all displayed variations. Each Gurkha had unique motivations for migrating to the UK. Some sought better education and job prospects for their children, while others wanted to reunite with family already settled there or pursue a higher standard of living. A common thread, however, was the belief that their service to the British Empire had earned them the right to live in the UK. For many, their time in the British armed forces was the most productive period of their lives, fostering a strong connection to the country. During interviews, Gurkhas often cited aspirations for better healthcare, a more secure life, and improved education for their children. Additionally, some were motivated by the desire for equal pensions and facilities. These varied motives highlight the complex mix of personal and collective factors driving their migration.

While I was trying to establish a connection for the interview with Gurkhas in Southeast London, one of his fellow Gurkhas suggested that Mr SL could be a potential key informant who could share his experiences with his service in the British armed forces, migration to the UK, and current settlement status. I obtained his mobile number from a fellow Gurkha and attempted to contact him. Despite my several phone calls, there was no response. It was likely because he used older handsets and pay-as-you-go SIM cards. The only option was to persist in calling and securing a meeting date. Finally, after several attempts, I contacted him and agreed to meet for an interview.

He asked me to wait outside his flat, in one of the council houses in Southeast London, as he was coming on a bus. Following our conversation, it was not difficult for me to recognise him in a typical Nepali hat (Dhaka Topi). The old man, limping his foot, carrying a carrier bag of his grocery shopping, could see him coming towards me where he had asked me to wait. I smiled at him and acted as if I knew him well. I greeted him- Namaste! I confirmed his name, and that was him.

I followed him to his flat. Inside the flat, there was his ill wife sitting on the bed and coughing continuously. I could see the medicines scattered on a table near the bed. He said something to his wife in his dialect and offered me a seat next to the bed. Once he stored his shopping, he became ready to talk to me. First, I spent some time talking about back home and their families. After preparing my paperwork, I opened the conversation by asking him why he came to the UK.

So, before I tell you why I came to the UK, it is fundamental to talk about our service, our involvement and whom we worked for. Unless I tell you that I worked in the British armed forces for 17 years, you may think I came to the UK for nothing. Although I was in the service for 17 years, it was like 1700 years because we never knew whether we lived or died. We lived surrounded by the enemy's ambush. And as a driver, I used to travel a distance, and anything could happen. Every day was a bonus for us. So, it is important first to understand our story. Our journey to the UK has been linked to our service to the British armed forces. Many people do not understand this. We have not come here for anything. We deserve to come here and have the same facilities as another white British. Despite the facts, after a long battle, the British government recently decided to allow us to come and settle in the UK. This is the connection: how I happened to come to the UK for a secure future, yet my sons and daughters have not been granted the permit. We hope they will also get the permit and join us- Mr SL.

I couldn't present his facial expressions, but I could still explain his emotions. He was enthusiastic and lively answering my question about his army life. He felt quite energetic recounting his war experiences but clearly expressed his disappointment about his living in the UK. The biggest problem for him was that he did not find what he had expected to find in the UK. According to him, he and many of his fellow Gurkhas were also found living a life of dilemma. They seemed to have

lived in the ambiguity of their circumstances. They could not claim whether their decision to come to the UK was good or bad.

I obtained Mr CG's mobile number from a member of the charity organisation where he was working in the executive body. I phoned him several times to discuss what I was asking and why I wanted to know that. He was uncomfortable talking to me initially, but once I explained the context, he became happy to offer me the time and share his real-life experiences. Answering my question about his motive to come to the UK, he said:

I came to the UK in 2004 as a family visitor as of previous times. But this time I wanted to stay longer. So, I applied for a work permit. While I was here, I learnt that some of the Gurkhas along with the social activists were organising campaigns to raise Gurkhas' voices for their pension, benefits, and residency issues in the UK. I also joined the campaign. At that time, some political leaders supported our campaign by giving the Gurkhas some chances to raise their voices about their rights. We went to the Home Office in Liverpool during the campaign and handed over our documents. And in 2004 the government changed the law to allow the Gurkhas to come to the UK and reside there permanently. As I said, my work permit application was refused then, but my application on the grounds of Gurkha's rights was successful, and I got a permit in 2004. My wife joined me after a year. My main motive was to bring my children here to the UK so that they could have a brighter future. Some have come, and some are still fighting the case against their visa refusal-Mr CG.

Mr KG and Mr GG have a similar story to Mr CG. Mr KG also had served in the British military for 19 years and had been to the UK many times for different reasons during his military service before he retired in 1997. He also wanted to move to the UK permanently, but there was no way for retired Gurkhas to settle there as they were supposed to retire in Nepal. However, he knew that once he could enter the UK, he would try to reside there permanently because he wanted to bring his children to the UK for a better future. So, he chose an alternative route- as a trainee in a short vocational course to migrate to the UK. Finally, he successfully obtained his permanent residency right; that was what he said.

After retiring in 1997, I didn't want to leave Hong Kong and return to Nepal. However, I was forced to do so as there were no provisions for us to stay and work. A couple of years later, I went to Pakistan to work for an international company until 2001. While I was there, I heard about other Gurkhas who were migrating to the UK for permanent residency. I was also eager to do the same for my three children's education and our secure future. So, I chose an alternative route to migrate to the UK. I enrolled in a short course in London and came here as a trainee. Upon arrival, I found that there were already more than 400 Gurkhas living in the UK and fighting for residency rights. I

also joined their campaign, and we collected public petitions. Our efforts gained public support and media coverage, ultimately leading to a policy change in 2004, allowing Gurkhas to migrate to the UK. The journey to get here was long, stressful, and filled with obstacles. The process was costly and required legal assistance, but I obtained a residency permit. My family joined me later, and we have lived in the UK since – Mr KG.

Mr HG, living in Kent, had a different story than others. He was in the British armed forces for 17 years before he retired in 2005 and lived in the UK for most of his service period. So, his migration to the UK, as described by him was not as difficult as that of others.

When the British government passed the bill to allow retired Gurkhas to migrate to the UK, I was lucky that I was still in service and was based in the UK. So, when I retired in 2005, I decided to stay here. I met some experienced Gurkhas and solicitors, who advised me on how to process the application. Based on their advice, I made the application for my permanent residency. I was not quite sure whether I got it or not. Unless the decision was made, I was so nervous and anxious. Finally, I got it. Once granted the right, I invited my family to join me. My kids were below the age of 18, so there was not any issue with their entry clearance. However, we spent a good amount of money on the visa process. Brokers charged us a lot for their fees. My wife faced a lot of hassles in Nepal while preparing their documents. So, for her it was difficult. For those Gurkhas who had retired in Hong Kong and were living in Nepal, yes, it was not easy for them to complete so many procedures before the entry clearance- Mr HG.

He considered himself fortunate because he was granted permission to stay in the UK without encountering any major obstacles. Similarly, some Gurkhas who had already been serving in the UK before retiring may have found the immigration process to be relatively easy. However, for those who retired in Nepal or other countries outside the UK, the process was challenging and filled with obstacles.

The influence of social network theory on migration can be observed in the case of the Gurkhas migrating to the UK. The strong motive to achieve a better livelihood and a more prosperous life was coupled with pressure from family and friends living in the UK, who viewed migration as a matter of prestige and dignity. According to Thieme (2006) and Kindler (2015), social networks play a significant role in guiding the migration process, as relatives and friends who are already living in the UK exert pressure on those still in Nepal to follow a similar trajectory to migrate to the UK. This also happened with the case of the Gurkhas, especially after the British government changed its policy and allowed the Gurkhas to migrate.

Mr CR, who has been living in the UK permanently since 2007, had served in the British armed forces for 20 years before he retired in 1981. Mr CR, a widow of his mid-80s, was one of the oldest Gurkhas whom I interviewed. Although he was living in the UK with his son and in-laws, he still felt as if he was living all alone on his own. His grandchildren go to school, and his son and in-laws go to their work. He finds himself alone and helpless at home. After the death of his wife, he was feeling lonely. He told me that he was not interested in migrating to the UK with his ill wife, who had been living in Nepal happily with other families and relatives. However, family pressure was exerted, and he had to decide to migrate.

To be honest, I wasn't keen on coming to the UK. I had already seen the country multiple times through my training and coursework. My wife had also been to the UK and knew life was tough there. We were content in our village, and I was involved in several community service projects and held the position of president in our ward. However, as time passed, I started to feel pressure from family and friends to apply for migration. Some of my fellow Gurkhas had already sold their homes and moved to the UK, which added to the pressure. Eventually, I applied for migration in 2006 under a policy for Gurkhas, but my application was rejected. I was discouraged and didn't feel like appealing, as I didn't see why I should have to beg to come to the country I had fought for. However, the pressure from my family persisted, and I decided to appeal. I was granted permission in 2007, but I question why my application was rejected in the first place if I was eventually allowed to come. The authorities want to make money from us; they're very clever that way- Mr CR.

During the interview, his expressions conveyed the emotional turmoil and dissatisfaction he experienced during the application process for migration. His facial expressions reflected a clear sense of pain, difficulty, and frustration with the complexities that he encountered. It was evident that he was not pleased with all the various legalities and procedures he had to navigate, which he perceived as barriers rather than facilitators for his migration journey.

4.4. Exploring Gurkhas' Integration in the UK

In light of the UK's evolving policies, particularly within its embrace of multiculturalism alongside recent trends in civic integration, I was keen to explore the unique integration experiences of Gurkha soldiers. This inquiry aimed to investigate how the multicultural frameworks within British society have contributed to fostering Gurkhas' (who denied being categorised as immigrants) sense of belonging, identity, and the promotion of their martial heritage. Given the Gurkhas' deep-seated belonging to this country and their belief in the UK's multicultural society, I was curious to explore to what extent these assumptions are upheld by current policies. I wanted to investigate

how the British policy of multiculturalism has supported the Gurkhas' legacy and their sense of belonging and to understand the local population's consensus on the Gurkhas' deeply held beliefs.

Thus, to find out their integration experiences and the policy impacts on their entire integration journey, I generated some interview questions, as below and investigated their integration patterns. All the interview questions were originally in the Nepali language. Here are their translations into English.

1. How satisfied are you with your current living situation in the UK? Is it like in Nepal?
2. To what extent have you been able to establish social connections with your communities and with the locals?
3. Have you faced any challenges while accessing essential services in the UK, such as healthcare, benefits, or housing?
4. How often do you participate in community events, politics, or cultural activities?
5. To what extent have you felt isolated or lonely?
6. What do you normally do in the event of any incidents, like illness, death, or serious family issues?
7. How comfortable do you feel communicating in the English language daily?
8. Have you faced any instances of discrimination or prejudice?
9. Do you feel the freedom to celebrate your culture and norms?
10. How important is it for you to promote your cultural identities? Why?
11. What nationality do you hold: Nepalese/ British?
12. To what extent was that difficult for you to gain British citizenship?
13. In your opinion, what more can be done to promote Gurkhas' integration in the UK?

Along with these questions, my intimate involvement with the community enabled me to grasp their daily realities. Similarly, following my dual role as a sociological researcher, I adopted an objective stance to delve into the intricacies of the Gurkhas' integration hurdles within British society. This dual perspective, as articulated by Saidin (2016), embracing both insider and outsider positions, facilitated me to explore a more holistic comprehension of Gurkhas' integration dynamics.

While analysing Gurkhas' integration experiences based on the different concepts and models of integration policies, I pointed out that integration policies, such as multiculturalism, helped to overcome barriers to integration and promote social cohesion by promoting intercultural understanding and respect for diversity (Ashcroft and Bevir 2018; Back and Sinha 2016; Hansen 2016a; Mattei and Broeks 2016; Modood 1994; Uberoi 2017b). Through initiatives celebrating their cultural heritage and honouring their military service, such as cultural festivals and veterans' support programs, Gurkhas were able to maintain their identity while forging connections with other

Nepalese communities and the wider British community. A policy like the Gurkha Welfare Scheme as an example illustrated in multiculturalism, acknowledged their historical contributions and paved the way for their recognition further strengthening their bond with the UK. This recognition not only enhanced their sense of belonging, as they have upheld but also promoted a feeling of security and acceptance, contributing significantly to their integration into British society.

Additionally, cultural events celebrating Gurkha contributions, such as Gurkha' Khukuri Naach[4], Gurkha veteran Gold-cup football tournaments, and Gurkha curry festivals are examples which have been promoted by multicultural policies helping to raise public awareness and acceptance. These events not only celebrated Gurkha heritage but also created opportunities for intercultural exchange, fostering a sense of recognition and belonging among Nepalese communities and within the broader British community (Gellner and Hausner 2013; Laksamba, Adhikari, et al. 2016). This recognition extended beyond cultural celebration helping to promote a good sense of belonging wherein Gurkhas perceived that their cultural heritage was not only accepted but embraced by the broader British community. At this point, I can argue that the promotion of this inclusive notion, as one of the main features of multiculturalism, contributed to the affirmation and recognition of the Nepalese diasporic identity, underscoring its cultural value within multicultural British society.

Mr KB seemed to have established good relationships with the locals as well as with the Nepalese diasporic communities in the UK. As a member of Gurkhas' diasporic organisation, he was involved in various activities. His level of awareness was essential for me to know more about his integration experience. Although he was not very keen on the policies involved in his entire immigration and integration, he was well aware of the multicultural characteristics of his local communities, where he and his fellow Gurkhas had the freedom of cultural celebration.

While we were in the army, at that time also we used to celebrate our songs and dance in our barracks in front of our white counterparts. They used to like our culture and respect. Since then, I have known that I can celebrate my culture and observe the festivals freely without any fear. Yes, I feel the freedom of practising our norms and cultures because I know only our culture can make us known to society. Especially Gurkhas' heritage and culture are our identity. So, there should not be any restriction to observing our culture, and to be honest, there is no restriction on celebrating our feasts and festivals. On every occasion, we gather and observe our festivals. On many occasions, many white people come to take part. I think they quite like us- Mr KB.

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[4] Khukuri Naach is a cultural festival celebrated by the Gurkha veterans by performing Gurkhas' military songs and dance. In this event, Gurkha soldiers perform artistic dance by exhibiting their sword, Khukuri. Both locals and the Nepalese diaspora have well recognised this festival.

From KB's narratives, it became clear that he found great comfort in adhering to his cultural norms and actively participating in cultural activities. He expressed confidence in the appreciation of their heritage by the White British community. Such sentiments were pivotal in strengthening the bond between the Gurkhas and the UK. His words underscored the significance of cultural freedom and the positive reception of their traditions, emphasising that these practices were integral to British multicultural frameworks and their identity. Moreover, his experiences highlight mutual respect and interest from the broader community, illustrating a pathway towards deeper integration and understanding within British society.

Mr DL, Mr HL, and Mr GG echoed similar sentiments to Mr KB. They also emphasised that the freedom to maintain their martial heritage and practice their norms without constraints provided them with a profound sense of belonging. This cultural and religious freedom enabled them to express their identities and stay connected to their roots, which they believed was crucial for preserving their martial history and heritage in the UK.

This is a good opportunity for us because we have the freedom to follow our traditions in the UK. British people respect our culture; they know we (Hindus) are liberal, and we respect others' religions and cultures equally. I feel very much connected with local communities through our cultures and cultural functions. We invite different cultural people to our functions and celebrate our music, dance, culture and foods together. Many white people have come to attend our cultural functions and programmes. They like it- Mr GG.

Mr DL, reflecting on his experiences, shared insights into how he and others in his community have adapted to life in the UK while preserving their Nepali culture. In discussing his daily life and sense of belonging, DL highlighted the availability of familiar cultural elements in local shops and the understanding of the Nepali language by some shopkeepers. This environment has enabled him to maintain traditions and rituals similar to those in Nepal. For him, this kind of multicultural environment has helped to minimise the sense of cultural loss. However, among these comforts, he expressed an emotional sentiment about the one thing they miss dearly: their families and relatives.

I don't miss my culture, food, and lifestyle much because I follow almost the same tradition as in Nepal. We find almost everything in shops in our areas that we need for our everyday life and our daily rituals. Many shopkeepers understand a little bit of the Nepali language, too. Sometimes, I feel as if I am still in Pokhara. The only things that we miss are our families and relatives- Mr DL.

Based on their narratives, it was evident that the Gurkha community in the UK found a comfortable environment that supported their cultural practices and fostered a sense of belonging. They

expressed strong appreciation for the freedom to celebrate their cultural heritage, including music, dance, and festivals, without encountering significant barriers or restrictions. This cultural freedom allowed them to maintain their identity and facilitated meaningful integration with broader British society. Their experiences highlighted mutual respect and interest from local communities, alongside a sense of connection through shared cultural exchanges. Despite the geographical distance from Nepal, the availability of familiar food, traditional clothes, and cultural elements and the use of the Nepali language in local shops contributed to a sense of continuity and comfort. However, they also expressed a heartfelt nostalgia for separation from families and relatives. Overall, their stories underscored the importance of cultural preservation, mutual respect, and the positive impact of multiculturalism in fostering a cohesive and inclusive society in the UK.

4.4.1. Gurkhas' Sense of Ethnic Identity and Social Cohesion

Scholars have observed that newly arrived migrants tend to remain attached to their traditions and communities, and only later in some cases they start developing a sense of belonging to the receiving society (Codagnone and Kluzer 2011a; Oliver and Gidley 2015b). Similar patterns have been observed among the migrant communities such as the South Asian, African, and Caribbean communities in the UK (Phinney, Ong, and Madden 2000; Robinson 2009). Emphasising the importance of communal bonding amongst the ethnic communities Codagnone and Kluzer (2011b:55) have stated that the term 'community' connotes the existence of common interests and some elementary sense of identity of fellowship among immigrants. This kind of sense of belonging and promotion of ethnic identity has been described as ''bonding and bridging'', which is expected to promote intimacy and attachment with the place of origin and its people in the destination country.

These examples back the common perception that ethnic immigrant communities tend to live in areas with high concentrations of their respective migrant groups and maintain their bonding through cultural traditions and language. In my observation also, this trend has been more evident among Nepalese, especially the Gurkhas in the UK. Gurkhas' settlement has been particularly concentrated in garrison towns, such as Aldershot, Ashford, Colchester, Farnborough, Folkestone, and Greenwich, where many Gurkhas had previously spent plenty of their working lives and where their friends and relatives had already settled (Laksamba, Adhikari, et al. 2016). This reflects their established connections to these communities and a desire to be near familiar surroundings.

Apart from this, Gurkhas had a strong bond of fellowship based on their brigadier tradition and batch membership. They identified themselves through their 'nambaries[5]' and tend to settle within close-knit circles of 'nambaries' and relatives to maintain a trust-based community (Adhikari et al. 2022). Within these 'nambaries', they not only maintained a strong bond of fellowship but also regulated their cultural, financial, and organisational relationships. Based on their soldierly relationship and trust, they observed a tradition of generating small financial funds to support each other during times of need. This type of intimacy was found to further strengthen their bond.

I have further observed that this close-knit and trust-based community, known as Samaj[6] that the Gurkhas have built and maintained within their social circle, has been an important part of their cultural identity and a supportive network for them. On the one hand, this provided them with a sense of belonging and security, as well as access to cultural and social events organised by their fellow migrants' ethnic organisations. On the other, by using such diasporic organisations, Gurkhas maintained their inter-cultural relationship with wider communities (Hausner et al. 2013). Furthermore, through these communities, Gurkhas were able to maintain the traditions, values, and practices that were important to them, including the practice of an endogamous marriage system, which was a key aspect of the Gurkha culture. Not only among the Gurkhas, but endogamy has been a key feature of Nepalese migrants in the UK.

To gain a deeper understanding of the Gurkhas' integration and sense of community in the UK, I asked Mr DL about the role of such ethnic organisations and networks within their community. Through our conversation, I observed how the close-knit and trust-based community, particularly the Samaj and Nambaries, have played a crucial role in maintaining their cultural identity and providing support.

Yes, I am a member of Kirat[7] Samaj. Many Gurkhas are members of this organisation. We want to make connections with our Gurkha members through these organisations. This is how we tend to meet, gather, and celebrate our cultural activities. These types of small organisations give us a sense of security. When we are within these communities, we feel that we are still in Nepal and have the freedom of cultural identities. I think these organisations are very important to us because they help us in times of need, especially when one dies; however, many of them are useless- Mr DL.

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[5] In Gurkhas' brigadier culture the term Nambaries represents the fellow Gurkhas who were recruited in the British army in the same badge and brigade.

[6] *Samaj* means a community, specially composed of close groups of the people having the similar characteristics of their origin, castes, religion, and professions. For instance, the Brahmin Samaj (community of Brahmins), Gulmi Samaj (close group of Nepalese from Gulmi region) and Sahitya Samaj (a literary group).

[7] Kirat is a religious/ cultural category in Buddhism especially observed by the ethnic groups such as Rai and Limbu in Nepal.

The newly arrived immigrants often engage in various clubs, organisations, and parties as a means of maintaining a sense of transnational identity (Low 2015; Shuval 2000; Tanaka 2019). Participating in these organisations allows them to feel a sense of attachment and belonging to their community. This also provides them with a social network and support system. I discovered this kind of engagement with the Gurkhas. These kinds of communal engagements have served a dual purpose for them, both providing a sense of belonging in the UK and helping to maintain transnational status by bridging the gap between the UK and Nepal.

Further to explore the significance of multiculturalism in enhancing the Gurkhas' integration through communal and ethnic organisations, I also spoke with Mr HG. He emphasised the significance of the multicultural nature of British society and the critical role these groups play within this environment that helped in fostering connections within and with wider communities.

We need these kinds of Samaj (community) for our safety, security, and unity. Especially the old Gurkhas, who feel lonely and miss their families, need these types of local communities. They can participate in different activities organised by such communities and socialise. They meet with other fellow members and share their pain and happiness. They build up a sense of intimacy and belonging. Apart from that, these types of small organisations help to connect us with other people, especially the White British. Through these organisations, we organise charitable events and generate funds. We use that fund in emergencies- Mr HG.

In my observation, it was obvious that Nepalese migrants tended to live in areas where their community was present. Regions such as the Royal Borough of Greenwich, the Reading Borough Council, Ashford and Maidstone in Kent, the London Borough of Harrow, and Peterborough City Council have become popular destinations for Nepalese. Notably, Nepali was the second most widely spoken language in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, and the council has designated it as a hub for Nepalese residents. It was especially because of the significant numbers of Gurkhas' and their families living in this region. This type of enduring tradition of the communal organisation has reflected the importance of Gurkhas in fostering close-knit social networks. Most Gurkhas stated that they needed such kind of close circles and ethnic connections, which for them, helped maintain a strong sense of attachment and intimacy. They emphasised the importance of close-knit ethnic circles and familial groups, which provided essential support during times of need and helped maintain their ethnic bonds. From Gurkhas' point of view, this kind of supportive network was essential for their ethnic integration.

However, from a broader perspective what I found was that in some cases, these ethnic limitations hindered their broader connections with other Nepalese groups and British communities affecting

their socialisation process. Additionally, I discovered that due to their limited interactions, many Gurkhas struggled to establish connections outside their immediate community, even with the other categories of Nepalese in the UK. This communal sentiment, to some extent, impeded their wider integration hampering their overall integration.

Thus, for broader integration, along with maintaining their ethnic bonds, Gurkhas should expand their connections with other diasporas and local communities. By participating in local activities, socialising with other immigrant groups, learning English, and volunteering in community projects, they can establish stronger links with wider communities, thereby promoting better integration.

The previous two sections explored the socio-cultural, religious, ethnic, diasporic, and intra- and inter-community integration of the Gurkhas. They focused on how the Gurkhas have built their ethnic networks and cultivated a sense of belonging within the framework of British multiculturalism. In essence, these sections analysed the Gurkhas' experiences and perceptions of living in a diverse British society. In contrast, the next section examines the civic integration measures that have, in many ways, impeded the Gurkhas' integration. It discusses how these stringent policies have obstructed their successful integration.

4.5. Rigorous Policies Obstructing Gurkhas' Citizenship Dream

''Why did the British Government not ask us about our English language capacity and the status of nationality? They just needed us to fight against their enemies. But now, when we ask the citizenship rights, they demand us to pass the English language tests. Were we illegal when we fought for them? If not, why do they need us to pass the test, acquire citizenship and earn legal status? Is not it a planned discrimination against us?''

These were common contemplation of most of the Gurkhas I met. Looking closely at this frustrating narration, one can easily understand the hurdles that Gurkhas were going through in their process of integration in the UK.

Thus, building upon the arguments previously outlined in section **2.3** of this thesis, in this section, I delve into a critical examination of contemporary civic integration policies. Specifically, I shed light on how these policies posed significant challenges for Gurkhas aiming to attain legal status in the country they have faithfully served for over two centuries. Drawing from an extensive range of literature, my personal experience, and the narratives of Gurkhas themselves, I begin this section by offering a concise overview of the prevailing civic integration policies in the UK, highlighting their mandatory requirements. Subsequently, I rigorously analyse how these strict requirements served

as barriers to the successful integration of Gurkhas, impeding their journey towards naturalisation and full citizenship rights.

Some scholars, for example, Ersanilli and Koopmans (2010a) Joppke (2017a) and Permoser (2012b) have argued the importance of integration policies in fostering the civic and political involvement of immigrants, including their right to vote and participate in the political process. However, I can argue that especially, the provisions of mandatory tests and training as set in the civic integration policy have been identified as a source of frustration for the Gurkhas. The recent shift towards civic integration, which requires immigrants to successfully pass the compulsory English language and history knowledge test known as the 'Life in the UK', has been proven to be an obstacle for those, such as Gurkhas wishing to access British citizenship rights (Kostakopoulou 2003).

Although multicultural recognition, at some point, has facilitated Gurkhas' ethnic, religious-cultural as well as organisational values, most of the Gurkhas expressed their dissatisfaction with the provision of mandatory tests as imposed via a civic integration approach. They viewed mandatory English tests as a primary obstacle preventing them from civic inclusion into British society. Although they wanted to gain British citizenship, which could allow them to have wider access, they have remained unable due to the difficulties in passing the English and history knowledge test. Most of the Gurkhas have been unable to access British citizenship, which, for them, feels like planned discrimination against them. Beyond the English language requirements, the substantial fees associated with the application process and legal requirements have further discouraged and compelled them to opt out of this passage. Most Gurkhas voiced that failing to obtain citizenship has, in turn, created obstacles in securing mortgages or bank loans, accessing essential government services, participating in civic activities, and exercising political rights. In sum, these barriers, compounded by financial and procedural difficulties, underscored how civic integration policies have significantly hindered the Gurkhas' integration into British society.

When I asked about their views on naturalisation and nationality, they expressed their anger and questioned why British citizenship was not required when they were recruited and deployed on the front lines during wars, but why it was necessary for now.

There was not any such condition of the English language when we joined the force. They only checked our physical fitness, not any qualifications. As an army, we did not need a lot of English language use because we followed martial rules and commands. So, why are they asking us to pass the test when they already know we were not good at the English language? Why do we need to naturalise? Why did they not ask us about our nationality in the first place while they were recruiting us for the armed forces? Did they need British nationality to enter into the force? Did they

ever think of British nationality while we were on the front line of the war? We all served the British flag, thinking we were no less than the whites. So, why are they now asking us about our nationality and citizenship regarding matters of equal pay, pensions and other facilities? This is serious discrimination against us. This kind of rule makes it difficult to settle well in the UK. This must be changed and made easy for us- Mr CR.

Mr SL, Mr GG, and Mr DL expressed their discontent with the unequal treatment between those having British nationality and themselves. They felt that Gurkhas unable to obtain British nationality were being regarded as second-class citizens within the Nepalese community and they were categorised as illiterate, uneducated and incompetent by other Nepalese individuals who had acquired it. This lack of British nationality has, in many ways, limited their access to services and facilities such as mortgage loans, housing benefits, education loans, travel visas, and voting rights. For them, this inequality is deeply intimidating and makes them feel marginalised.

During our interview, Mr GG shared his experiences and the difficulties he faced due to his Nepalese nationality. Despite the Gurkhas' esteemed reputation, as he said, they still encountered many bureaucratic and social hurdles. As one of his bitter experiences, he was denied a loan application because of his nationality, even after explaining his status as a Gurkha. He also talked about the challenges of dealing with immigration policies that require a lot of paperwork and take a long time to process, like getting travel visas for other European countries. According to him, these issues have created significant barriers to recognition and integration. He highlighted the ongoing struggles faced by many Gurkhas.

Once we had been to the bank to ask for a loan, they asked us about our status. When we said we were still of Nepalese nationality, they did not process our application. We explained to the person that we were Gurkhas, but he did not consider us. This is a small example I am telling you; this kind of thing regularly happens to us. Wherever you go, first, they ask us to show our identity. When we present our Nepali passport, they pretend as if they have never seen this. We don't have any other, so what to show them? You know, it is also not easy to get a visa for us to travel to any other European nation either for holidays or to meet relatives living there. To get a visa, we have to follow the long process. If we had a British passport, we could go easily- Mr GG.

Most Gurkhas believed that the standard measures should not apply to their cases. They argued that there should be special provisions for citizenship specifically tailored for them, and they should be given a choice in the matter. According to them, their unique contributions and sacrifices warrant a distinct set of rules that recognise their service and facilitate their integration into British society.

It is my choice if I want to become a British national or remain a Nepalese, but the government has to give me a choice. They should not apply any rules and restrictions to give us citizenship because we (Gurkhas), in a true sense, are British. We never thought that we were not British. When I came here, I thought they would straight away give us citizenship. But when I learned we needed to pass the exams and tests for that, I was so frustrated. Is there any test bigger than the life we sacrificed for this nation? Why should I pay that much money for citizenship? We must get it free and without any tests- Mr HL.

This frustration highlights the significant barriers that civic integration measures have imposed on the Gurkhas' inclusion in the UK. Despite their loyal service, the requirements to pass language tests for citizenship rights have created a sense of exclusion and discrimination, making the process of integration difficult and unjust. These measures undermine the sacrifices made by the Gurkhas, emphasising the disparity between their contributions and the recognition they receive.

These are the only notable representations of the Gurkhas, who were not happy with the provision of such stricter policies. Along with them, most of the Gurkhas and their families, especially their widows were found to be impacted by such policies. These requirements have become a major obstacle for them, hindering their everyday livelihoods and making it difficult for them to access many systems in the UK. The situation has caused considerable distress and hardship, leaving many Gurkhas and their community feeling isolated and excluded from the wider society.

Based on the narratives, I have highlighted some hurdles caused by the recent civic integration policy's restricted requirements.

a. Difficulty in passing language tests: Language tests are often used as a civic requirement for immigrants in the UK, but these tests have been difficult for some, especially family migrants, Gurkhas, and their spouses. It has limited their opportunities for work and education to access healthcare and other essential services in the UK.

b. Loss of political rights: This has limited their ability to fully participate in society, vote in elections, and access certain government services.

c. Stigma and discrimination: Those Gurkhas who were subject to civic requirements have faced stigma and discrimination from those who viewed them as less educated or less intelligent in their family circles. This has made it difficult for them to form connections and build community relationships.

d. Negative impact on family life: Civic requirements have affected family life, as some of them have separated from their loved ones due to their inability to meet the requirements, either to migrate to the UK or to meet the legal status once in the UK.

Apart from the above-mentioned difficulties, in a real sense, Gurkhas in the UK have become the victim of discriminatory policies, which have failed to include its loyal citizens in the system's mainstream. To say it differently, due to the range of barriers in British integration policies and its bureaucratic system, Gurkhas have been going through numerous hurdles. Apart from their equal pay and pension, they have been facing many other problems like family disintegration due to the policy problems of accompanying their dependents who are over 18 of age, very high visa fees for family entry allowance, and lack of access to the entitlement legal aid in the UK (Adhikari et al. 2013).

During my research, I came to learn that the Gurkhas, who had been loyal fighters for the British monarchy, were engaged in a battle against the British government due to their discriminatory policies. Despite over 4,000 Gurkhas (as per the record of 2023), serving to protect Britain and its monarch, there were a much greater number of retired Gurkhas fighting for their equality, pensions, civic rights, rights for family reunification and standard livelihoods in the UK. Scholars also have highlighted that this type of plight of Gurkhas concerning their compensation, retirement benefits, and equality rights has become a widely acknowledged phenomenon, yet it appears to have gone largely unnoticed (Kochhar-George 2010). The strikes and hunger strikes that have taken place in front of Downing Street in the UK were examples of the reflection of the ongoing struggle faced by the Gurkhas in their quest for rights and equality. These protests demonstrated the grievances of the Gurkhas, who felt that the British government unjustly treated them despite their years of service and sacrifices. Thus, based on my observation, this type of contradiction: Gurkhas who fought for the nation are now fighting for pensions; is evidence of the British government's disloyalty against Gurkhas' loyalty.

Mr SL has experienced firsthand challenges and frustrations faced by many retired Gurkhas regarding their pensions and living conditions. Despite their dedicated service to the British Army, Gurkhas often found themselves struggling to make ends meet due to inadequate financial support from the government. This interview sheds light on the disparity between the pensions received by Gurkhas compared to their British counterparts in the military, as well as the broader issue of equitable treatment under recent policies. Mr SL's narrative highlights his deep dissatisfaction with the government's behaviour, particularly regarding the disparity in retirement schemes. I could easily sense his frustration against the discriminatory policy which was ruining many Gurkhas' dreams of better retirement plans and their main motives for migration.

Look at me, see how old I am. How much longer do you think I'll be around? Not many years left. I came here hoping for a better life, but what did I get? How can I live on this small pension? The government gives much more money to the British army, but they give us very little. It's not enough to pay rent unless we share a house. We've protested many times, asking for fair pay and pensions, even going on hunger strikes like fast-to-death hunger strikes. But the government hasn't listened to us. It's not fair to us Gurkhas- Mr SL.

This kind of narrative clearly expressed the fact that Gurkhas, despite their old age and ill health, felt compelled to resort to such drastic measures as strikes and hunger strikes highlighting the persistence of their demands for fair treatment and recognition of their contributions. According to them, by offering them the rights they deserve, the government can create an environment that thereby supports their settlement, retirement and overall integration.

4.6. Chapter Summary

Considering Nepal and the United Kingdom's two-century-distinct relationship based on the special affiliation of Nepalese soldiers known as 'Gurkha', this chapter first presented the historical connotation of the term: 'Gurkha'. Along with the definition of this ethnic connotation, then this chapter highlighted the deep-rooted historical connection between Gurkhas and British imperialism. By outlining key timelines of Gurkha recruitment into the British armed forces, their participation in various wars, and their bravery and sacrifice for the British flag, this chapter provided a detailed account of the Gurkhas' unwavering loyalty and profound sacrifice for Britain and its people, and this chapter set the stage for discussion of their immigration and integration into the UK.

In the context of their migration, specifically, this chapter analysed two specific legislative changes of 2004 and 2009 that opened the door for retired Gurkhas to migrate and settle in the UK. By highlighting the reasons for Gurkhas' subsequent migration to the UK, this chapter provided an account of Gurkhas' trajectory as the largest Nepalese category in the UK. Thus, in light of the immigration and integration policies, specifically the multiculturalism and civic integration, adopted by the UK, this chapter analysed their settlement and integration patterns in the UK.

Based on the information gathered, this chapter highlighted several compelling reasons behind the Gurkhas' decision to migrate to the UK. Among the primary pull factors were the desire for a secure life, access to better health and residential facilities, and the promise of a brighter future for the next generation. Additionally, the prospect of receiving equal pensions and benefits as their white British counterparts was a significant motivator. Despite some Gurkhas' reluctance to leave

behind their property, social status, public responsibilities, and relatives in Nepal, social networks and familial pressures played a crucial role in their decision to migrate. Abandoning the social prestige and economic standing they had earned through a lifetime of service was not easy. Nonetheless, the hope for improved living conditions and overall better prospects ultimately won the decision to migrate.

In my investigation into the settlement and integration experiences of Gurkhas, it became noticeable that their overall integration process and patterns were significantly different from other trajectories of Nepalese, such as highly skilled and education-related migrants in the UK. Gurkhas' integration into British society was found to be slower and less effective. Several factors including age, education, skills, English language proficiency, and ethnic orientation emerged as crucial contributors to these distinctive experiences. Additionally, their relatively lower level of sociocultural linkage to the wider community contributed to their poor diasporic network affecting their broader integrity. Many of them, who had limited education, faced challenges in familiarising themselves with local rules, laws, and social norms.

While investigating Gurkhas' integration against the backdrop of the British multiculturalism policy framework, in some cases, Gurkhas were found to have experienced cultural freedom. They enjoyed observing their heritage and practising their norms and values. Additionally, they were able to set up their ethnic network and promote social and cultural belonging. Their settlement patterns in the proximity of the garrison areas have not only provided them with a sense of security but also have made it easier for them to do everyday activities, such as the availability of groceries of their taste and also the costumes of their tradition. To some extent, they seemed happy with the public response to their heritage, and they assumed that they belonged to this society.

Additionally, some special events and programmes such as the Gurkha Veteran Gold-cup, Khukuri Naach and Gurkha curry festivals, targeted at the Gurkha community provided them opportunities to celebrate their heritage. These kind of welfare events, on the one hand, boosted their sense of recognition and on the other, provided them with the opportunities to mingle with broader communities. These occasions were viewed as the best moments especially for the Gurkha women because a large number of these women participated on such occasions wearing their traditional clothes and jewellery and presenting various cultural activities. Among them Nepali Mela has been seen as one of the biggest Nepali events, especially organised by the Gurkha community in the UK Gellner (2017) and Laksamba Adhikari, and Dhakal (2016), also have mentioned about these events, especially the Nepali Mela, which for them, has worked as a bridge to link all kinds of Nepalese communities in the UK. Although integration policy, for instance, multiculturalism has no direct role in organising such communal events, the policy's inclusive and diversified features that

accept and recognise the co-existence of various ethnic groups, have so far, encouraged such activities and facilitated Gurkhas' integration.

Ager and Strang (2008b) have emphasised immigrants' integration associated with the core areas such as housing, health, education and employability, defined as the main markers of integration. Phillimore (2012c) and de la Porte and Heins (2016) have also focussed on these core areas as 'means and markers' for integration. While British policies have aimed to integrate Gurkhas focusing on these core areas, in my examination, I have explored that beyond basics, it was evident that additional factors, such as community engagement, support programmes, diasporic networks, interethnic relationships and choice of citizenship were equally significant for their inclusion. The chapter highlighted proficiency in English as a particularly formidable obstacle, causing communication inefficacies, and resulting in numerous problems in their daily lives. These communication barriers extended not only to interactions with the local white British population but also strained relationships within different Nepalese categories. Despite establishing positive ethnic connections with their Nambaries and ethnic organisations, Gurkhas were found to have poorer linkage with other migrant communities. These challenges had a significant effect when it came to developing social cohesion, maintaining intercultural diversities, building inter-community relationships and mixing with a diversified societal fabric.

Besides this, in this chapter, I have discussed their contemplation against the restrictions posed by some policies, specifically the policies concerning civic integration. Because of the mandatory tests and training set in the civic integration concepts, they were barred from acquiring British citizenship hindering their access to civic and political systems. Due to the policy requirement set in the naturalisation, most of the Gurkhas were barred from becoming legal citizens of the nation for which they sacrificed their lives. According to them, it was a huge discrimination against them. Since Gurkhas did not like to be called immigrants in the nation for which they fought. So, for them, there should not have been any difference between the British people and them. They believed they should not be required to go through hard processes to acquire British nationality. Instead, they believe they should have been awarded the nationality honouring their service and patriotism.

While analysing the Gurkhas' ongoing tension regarding discriminatory retirement schemes and pensions, this chapter highlighted their appeals and demonstrations. This highlighted the instances of hunger strikes, and 'fast-to-death' protests organised by Gurkhas to oppose the disparities in pay and pensions. These frequent calls for strikes underscored the Gurkhas' view that the government was being disloyal to its loyal fighters. In this regard, the chapter has recommended reviewing the policies and addressing Gurkhas' issues to facilitate their full inclusion.

In the end, given their extensive service to the country, the chapter concluded with my argument and recommendation. I argued that they deserved a different set of rules regarding gaining access to civic rights and political participation. The government should offer them an easier path to family reunification reflecting their unique contributions and sacrifices. Instead of imposing stringent requirements that many found challenging, such as rigorous English language and history tests, the government should provide Gurkhas with the choice of citizenship as a gesture of recognition and gratitude. This would not only honour their dedication but also facilitate their integration into British society, allowing them to access essential services and fully participate in civic life.

Chapter Five: High-Skills Visa, Nepalese Migration, and Integration in the UK

5.1. Introduction

Recently, the global demand for a professional workforce, particularly in innovation, information technology, engineering, and research, has driven a notable trend of economic migration (Bailey and Mulder 2017; Fernando and Cohen 2016; She and Wotherspoon 2013). In response to this demand, countries worldwide have adopted selective immigration policies targeting high-skilled workers. During the 1980s and 1990s, nations like Australia, Canada, and the USA launched initiatives to attract professionals to meet the growing needs of their skilled workforces. Similarly, European countries such as France and Germany also adjusted their immigration policies to attract high-skill migrants (Docquier and Rapoport 2009). This trend became increasingly evident in the UK, especially after the early 2000s (Aure 2013; Koopmans 2012). In particular, the UK has implemented immigration schemes aimed at attracting skilled professionals from the global south to address workforce shortages (Skeldon 2009a; Varma and Kapur 2013a). On the one hand, for young professionals from these regions, these opportunities offer the chance to live, work, study, and advance their careers in the UK, and on the other hand, the United Kingdom benefits from tapping their skills to meet its labour market demands.

Nepalese individuals with professional potential were aware of migration opportunities to Western countries, yet their ability to migrate was severely restricted by the country's less flexible emigration policy compared to today. While there was an existing trend of seeking permanent migration opportunities to the USA under different schemes such as the Diversity Visa (DV) programme, there was not any immigration scheme for Nepalese professionals to migrate to the UK permanently. Consequently, following political changes and the country's emigration perspectives, especially from the early 2000s, many Nepalese skilled professionals began to migrate to Western countries, especially the UK, seeking permanent settlement (Roland et al. 2014). Various professionals, including medical practitioners, engineers, educators, accountants, and lawyers, viewed the high-skill visa route to enter the UK as a gateway to a better life (Laksamba, Adhikari, and Dhakal 2016). This trend intensified as individuals already in the UK for studies or work sought to convert their visas into highly skilled visas for permanent residency (Adhikari 2012; Bhattarai 2009a).

Following this global trend, during the third quarter of 2021, approximately 5.9 million individuals in the UK workforce were foreign-born, constituting roughly 18% of the total labour market participants in the country (Reino and Rienzo 2022). In this proportion, highly skilled immigrants

make a significant share. Although there has not been an exact figure for this category of Nepalese migrants in the UK, some Nepalese diasporic organisations' survey data claim that among different trajectories, such as Gurkhas, students and dependents, highly skilled migrants and their families make up the 2nd largest category of Nepalese living permanently in the UK (Embassy 2021; NRNA 2020). Along with the Gurkhas and their families, the HSMP helped establish the Nepalese community as the fastest-growing non-European community in the UK (Adhikari 2012).

Thus, considering highly skilled Nepalese migration as a significant pathway, this chapter examines their integration patterns within the framework of the UK's immigration and integration policies. To begin with, this chapter provides a brief overview of the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP) in the UK context. By exploring both the push factors (such as limited professional opportunities in Nepal) and pull factors (such as better career prospects and quality of life in the UK) associated with this visa scheme, the chapter illustrates why the highly skilled migrant visa category became one of the most sought-after migration programmes among Nepalese professionals. Drawing on my personal experience of migrating to the UK through this pathway, the chapter highlights the transformative impact of this visa category. By examining their motives for migration and their future aspirations related to professional and familial development, the chapter offers an in-depth analysis of their entire immigration and integration journey, considering the policies adopted by the UK.

Furthermore, similar to other migrant categories, based on the narratives that emerged from the interviews, this chapter explores the influence of British multiculturalism on the integration of highly skilled Nepalese migrants. It examines how multiculturalism as an inclusive policy, to some extent, helped to promote a sense of belonging, identity, freedom of practice, and integration (Aschroft 2019; Tahir 2017b). This chapter delves into the theoretical depth of multiculturalism by analysing the socio-cultural, religious, normative, and ideological factors that have catalysed the desire for integration among this category of Nepalese. While doing so, it investigates how the policies have, to some extent, helped these professionals establish various profession-based organisations, extend their diasporic network, exchange skills and cultures, and foster a secular environment that encourages full participation in British society. By providing detailed insights into the personal and professional lives of these migrants, the chapter underscores the role of multicultural policies in enhancing their traditional sense of identity and ethnic belonging by supporting their integration into the complex social fabric of the UK.

Conversely, by problematising the constraint measures imposed in the domain of the civic integration concept, this chapter critically scrutinises the policies and their subsequent impacts on the entire immigration journey of highly skilled Nepalese migrants. While doing so, this chapter specifically analyses the interaction and conflicts between the integration desire of highly skilled

migrants and the strict rules and requirements embedded in these policies. How the highly skilled Nepalese migrants navigated and negotiated with undesirable policies while establishing their desires to become a British; will be the major argument of this section. By identifying major issues, according to these migrants, which have significantly hindered their successful integration, particularly in the area of recognition of foreign qualification, provision of English language tests for naturalisation, more specifically the mandatory measures in the domain of family reunification. Additionally, by scrutinising the recent requirements set in the visa clearance, particularly for highly skilled migrants, such as a point-based system and a high-income threshold as measures, the chapter portrays civic integration as a tool to control the inflow of economically passive migrants. Through this critical lens, the chapter reveals how these policies often acted as barriers, complicating the settlement and integration process for Nepalese professionals in the UK.

5.2. An Overview of the HSMP: A Scheme to Attract the Best and Brightest to the UK

Similar to other developed countries, the United Kingdom was also in this race to attract potential skilled professionals. However, there were not any specific immigration categories until it introduced new policies in the early 2000s, prioritising skilled immigrants over so-called unskilled ones (Boucher and Cerna 2014). The immigration scheme known as the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP), introduced in 2002, was one of the policy-based schemes designed to attract the best and brightest from throughout the world.

The HSMP was introduced in the early 2000s, to attract exceptionally skilled individuals by offering them opportunities for work or self-employment in the UK. The application process for the HSMP involved two key steps: obtaining an approval letter that confirms eligibility and meeting the immigration rules for residency. To qualify, applicants must possess at least a graduate-level education, achieve a minimum score of 6 out of 9 in the IELTS (International English Language Testing System), and provide proof of professional skills. Furthermore, applicants were required to commit in writing to making the UK their primary residence (House of Lords/House of Commons Joint Committee 2002). According to Home Office policy documents, the HSMP offered a pathway to permanent residency in the UK, which was a major motivating factor for potential migrants. Successful applicants initially receive leave to enter for one year. If, at the end of this period, they demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to become lawfully economically active, they can apply for a three-year extension. After these three years, they are eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR), provided they have had a continuous period of at least four years as a highly skilled migrant and have maintained lawful economic activity in the UK. As outlined in the Home Office documents the applicants were advised that once they entered via HSMP, they

would be in a category with an avenue to settlement and could apply for settlement after four years of qualifying residence (House of Lords/House of Commons Joint Committee 2002).

In addition to the policy requirements of IELTS for non-English-speaking applicants, such as Nepalese, the HSMP process involved numerous socio-economic and cultural factors that could complicate the visa process. Many applicants, who were in permanent employment in Nepal, had to leave their secure jobs to relocate to the UK. This often involved selling their homes, relocating their families (including spouses and children), making significant financial commitments, transferring their businesses, and leaving behind extended family and relatives in Nepal. These constraints sometimes forced individuals to opt out of the application process.

Despite the competitive selection criteria and complicated socioeconomic constraints, the HSMP continued to attract many applicants due to the perceived benefits of living in the UK compared to Nepal. These benefits included a higher standard of living, easier access to better healthcare, a more secure environment, and an overall better quality of life. The most compelling factors for migration under the HSMP were the prospects of permanent settlement and a secure future for their children. Consequently, from 2004 to 2009, until the HSMP was altered to a more restricted point-based selection system (Tier System) in 2009, many Nepalese professionals and their families came to the UK seeking to make this country their permanent home and to become legal citizens of this country.

Based on the narratives from the interviews with different professionals of this category, the below section highlights the migration motives and the appealing aspects in the UK.

5.3. The Appeal of the UK for A Better Future

The attraction of better education for their children, a comprehensive healthcare system, a secure and insured life, and the promise of a more prosperous and peaceful lifestyle in the UK presented the HSMP as a life-changing opportunity for many Nepalese professionals and their families. Among all, most emphasised their children's education and a better future as the main motives for migration. Additionally, Maoist political unrest in Nepal and its consequences were often cited as major push factors. The then political instability compelled many Nepalese professionals, including me, to look for alternative destinations, where the UK was proven to be one of the best options. I also migrated to the UK under this route in 2007.

Most of my respondents prioritised their migration motives linked with their children's education and better prospects, it was because, for middle-class families' social status and hierarchy were

closely linked to the quality of their children's education, schooling and job prospects. Enrolling children to cities for education and sending them to expensive private schools reflect wealth and richness for middle-class families (Bhattarai 2009a; Pariyar 2018b). A similar trend has been evident in many South Asian families, especially in Indian (Fernando and Cohen 2016; Raghuram 2006). On top of this, the desire for permanent residency, as mentioned in the HSMP policy document: 'making the UK a next home' was very appealing- a 'wow' factor. Besides this, the high value of the Sterling Pound (to date, one GBP has an exchange value of 170 Nepalese Rupees) was always seen as one of the appealing factors.

Mr B, a 59-year-old government official in Nepal, came to the UK in 2006 via HSMP. Before migrating to the UK, he was in a senior-level post in a government office in the capital city of Nepal. As a senior-level permanent officer, he had earned a good sum of money and had lived a high standard of life like having the facilities of a car, domestic helper and having good social status. His two children were in a private school in Kathmandu. Owning a car, sending the children to private school and being able to keep a domestic helper are examples of a high standard of living in Nepal that very limited people can afford. Despite having these all, according to Bhandari, he chose to come to the UK for his children's education and better future.

We were very much frustrated with the country's deteriorating situation. We were especially worried about children's education and future because there were always closures and strikes. We were in great confusion about what to do with children's education. When I learned about HSMP from my colleague, I was very much motivated by the provision of permanent settlement rights. So, we decided to apply for the purpose of our children's education and their secure future. Although I had to give up everything, my job, family and everything, we chose to come here for children-Mr B.

A decade-long civil war as explained in the previous chapter, had badly affected the education sector of Nepal leading to the closure of schools, colleges and universities (Pherali 2013). So, the parents whose children were in education were very concerned about the situation. They were looking for a better option for that. However, they could not send their children abroad alone as it involved various policies and legality of age and security. Migrating the whole family was the best alternative, and HSMP allowed them that opportunity.

Mr T, a 53-year-old secondary-level maths teacher in Scotland, migrated to the UK in 2005 under a highly skilled visa. Like Mr B, Mr T's primary motivation was his children's education and future prospects. Before applying for the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP), Mr T had begun the process of migrating to Canada, with his application already halfway through. However, in 2004, he learned about the HSMP and decided to apply. His initial application was rejected due to tax-related issues, but he reapplied and was eventually granted the visa, moving to the UK in 2005. Mr

T emphasised that the UK's renowned education system and the opportunities it offers were significant factors in his decision. He believed his children would benefit from high-quality education, paving the way for their success. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of stability and security in the UK, which would support his family's growth and development.

Before applying for the HSMP, I had begun the process of migrating to Canada. My application was almost halfway through Canada migration. Meanwhile, I heard about HSMP in 2004. So, I applied for this. My application was rejected due to the policies linked with tax pay for the first time. I applied again. Finally, I got the visa and came here in 2005. My main motive for coming here to the UK was linked with many factors, yet the main reasons were children's education and better job opportunities for them- Mr T.

Mr K- a 52-year-old man worked full-time for the National Health Service (NHS). In addition to his job, he was also actively involved in various Nepalese diaspora organisations. Recently, he was elected in a key post in one of the diasporic organisations of Nepalese professionals in the UK. When I asked him, he also indicated the unstable political situation in Nepal and its consequences on his job, family and especially on his son's education. According to him, all those unexpected scenarios forced him to think about migration and HSMP turned out to be an opportunity for him at that time. Otherwise, he said he was very happy with his high-paying job in an international company in Nepal.

I used to work in a senior position in an international company funded by the Swiss government. However, due to political instability, the company withdrew all its projects and stopped funding. I not only lost my job but also got a threat of life. The whole of our family relocated to a different city. Yet, I was so much concerned with my son's education. I was thinking of going abroad, especially for my son's education and better prospects. As I realised this visa scheme, I followed the route and came to the UK in 2005- Mr K

Drawing from the narratives, it has been clear that these migrants arrived to establish the UK as their second home, driven by aspirations for their children's education, future opportunities, financial independence, improved healthcare, property ownership, and the prospect of permanent settlement and integration into British society. However, the most crucial questions still surrounded their ability to achieve these goals among these migrants. So, I aimed to investigate whether they could realise their aspirations for permanent settlement, secure employment in their field, navigate the UK's systems, and ultimately obtain British citizenship as they had dreamed of achieving before migration. I sought to understand the overall settlement and integration patterns of these professionals, distinguishing their experiences from those of Gurkhas, students, and dependents.

In addition to the typical integration processes experienced by all newcomers, my research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of policies in facilitating the overall integration of highly skilled migrants in the UK. By examining policies, particularly those related to the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP), I aimed to uncover how these policies either facilitated or impeded their integration into British society. Specifically, I sought to examine the impacts of multiculturalism as well as the constraints imposed by civic integration measures, distinguishing these dynamics from those observed in other migrant categories. The subsequent section presents this aspect.

5.4. Integration Aspiration: Impacts of Multiculturalism

Initially, I wanted to find out the effectiveness of the specific policies associated with highly skilled Nepalese professional engagements and integration. However, upon closer examination, I discovered that multiculturalism has played a pivotal role in fostering their sense of belonging and overall integration. While policies directly targeting their professional integration have been undoubtedly essential, the broader spirit of multiculturalism has provided a fertile ground for their overall integration. To say this in another way, the specific policies surrounding the profession and work can be vital for achieving integration in those particular areas. However, multiculturalism as a broader approach is crucial in facilitating these work and profession-related policies thereby promoting overall social and cultural cohesion.

Similar to the Gurkhas' integration narrative, highly skilled Nepalese migrants also highlighted the significance of multiculturalism in their entire immigration journey. The interview data indicated that the British multicultural approaches to diversity, cultural pluralism and ethnic recognition embedded in the integration policy framework, have played a significant role in facilitating Nepalese professionals' integration. On one hand, this kind of inclusive approach has helped dismantle barriers to integration and discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, nationality, and race. On the other, it has facilitated a sense of belonging among highly skilled Nepalese by providing platforms for them to maintain their cultural identities while engaging with broader British society through their skills and expertise. According to them, the multicultural setting of British society has created an environment where they can engage with diverse communities through their profession-based networks and extend their personal as well as professional relations.

Celebrating cultural diversity under multicultural policies allowed these migrants to maintain their transnational cultural identity while integrating into British society. This dual sense of belonging was crucial for them because some of them were well-connected with different professional organisations in Nepal. Additionally, multicultural policies often recognise and value the contributions of migrants, boosting their confidence and integration efforts. For those employed in their areas of expertise, initiatives such as diversity training in the workplace and equal opportunity

programs have enhanced their workplace integration. The freedom to establish various skill- and profession-based organisations, such as the Nepalese Engineers Association and the Nepalese Chartered Accountants Association, has further promoted broader socio-cultural engagement. These organisations, through community engagement programs offered by local councils, have facilitated the socio-economic and cultural integration of Nepalese professionals within both the Nepalese diaspora and British society.

Moreover, the multicultural policy framework has fostered a climate of acceptance for diverse business ventures in the UK. This environment has encouraged Nepalese professionals to establish businesses that serve both the Nepalese community and the broader British market, thereby contributing to their economic integration. Cultural exchange programs and events have further promoted cultural cohesion by allowing Nepalese professionals to share their heritage, preserve cultural practices, and engage in social interaction and celebration. These initiatives have strengthened community bonds and cultural cohesion among these migrants.

Mr K, who lived in Dartford, shared his experience of living and working with various cultural groups for community cohesion. Affiliated with various community engagement programs, he provided a unique perspective on how multiculturalism has shaped the experiences of highly skilled Nepalese migrants, including him. During our interview, he highlighted the significance of Dartford's multicultural nature in fostering his interest in community engagement and a sense of unity. By giving an example of volunteering at the Parkrun event by their organisation, he emphasised his involvement in SONP and local programs in Kent, Dartford that underscored the importance of cultural diversity policies in creating inclusive spaces where individuals from different backgrounds could come together, exchange ideas, and collaborate towards common goals. Through his experiences, it became evident that multiculturalism has not only helped to promote social cohesion but also has enhanced the sense of belonging and participation among migrant communities.

I fully engage in local services, such as safe neighbourhood programmes and Green Kent. Local communities and local leaders run these programmes. We collaborate and volunteer for various programmes, such as weekly Parkrun, to promote our identity, which is very good. Similarly, on behalf of the Dartford Nepalese Community, I have worked in different positions to promote safe neighbourhoods and local cultures, which makes me feel like an integral member of this diverse community- Mr *K*.

Needless to say, the United Kingdom has benefitted significantly from the skills and services of its skilled and professional immigrants, particularly in the IT and health sectors (Aure 2013; Bass 2019; Raghuram 2006). Since the arrival of highly skilled Nepalese migrant, their contributions to

community service have notably increased. While many migrants, particularly those from non-technical backgrounds, have struggled to find jobs that match their experience, others have successfully established their firms and businesses. In recent years, numerous Nepalese professionals, particularly in engineering and accountancy, have set up their firms and built strong community relationships in the UK through their work.

On many occasions, liaising with local authorities, they use spaces in local schools or libraries to provide counselling and career advice primarily aimed at Nepalese youth. However, these services also attract young people from various other communities, supporting the second generation of Nepalese in integrating with the locals and fostering broader community cohesion. Beyond their professional roles, they have established various consultancy and counselling services, chemist shops, dentistry practices, and tuition centres, serving the local communities in numerous ways. By addressing the needs and interests of their local communities, these professionals have significantly contributed to the social capital of the Nepalese diaspora. They attribute their integration to the liberal policies that support diversity and inclusion, which have enabled them to thrive and make a positive impact on both the Nepalese diaspora and the broader local population.

Mr R, an engineer who migrated to the UK as a highly skilled professional in 2005, is a notable example of this community engagement. Despite facing initial integration challenges, he has established himself within the local council and taken on various private projects. Remarkably, many of these projects are voluntary, as he provides free services and encourages local youths to join as apprentices, offering them training and helping them secure employment. He proudly shares that many in his community know him by his first name, a testament to his community involvement and the strong bonds he has formed.

I and another Nepalese colleague have registered an engineering firm in Southeast London. We both work in the local council during contracted hours. Beyond these hours, I volunteer my time by counselling local youths who aspire to careers in engineering and providing engineering advice to those in need, all free of charge. Sometimes, we even offer training and apprenticeships to these youths. This work keeps me busy, but it has also brought significant benefits to our community. I frequently receive invitations to local parties and celebrations, which has strengthened our community bonds. My profession has truly helped me integrate with the locals, and while not everyone gets such opportunities, I feel grateful. Who knows, maybe one day I'll run for election and win, hahaha! – Mr R.

The narratives gathered from interviews reveal that many respondents were actively involved in local community services, particularly those engaged in different diasporic organisations. As volunteers, they supported both their communities and the broader British communities. Their

involvement in local well-being initiatives highlights their commitment to community service. This engagement underscores the effectiveness of multicultural policies in creating an inclusive environment that encourages participation in community services.

Unlike the Gurkhas, highly skilled Nepalese professionals faced no significant communication barriers. Being well-educated and proficient in English, they were able to build strong relationships with their neighbours. Through their personal and professional networks, these migrants established solid connections with local councils. By engaging with local communities, political leaders, councils, and various stakeholders, they successfully organised a range of community programs and charitable events. These activities included yoga classes, dance and music events, Nepali language lessons, and street festivals. Additionally, with the support of community leaders, highly skilled Nepalese have organised inclusive events and programs that encourage participation from people of all backgrounds. These efforts have notably benefited many members of the white community as well.

Mr RB was engaged in a party politics in a local council in Southeast London. According to him, he was a lecturer in Nepal before he came to the UK on a highly skilled visa in 2008. During his early settlement, like others, he also encountered so many hurdles. Although he tried several times, he never found any jobs in the teaching field. So, he decided to pursue vocational courses as a safety engineer and an electrician. According to him, he had to bring money back home to cover the college fees as he was not entitled to claim the public fund before he was naturalised. By any means, he completed the course and became a safety engineer and an electrician. Since then, he had his own business and firm, employing many people from all backgrounds. Through his services, he has not only built very good connections among the Nepalese communities, but he has also been able to be elected in a key position in one of the Boroughs in Southeast London.

I was particularly interested in meeting him and asking him about his journey from an immigrant to a local politician. So, after several times of attempts, I managed to interview him. When I explained to him about my research, especially about the aspect of highly skilled Nepalese integration, he was so excited to share his experiences. During the interview, he not only appreciated the diversified local communities but also highlighted the importance of the co-existence of multiple cultures for building Britain better. He praised the Nepalese communities and the locals who elected him in key post in local borough.

I am deeply thankful for the support of both the Nepalese community and our diverse local residents here. Their backing has been pivotal in my journey from immigrant to local councillor. Diversity is essential for the growth of a cohesive society, and my experiences underscore the value of an inclusive environment. The Nepalese community and the residents who elected me

have shown remarkable unity and trust. It illustrates how embracing diversity and forging strong bonds with local people can strengthen our community- RB

The stories of highly skilled Nepalese professionals like Mr RB illustrate a compelling narrative of integration, multiculturalism, and community engagement in the UK. Overcoming initial hurdles, these professionals have not only established successful careers and businesses but have also become integral parts of their local communities through different professional-based organisations and initiatives. Their ability to navigate and contribute to British society highlights the inclusive nature of multiculturalism, which has helped to forge both personal and professional growth while preserving cultural identities and a sense of belonging. The positive response that these people have received from local residents underscores the mutual benefits derived from these interactions, including enhanced community services, cultural enrichment, and economic contributions. Ultimately, their experiences demonstrate that embracing diversity and fostering strong community bonds are pivotal in creating a harmonious and prosperous society for all.

5.5. Policy Pitfalls: Struggle of Nepalese Professionals in Integration

This section critically analyses the adverse effects of rigorous integration policies on highly skilled Nepalese professionals settling in the UK. The occurrence of uncertainty, compounded by distressing incidents of suicide and deportation as mentioned in the methodology chapter, underscores the formidable challenges of forging a new life in the UK. Drawing from a wealth of arguments on this integration model, based on the available literature, personal interpersonal experiences, and information gathered from interviews, this section explores how the mandatory requirements of civic integration policies, both in Nepal and the UK, have significantly impacted their settlement, family reunification, and overall integration.

By presenting real-life integration hurdles—from securing employment and housing to accessing government services—this section scrutinises the pitfalls of current policies. Specifically, it highlights the discriminatory practices of not recognising Nepalese academic degrees and undervaluing their skills and experiences for employability. This analysis emphasises the predicaments faced by Nepalese professionals in the UK, offering a detailed examination of how civic integration requirements hinder their successful settlement and integration patterns.

In many instances, the British education policy and examination board do not recognise Nepalese qualifications. They assume that Nepalese pedagogy is delivered in Nepali and differs from the UK examination system. Even though many recent applicants have studied in English medium courses very similar to those in the UK, the National Agency for International Qualifications and Skills

(NARIC-UK) still does not consider Nepalese education and skills as equivalent to those in the UK. Consequently, many highly skilled Nepalese professionals have engaged themselves in low-skilled jobs.

This discriminatory practice has always prompted me to question: why did the UK government validate Nepalese academic degrees and qualifications for application purposes but fail to recognise them upon entry into the UK? My argument was not unique as these questions were raised by most of my respondents, highlighting a widespread concern among Nepalese professionals.

When I met Mr B, he was an Uber driver. According to him, lack of UK-based job experience in his area of expertise, and more specifically non-recognition of Nepalese qualification here in the UK posed all these hurdles for not finding a white-coloured job. Along with him, some were in low-paid jobs such as security guards, factory workers, and delivery drivers. This has posed significant social status and integration issues among these migrants. Compared with others who had a job in the field of their expertise, such as a few engineers, accountants, and medical professionals, in most cases those who were engaged in low-paying manual jobs were found less social, less integrated, more frustrated and mentally distressed. They always regretted their decision to migrate to the UK.

I have never mentioned my work to my family in Nepal and other relatives, and I don't feel comfortable talking about it amongst other friends here. They may think that being a highly skilled professional, I work as an Uber driver. When I see some familiar names calling for Uber, I normally don't pick up. At one time, I felt so embarrassed when I went to drop one of my relatives at the airport. I told him a lie saying I do this part-time- Mr B

Before migrating to the UK in 2006, Mr S was a political science lecturer at a college in Kathmandu. He had a decade-long experience teaching political science at a higher level, which made him eligible to migrate to the UK as a highly skilled individual. However, after he arrived in the UK, he was not being able to find any work in his areas of expertise. Every time he tried; he was rejected on the ground of qualification. Consequently, he was compelled to continue working as a security guard. Despite being frustrated with the unsocial shifts (both days and nights), he couldn't afford to leave the job for financial reasons. According to him, he felt uncomfortable talking about his job, as it was a matter of social prestige and status, both in the UK and in Nepal.

I am now tired of trying things. Every time I apply for a job, they reject me for not having British qualifications. It is unlike in Nepal where you visit the office, meet the people and talk to them about the job. Here, everything happens online. I can't meet people and convince them about my

qualifications and experience. Who is to blame? So, now I have left to try. I do this as long as I can and get early retirement. I am already 55 years old- Mr S.

Here, I intend not to criticise any work and don't mean to discriminate against the manual worker. I want to exemplify the cases of some highly skilled Nepalese migrants, who had moved to the UK hoping to find high-paying jobs in their areas of expertise but could not align with their field of expertise, and they felt so distressed. However, this was not the case with the Gurkhas and other trajectories of Nepalese. As many working-age Gurkhas were engaged in the security industry in the UK, there was no hesitation in doing a security guard job as it aligned with their previous job nature. Similarly, the dependents, especially the women, did not hesitate to engage in small businesses like restaurants, beauty-parlour, and retail shops. It allowed them to be economically active because they hardly had any chances to engage in economic activities in Nepal. In the case of the students, especially the young and single ones were ready to get employed in such small businesses as they needed to make money to meet the tuition fee, legality, accommodation, and stationeries.

In addition to the discriminatory provisions affecting employability, the requirements for obtaining British citizenship imposed significant burdens and stress on families. Although individual circumstances can vary, the stringent policies often prevented highly skilled dependents, particularly spouses, from acquiring nationality status. This restriction not only impeded their ability to travel but also limited their access to essential services, including political rights. This situation has left many individuals facing an identity crisis, uncertain of where they truly belong—Nepal or the UK. The absence of dual citizenship aggravates this dilemma, as Nepal regards these emigrants as ineligible for key services, while the UK denies them full citizenship rights. This double bind has created a profound and intimidating predicament.

I and our sons have got British citizenship, but my wife is still in Nepalese. She tried a couple of times but could not pass the English test. We spent a lot of money on her English classes and exams; however, she could not pass them. When we need to go on holiday or travel abroad, she needs a visa, and it is a long process. So, we have often cancelled our holidays and decided to go within the UK- Mr R.

It was not only the case of Regmi's wife. Hundreds of highly skilled migrants' spouses, particularly wives, faced significant challenges either in acquiring entry clearance to join their husbands in the UK or in acquiring British nationality. The inability to enter the UK led to severe family issues, sometimes resulting in divorces or husbands quitting the settlement process to return to Nepal. Additionally, the failure to secure British nationality created numerous problems, such as difficulties

in obtaining mortgages, loans, and credit cards. These limitations left many Nepalese women feeling hopeless, discriminated and frustrated by their expectations of economic freedom.

Peters, Schmeets, and Vink (2020) argued that citizenship does not equally matter to all categories of immigrants. It can matter differently depending on various factors such as the country of origin, occupation, age, ethnicity, and qualification. Although the notion of acquisition of citizenship has been linked with success in the labour market, immigrants' reactions to nationality policies differ, depending on their abilities and motivations to acquire a nationality (Huddleston and Falcke 2020). There are several cases of foreign nationals who have fully integrated into the labour market without being British citizens. The examples can be drawn from the English sports world, the NHS and big financial and technological companies, where most members belong to foreign nationals.

I also argue that to be fully integrated into British society, acquiring British citizenship is unnecessary. One can participate in many aspects of British life, including employment, education, volunteering, and community activities even without being British (Kostakopoulou 2003). Social integration, which involves building relationships with members of the receiving community and participating in social and cultural activities, is also an important aspect of integration that can be achieved without citizenship. Immigrants can participate in cultural events and community organisations to help them build connections and engage in meaningful relationships with their neighbours. Furthermore, there are many opportunities to contribute to British society through volunteering and community service, which can help immigrants develop a sense of belonging and purpose in their new homes. Therefore, considering these aspects, the government should implement generous policy measures to promote non-British immigrants' successful integration into the wider civic-political systems.

When immigrant communities face policy-level challenges in the destination country, as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis—integration as a three-way approach—diplomatic authorities, such as embassies, should assist their transnational citizens (Di, Kalantaryan, and Bonfanti 2015b). However, in the context of the Nepalese embassy in the UK, despite its efforts, the lack of power and resources has prevented it from influencing policy changes that could facilitate the integration of Nepalese professionals in the UK. To understand the role of the Nepalese embassy in supporting Nepalese residents in the UK, I interviewed the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Nepalese embassy in the UK.

We do not hold any power to influence or change any policy launched by the British Government. We are here to follow and implement the policies set by Nepal's Government- Deputy Chief of Mission.

According to the Deputy Chief of Mission, Nepal's response to immigration policies introduced by the UK is relatively limited. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, Nepal cannot exert significant influence over UK immigration policies due to the substantial power imbalance between the two countries. The UK, being a globally powerful nation, can shape and enforce its immigration policies without significant input from less affluent nations like Nepal. Secondly, the Nepalese diplomatic authorities, such as the embassy, have encountered challenges in reaching and engaging with the Nepalese community residing in the UK to investigate the challenges they face in integration.

There were some stories of success and prosperity. Among many, very few that we can count in figures have achieved higher status and better positions and become wealthier and more popular than they were in Nepal. Having been influenced by diversified political participation in the British political system, some Nepalese highly skilled migrants also have demonstrated significant interest in it. While there have been some local-level representations in boroughs and councils, no one of Nepalese origin has ever been elected as a Member of Parliament (MP). Dr Kaini, a Labour Party candidate of Nepalese origin, ran for the MP election from the Dartford constituency in the 2017 general election but was defeated by the conservative candidate. Similarly, another example was Mr RB, a local councillor in Southeast London. Some have set some examples, but many have been barred from participating in political activities. That was due to the policies in practice. Many of them expressed dissatisfaction with the condition that one must have British nationality to participate in civic services.

5.6. Chapter Summary

Considering highly skilled Nepalese migration to the UK as an example of a global economic migratory phenomenon, in this chapter, I investigated the multidimensional factors influencing their entire immigration and integration journey. To maintain a flow in the chapter's theoretical framework, similar to the previous chapter, I have laid out the introduction of this visa category in a global context, then I presented both pull and push factors for migration motives. Similar to other migrant categories, I analysed how integration policies influenced the overall immigration and integration trajectories of this visa group. Within the framework of British multiculturalism and its notion of the co-existence of diversities, I investigated how fundamental factors like recognition and acceptance, as described by Rosado (1997), have influenced the settlement and integration of highly skilled Nepalese migrants.

Furthermore, in contrast to the principle of multiculturalism, I critically examined the recent emergence of civic integration policies and their increasingly stringent requirements, as mentioned by the scholars (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2010b; Goodman 2012a; Joppke 2017a; Kostakopoulou

2010b). Based on the fundamental interest embedded within this policy mechanism, I have critically evaluated its harsh aspects such as frequently changing requirements and increasingly tougher criteria, such as the need to obtain higher points to qualify in the highly skilled visa category, particularly for non-English speaker immigrants, such as Nepalese. Based on the narration evolved from the real-life integration experience of this category of Nepalese, I have highlighted that constantly evolving and stricter requirements, especially in the domain of nationality acquisition and family reunification, have adversely affected their ability to settle and thrive in their new environment.

By examining the primary drivers of migration, I explored the motivational factors linked with their migration decisions. Through interviews, I discovered two main categories of factors: those pushing them away from Nepal and those pulling them towards the UK. Pushing factors compounded political instability, concerns about personal security, and uncertainties regarding education and employment opportunities for their children. Conversely, the importance of enhanced educational and employment prospects, greater stability, improved healthcare, and financial independence acted as significant pulling factors driving migration to the UK. While analysing this trend, I characterised this migration trend, as a one-way journey, and I compared it with a "brain drain" for Nepal.

While examining the policy effects in this category of migrants' integration, I argued that Multiculturalism policies in the UK have played a pivotal role in promoting the integration of highly skilled Nepalese migrants. Through their inclusive nature, these policies have recognised and celebrated the diverse backgrounds and cultures of migrants, including the Nepalese community. This acceptance and recognition have provided highly skilled Nepalese migrants with the freedom to express their cultural identity and participate actively in local communities. From participating in local festivals to engaging in religious practices, highly skilled Nepalese migrants have been able to maintain their cultural heritage while simultaneously integrating into the broader British fabric. Furthermore, multiculturalism has facilitated social interactions and connections between Nepalese migrants and the local community, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual understanding. As a result, highly skilled Nepalese migrants, to some extent, have benefited from multiculturalism policies by experiencing cultural freedom, local engagement, and a strong sense of belonging within both their diaspora and the wider British society.

Reciprocal recognition and mutual acceptance of cultural norms have not only developed a sense of belonging among this category of Nepalese migrants but have also promoted their participation in local organisations. Highly skilled Nepalese migrants and their diasporic organisations have made good access to their local boroughs and councils. On the one hand, by utilising the local resources, highly skilled Nepalese have run several programmes and promoted their language,

culture, norms and identity. On the other hand, the local communities have also benefitted from the skills, professions and businesses these people have brought to the locals. Even the second generation of Nepalese was found to be well-connected with the local communities through cultural exchange. This has promoted a sense of belonging and acceptance among them, as well.

Conversely, I identified several negative impacts of the recent trend of civic integration policies on the integration of highly skilled Nepalese migrants. Specifically, I highlighted how the concept of civic integration complicated and hindered the emigration process in the country of origin- Nepal. Based on the interviews, I found that civic integration policies had negative effects on the integration of highly skilled Nepalese migrants in the UK. These policies made it hard for them to settle and become part of British society. The rules were strict and demanding, like language tests and cultural assessments, which were tough for newcomers to meet. The mandatory tests and interviews made getting residency or citizenship even more difficult. The process of becoming a citizen was also hard and expensive, with lots of paperwork, legal advice and the high cost involved in it. Even though they were skilled and contributed to the country's socio-economic factors, due to the discriminatory labour market selection criteria, they found it difficult to find a job in their fields of expertise.

In addition to highlighting the challenges posed by civic integration policies, I underscored the significant impact on family reunification processes. Particularly, spouses and partners seeking to join their families in the UK faced considerable hurdles due to the stringent visa system and border screening procedures. The spouse visa application process became increasingly complex and time-consuming, requiring extensive documentation and meeting stringent financial criteria. Additionally, border screening measures added further layers of scrutiny, potentially delaying entry and complicating the reunification process. These barriers not only separated families but also created emotional and financial strain, as spouses and children struggled to navigate the intricate immigration system.

In sum, highly skilled individuals' migration has become a common phenomenon in recent years due to the competitive global knowledge economy. The countries in the global south, such as Nepal, are losing their skilled workforce, and in contrast, developed nations, like the UK, have implemented different immigration policies to attract highly skilled workers. So, for mutual benefits, sending and receiving countries must negotiate effective policies that can promote successful immigration and integration of this category of migrants.

Chapter Six: Nepalese Students' Migration and Integration in the UK

6.1.   Introduction

It is worth beginning this chapter with a conversation I had with one of the Nepalese students in the UK. This interview serves as a glimpse into the broader reality of Nepalese students' aspirations and motivations for migrating to the UK. Through this small window, one can gain a clearer understanding of the larger context surrounding their entire journeys.

I-   Why did you choose the UK for your higher education?

Ms Sth- It's a long story, but I'll share it with you. During my college days, many of my friends talked about going abroad for higher education. Some planned to go to Australia, others to the USA or the UK. I wasn't sure about it because my parents couldn't afford the high costs. I often told my friends I wasn't interested, but deep down, I was keen on it. In the back of my head, I always dreamed of going abroad and having a higher degree, finding a high-paying job and living a secure life. As there was no alternative for me, after college, I stayed home, helping my parents. One day, unexpectedly, my dad suggested sending me abroad for further studies. He brought a list of friends and relatives who had either obtained visas for the USA, Australia, or the UK or were already there. He asked me why I shouldn't try for the UK.

She- (continues) Then he emphasised the better job prospects, world-class recognised degrees, and the high value of the British pound. He also mentioned the social prestige it would bring to our family, as having a child study abroad is highly regarded in our community. My dad even offered to sell a piece of land to fund my studies, believing it was an investment in my brighter future and better prospects. My mom agreed with his idea, and finally, my dream came true.

I-   And how is the dream turning out here?

Ms Sth: (Takes a long, deep breath and pauses), that's a long story too, more like a novel, she smiled.

Indeed, it is more like a novel if one delves into the numerous stories of ups and downs, successes and failures, and the challenges and opportunities that Nepalese students face abroad during their academic journey. This journey is often found intertwined with the broader experience of immigration and integration beginning from home to the country of destination. However, in essence, her narrative stands as compelling evidence of the immense value placed on higher education among the Nepalese and the far-reaching impacts of education-related migration.

Considering modern education-related migrants as "de facto permanent migrants" as argued by Bass (2019:223), and categorising the Nepalese students' migration to the UK under the same category, this chapter explores the immigration and integration patterns of Nepalese students in the UK. Against the background of the recent trend of education-related migration, this chapter highlights some facts and figures proving this trend as one of the largest migration pathways. Additionally, this chapter presents the context of the United Kingdom and discusses the high value of British institutions and education degrees, which have been viewed as the marker of social prestige linked with better prospects. Then this chapter links the context of Nepalese students' quest for quality education and their hidden aspiration of permanent settlement dream in the UK. Based on the information gathered from the interviews, this chapter reveals intricacies intertwined with the individual's motives for migration. It then highlights the migration desire associated with students and their families' socio-economic, cultural, caste, class and social prestige.

Observing recent trends in the Nepalese education sector, this chapter illustrates that educational credentials have recently become more important for upward social mobility, social prestige, and enhanced quality of life in Nepal. Consequently, 100 thousand Nepalese students annually emigrate to Western nations, such as the USA, Canada, Australia and the UK for higher education (Sansar and Bureau 2019). In Australia, during 2014/15 Nepalese students represented the 4th largest number of international students, after Chinese, Indian and Pakistan (Pariyar 2018a). Similarly, recently, Nepalese students established themselves as Japan's 3rd largest foreign community (Kharel 2022). Compared to Australia, the Nepalese students in the UK were smaller in number, however, they were rich in their demographic characteristics such as age, ethnicity, gender, caste, qualifications and familial structure. Along with the policy impacts, those demographic features played crucial roles in their entire immigration and integration journey.

Various studies have shown that pursuing academic advancement in well-regarded UK institutions was linked to enhanced job prospects and anticipated economic opportunities upon graduation

(Docquier and Rapoport 2012; Skeldon 2009b). These young and skilled graduates aspired to find competitive jobs in big companies of developed nations offering attractive salaries and various facilities. Those, who found a job in their areas of expertise found that easy to stay and extend their leave in the UK. On the contrary, many of them engaged in low-paid jobs that did not align with their studies and skills. From an individual standpoint, while this presented an opportunity for improved prospects, it also raised significant concerns for the countries losing their potential workforce. This is because the skilled workforces, who once migrated to the developed nations, barely return to their country of origin (Skeldon 2009a). The outcomes derived from in-depth interviews conducted with Nepalese students in the UK unveiled a recurring pattern wherein no one expressed a desire to return to Nepal permanently. A parallel trend was discovered among Nepalese students in Australia (Pariyar 2018a), Nepalese students in Denmark (Valentin 2012a) and Nepalese students in the USA (Bohra-Mishra 2011a). Discussing the context of brain drain, Varma and Kapur (2013) also have mentioned a similar pattern among Indian students migrating to Western nations.

Focusing on education-related immigration policies and their alignment with the broader British multicultural framework and the recent shift towards civic integration, this chapter then delves into information derived from the real-life experiences of Nepalese students, and it closely analyses how these policies have influenced various aspects of this category of Nepalese including their educational experiences, cultural exchanges, social cohesion, economic engagement, and overall integration into British society. While analysing the policy implication, the analysis begins with an overview of Phase One from 1997 to 2010- of the New Labour administration's approach to education-related immigration policies, which were relatively welcoming and aimed at promoting the UK's economic structure by attracting international students. These policies were designed to position British universities as centres of quality education, fostering a more flexible and inclusive environment for cultural exchange and integration. This chapter examines the impact of these policies on the integration of Nepalese students in the UK. Aligning these policies with the principles of multiculturalism, it highlights how, similar to other migrant categories, the inclusivity of the British multicultural framework has effectively facilitated their integration.

Conversely, the chapter also explores the recent shift in Phase Two post-2010 under the Conservative Party's administration, where stricter immigration controls and civic integration policies have significantly affected the integration journey of Nepalese students. The discussion focuses on specific measures such as mandatory English language tests, higher visa fees, the introduction of the point-bases system and the abolition of the Post Study Work permit, and their direct impacts on the aspirations and integration experiences of Nepalese students in the UK.

In its conclusion, the chapter advocates for liberal immigration policies that accommodate ethnic minorities, such as Nepalese students, alongside global talent, emphasising the need for inclusivity and diversity in the UK's educational landscape. Through its structured analysis, the chapter contributes to the discourse on immigration, education, and integration policies, advocating for a more reasonable and welcoming environment for diverse student populations, thus fostering holistic integration and societal cohesion of these young talents.

Before I begin revealing the quests of Nepalese students linked with their desires for higher education and its broader perspectives, which I do in subsection 6.2.1, for now, in the subsequent section, I first briefly present the UK context of the recent trend of education-related mobility, wherein I discuss the context of Nepalese students' experience.

6.2. An Overview of International Education Mobility and the Context of Nepalese Students in the UK

In recent decades, there has been a significant rise in international education mobility, particularly among prospective students from the global south who aim to pursue higher education for improved career prospects in countries like the USA, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom (Choudaha and Chang 2012; Madge, Raghuram, and Noxolo 2015; Moskal 2016). According to recent information from UNESCO, the number of internationally mobile students tripled from 2000 to 2019, and more than six million students have recently travelled abroad for their tertiary education in 2022 (IOM 2022). This figure represented nearly 17% of the total international migration of which North America and Western Europe hosted 49% of the total international students. This trend has recently grown significantly, making the recent trajectory of educational migration one of the largest categories and a global phenomenon necessitating specific policies for integration (Bass 2019; Bolsmann and Miller 2008; IOM 2020).

Although the United Kingdom has traditionally been a popular destination for international students, especially those from former British dominions, in recent years, it has engaged in a global competition to attract the 'brightest' and 'best' from around the world, which I have stated in the previous chapter as well (Bass 2019; Bolsmann and Miller 2008; Lomer 2018; Raghuram 2013). On some occasions, this trend has been closely compared with industry because international students are seen as cash cows who help generate revenue for the receiving country (Bass 2019). Thus, to attract prospective students, the government has enacted varying policies in the domain of higher education.

According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 679,970 international students pursued their degrees in 2021/2022. Of them, the total number of non-EU international students in the UK was 559,829. The HESA data showed that compared with the previous year, 2020/2021, there was a growth of 12.3% in education-related immigration in the UK. For this growth, the South Asian nations, including Nepal, were seen as good contributors. Compared with Chinese and Indian students, Nepalese students in the UK are much smaller. However, as stated previously, education-related Nepalese immigrants make up 3rd largest category of Nepalese residing in the UK.

If we look at the trend of Nepalese students going to Western countries primarily for higher education, we can notice its upward swing, especially after the political shifts in Nepal. Recently, it has become a common fashion amongst the young generation. Most of these students think studying abroad exposes them to diverse cultures, broadening their knowledge and understanding of the world and developing professional skills for higher job prospects (Bhattarai 2021; Bohra-Mishra 2011a; Pariyar 2018a). Similarly, middle-class parents in Nepal increasingly recognise the importance of education for their children because higher education has been associated with improved social status (Stash and Hannum 2001). Parents and students think higher education often leads to lucrative jobs and is associated with elevated socio-economic status, as seen in developed industrialised nations such as Australia, Canada, the UK, and the USA (Bruslé 2009b; Pariyar 2018a; Valentin 2012b).

Apart from this, the recent education-related immigration trends have indicated that in addition to academic aspirations, factors such as family dynamics, the UK's historical ties to Nepal, social network influences, and the high value placed on socio-economic opportunities have played a significant role in Nepalese students' decisions to migrate to the UK (Adhikari 2012; Pariyar 2018a). However, compared with others, there have been very few studies about Nepalese students' settlement and integration patterns in the UK. Pariyar (2018b) studied the caste, ethnicity and hierarchy among Nepalese students in Australia and Valentin (2012) studied Nepalese students' status in Denmark. However, the area of Nepalese students' immigration and integration experiences in the UK suffers from a lack of academic inquiry.

Thus, from this perspective, the significance of the current research lies in its ability to address a critical gap in the literature on Nepalese students' immigration and integration in the UK. While there has been substantial research on Nepalese students in countries like Australia and Denmark, the unique socio-cultural and economic dynamics influencing Nepalese students' overall immigration and integration in the UK remain understudied. By exploring these under-researched areas, the current study not only contributes to the broader understanding of international student mobility but also informs policies on students' successful integration in the UK.

In the next section, I explore the quest for quality education and anticipation of permanent residency, shedding light on the motivations driving Nepalese students to migrate to the UK for education. By examining their aspirations for high-quality education and the opportunities associated with it, this section reveals how the promise of a globally recognised degree and the potential for long-term residency have shaped their migration decisions.

6.2.1. Quest for Quality Education and Anticipation for Permanent Residency

My investigation has revealed that among the various pathways of Nepalese migration to the UK, the quest for higher education stood out as a major driver. The pursuit of higher education from globally recognised institutions was the primary motive driving Nepalese students' migration to the UK. While analysing the pull factors, beyond the attraction of prestigious academic degrees, Nepalese students were drawn to the promise of a better quality of life, improved healthcare facilities, broader employment prospects, and financial autonomy. Conversely, concerns about the uncertain future, limited employability, political instability, and the perceived lack of recognition for Nepalese academic credentials served as indirect push factors prompting Nepalese students to seek educational opportunities abroad. Despite the multifaceted nature of migration motivations, based on the information gathered from the interviews, common themes emerged among Nepalese students in the UK, including aspirations for lucrative employment, a higher standard of living, and the possibility of permanent settlement. Some interview illustrations highlight these aspects, as below.

Mr B lived in Southeast London and worked in a café in Greenwich. On a particular day when I met him, he worked in a café run by a Nepalese owner near Greenwich University. When he saw me, he offered me a cake and a coffee and asked me to wait. Sipping my coffee and nibbling the cake, I waited till he made himself available. Once he made himself free for an interview, we went upstairs and discussed his education journey in the UK. He began his story by linking his objective of opening a school in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Before coming to the UK, he and his wife had built successful careers as teachers in Kathmandu, earning good salaries and living comfortably. However, he had a deep-seated desire to study abroad for a higher degree. He was particularly interested in obtaining a British qualification, which he believed would increase his respect in the eyes of his colleagues and students in Nepal. With this goal in mind, he decided to come to the UK in 2020 to study school management. He saw this as a means to open his own school in Kathmandu with joint investment and ultimately settle down

there. He believed that his British qualification would be highly regarded in Nepal and enable him to impact the education system in Nepal.

Look I am a mature student, I guess I am older than you. But look what I am doing here. I did not come here to do this. I came here to study MBA in school management thinking that I would be able to leverage it once I went back to Nepal. But, you know, my expectations were completely shattered. This COVID-19 ruined all my plans and goals. I had already spent a large sum of money coming from Nepal to cover the fees and my stay here. You tell me now, how I can invest in a school, I can't. So, now I decided to stay here, which I have shared with my family. They have allowed me to further stay here, and if possible, to bring them also here. Now I am in that plan. So, I am looking for all means to switch my visa to another category, like work permit sponsorship. But for sure, I am not thinking of returning to Nepal any soon. Let's see where this luck takes me-Mr B.

After completing his master's in school management, Mr B had nearly one year left on his visa to stay in the UK. He mentioned that he was already considering extending his stay but wasn't sure how to go about it. He struggled to find a job in his field, and without that, he couldn't switch his visa to another route. In this paradoxical and stressful state, he worked full-time as a barista, hoping that his luck would eventually unlock an opportunity leading to a long-term settlement. His narration highlights his ambition for permanent residency and the hope of bringing his family to join him. Bhattarai's ambition of permanent settlement again reminded me of why Bass (2019) characterised students as de facto permanent residents.

Ms P, who worked as a part-time beautician in a Nepalese-owned parlour in Kent, came to the UK to study MBA in 2021. According to her, after completing her undergraduate studies in Eastern Nepal, she recognised the pivotal role of obtaining an internationally recognised academic qualification to boost her career forward but was not sure which country to go to. As she was preparing English language proficiency courses to fulfil admission requirements, she was influenced by her friends who praised the UK's prestigious universities and rich cultural diversity. They highlighted the UK's robust education system, known for its high standards and global reputation. Moreover, she was drawn to the higher job opportunities available in the UK. These factors collectively solidified her decision to pursue further studies in the UK.

As a part-time beautician, she worked in a Nepalese-owned beauty parlour in Kent, where I met her. As it was difficult for us to stay in her parlour and talk, I offered her a lift and brought her to my place to interview her. Initially, she was uncomfortable coming with me, but once I explained to her that my wife was at home and that would be a chance to introduce herself to each other, she became comfortable and happy. Once she got familiarised, I asked her about her educational journey to the UK.

I wasn't sure whether to go to Australia or the UK, but I was determined to go abroad. So, I joined coaching classes to prepare for tests and interviews. Most of my classmates were planning to go to the UK, which motivated me to consider it too. I also had some relatives in the UK, so I contacted them for information about studies and work opportunities. They provided valuable insights about the UK, its Nepalese communities, job prospects, and the benefits of migrating there. Additionally, I learned more about the Nepalese community in the UK through the internet, which gave me the confidence to apply to study there- Ms P.

Drawing from the Ms P's interviews, I explored that social networks provided valuable connections for students in terms of internships, job placements, and professional development, with well-connected family members or friends potentially helping students establish themselves in their chosen field (Thieme, 2006; Bhattarai, 2009; Kindler, 2015). Established networks of family and friends in the UK provided valuable insights about educational institutions, accommodation, job opportunities, and the overall living experience, deciding to study in the UK more appealing and less intimidating for potential applicants in Nepal. For students with family ties, particularly among the Gurkhas, exposure to British culture facilitated easier adaptation. Familiar connections eased the transition, alleviating homesickness and providing emotional and financial support, crucial for those struggling to fund their education. Positive experiences and success stories from friends and family further motivated others to pursue education in the UK, highlighting the significant impact of social networks and familial ties (Kezar 2014).

I was very curious to know the educational journey of Gurkhas' grown-up sons/ daughters, who were not as dependent on their parents, but on their own decided to come to the UK for their tertiary education. Additionally, I was curious to explore how an already established nexus of family members and friends living or studying in the UK, in particular, plays a role in the migration journey. So, I decided to interview S Gurung, a 36-year-old man the son of a retired Gurkha living in the UK. At that time, he lived in Harlow, London with his fiancée. As a part-time employee, he worked for ONS (Office of National Statistics). The rest of the time he was busy with his modelling hobby, as he said he has worked in some short Nepali movies and videos, which I did not know until I met him.

He was born in Hong Kong as the son of a British army officer and received his primary education there. Later, when his father retired and returned to Nepal, he joined him and completed his secondary education in Pokhara, a city in western Nepal. During his stay in Hong Kong, he learnt much about the value of British education. At Pokhara's school, he met many interested in joining Gurkha and migrating to the UK or applying as a student to find an alternative. Despite his desire to pursue higher education in the UK, he was unsure how to do that. Like some of his friends, who

had migrated to the UK with their retired Gurkha parents, he also wanted to come to the UK, but due to his age restriction, as he was already above 18, he was not eligible to join his parents when they migrated to the UK in 2006. Unfortunately, he said he had to follow an education route to come to the UK in 2009.

While in Hong Kong, I had heard much about the value of British universities and degrees. No doubt, while in the army, my father was also well aware of the value of British education, which for him was not only a key to finding a good job and earning good money, but also a matter of social dignity. As a Gurkha, it was a matter of pride for him to send me to the UK for education. Some of my relatives (retired Gurkha families), who were residing in the UK, also encouraged me by highlighting the importance of British education, which would help to find a high-level job and earn money. Including that, I was interested in another reason it might open an option for permanent settlement. So, I chose to come here – Mr S Gurung.

According to him, after completing his studies, he had no option apart from returning to Nepal. But at that time Gurkhas were fighting for their children's right to migrate to the UK; for him, that was the right path to catch. He also appealed on that ground requesting his right to live in the UK permanently. His plea was rejected in the first place, but once the government allowed some of the retired Gurkhas' grown-up (above 18 years of age) sons/ daughters, he also got permission to stay here permanently. Mr Gurung was among the fortunate families who were granted the right to remain in the UK as members of the Gurkha family. In contrast, numerous other cases have been unsuccessful in obtaining this privilege but still have been fighting for that right. Further investigation is required to explore this aspect.

His narration has been crucial to argue that an already established nexus of family members and friends living or studying in the UK provided first-hand information about educational institutions, accommodation, job opportunities, and the overall experience of living in the UK to the potential applicants in Nepal. That helped them decide to study in the UK more appealing and less intimidating. Similarly, students with family ties to the UK, specifically of the Gurkhas, grew up with exposure to British culture, making the transition to living and studying in the UK less intimidating and enabling them to adapt more quickly to their new environment. As argued by Kezar (2014), having familiar connections in the UK eased the transition and alleviated homesickness, as they knew they had supporting members in the UK. Additionally, family members residing in the UK provided financial support for tuition fees, accommodation, and living expenses, which was a significant factor for students who were finding it difficult to fund their education otherwise.

Mr PD, who worked as a trainee healthcare provider at a care home, came to the UK in 2018 to study MBA. After completion of his studies, he succeeded in obtaining his PSW from a private firm,

where he worked for a few months. Meantime he came into contact with an agent, who advised him to switch to a carer visa, initially valid for four years, with the possibility of an extension. But the agent told him that would cost him about £5000 (five thousand). Although that amount was very high, that was the only option for him to extend his stay. So, he decided to follow that route. When I first time met him in early 2023, he said he was just lucky to get his carer visa for four years. He looked very happy and was hopeful that one day he would be able to live here permanently.

Although I came here for study purposes, I never intended to return to Nepal. My dream was always to come here and settle permanently. I chose the student visa as a means to enter the UK, but I have no plans to go back unless I hold British nationality. I have found there are many agents. You just pay a good sum of money to them; they will help you find a way to switch your visa. I know some other students also have followed this route. It is not easy for those with family and children, but for my category of single, yes, it is OK. I can compromise this type of thing, you know. By the time this visa expires, it would be a total of eight years of my stay in the UK. I have heard, that if you can live here for ten continuous years, I can apply for the ILR. I know it's not easy to find such opportunities, but I'll try my best. Hopefully, I'll succeed, hopefully... – Mr PD.

Drawing from these narratives, it is evident that the desire for permanent settlement in the UK played a crucial role in most students' decisions to migrate. Their experiences illustrate the determination and strategic planning involved in securing long-term residency. The willingness to navigate different rules and invest financially in various visa applications, on the one hand, underscores the importance of their aspiration to settle in the UK. On the other, these accounts also expose the active involvement of agents and firms in the business of visa alteration. At this stage, I can argue that it is essential to cross-check such activities and bring them under the regulation, otherwise, there will be always a fear of fraud, and many students can be victimised.

Similar to the trend observed among other South Asian students, as noted by Madge, Raghuram, and Noxolo (2015) and Skeldon (2009), many Nepalese students deeply aspired to obtain permanent residency and British nationality. Thus, it was crucial to explore how their ambition of living in the UK was either facilitated or hampered by the policies in this sector.

6.3. Impacts of Policy Reforms

Considering recent trends in international students' ambition for permanent settlement, it is evident that there is not much difference among highly skilled migrants family migrants and students, as all of them are often driven by long-term settlement objectives (Bolsmann and Miller, 2008; King and Raghuram, 2013; Lomer, 2018b). Consequently, policies surrounding the settlement and integration of these students are now closely linked to immigration policies for other categories of

migrants, especially skilled migrants. It is because, once they are in the UK, many students intend to switch their visas to professional routes thereby, they can extend their leave.

In this section, I conduct a concise historical analysis of education-related policy reforms from the late 1990s to the early 2020s. By dividing these shifts into two phases, I examine the evolution of higher education-related immigration and integration policies, highlighting the transition from multiculturalism to the civic integration model. The first phase, from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, is characterised by reforms closely linked to the framework of multiculturalism. During this period, from 1997 to the early 2000s, the New Labour government implemented flexible education policies designed to attract international students and support their integration into the UK's economy and labour market.

On the contrary, I rigorously scrutinise the policies implemented especially after 2005. Through the theoretical exploration as well as drawing from the interviews, I aim to evaluate how these policies, which are guided by the principle of the civic integration concept, have served the interest of the government by tightening the immigration border, on the one hand, and by impeding the entire integration experience of the Nepalese students in the UK, on the other hand. Section 6.3.3. in particular, serves my argument by highlighting the adverse effects of these policies in their entire integration efforts affecting their ambition of permanent settlement.

6.3.1. Phase One: Policies Closer to Broader Multicultural Integration Concept

Following the victory of the parliamentary election of the Labour Party in the 1997 general election, Tony Blair became the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on 2 May 1997. As Tony Blair had repeatedly claimed that the three priorities of a New Labour would be 'education, education and education', from 1997 until the Coalition government of 2010, the New Labour governments (both of Blair and Brown), introduced various policies in the education sector in the UK (Bolsmann and Miller 2008; Lomer 2018). By introducing a Prime Minister's Initiatives (PMI) policy, the Blair government began to emphasise the growth of international students in British higher education institutions. The policy was enacted in marketing the new ''Educ@tion'' brand intending to make Britain the ''first choice for quality'', which welcomed international graduates to contribute to the UK's labour market to boost the economy (Lomer 2018:313). While Blair's policies were oriented to control illegal immigrants, they still motivated international students by offering scholarships, providing part-time work, and allowing them to bring dependents and apply for Post Study Work (PSW) after their studies.

In his article titled "Why we must attract more students from overseas," Tony Blair outlined his government's efforts to attract international students to British universities (Blair 2006). According

to him, Britain was already a popular destination for foreign students due to its long-standing reputation for high-quality education, cultural diversity, and innovation. So that he wanted to take things further by providing more funding to promote the UK as a study destination and making it easier for international students to apply for visas. In Blair's policy, international students were supposed to bring significant benefits to the higher education sector and especially to the country's economy (Bolsmann and Miller 2008). The policy assumed that international students would foster creativity, bring fresh perspectives to classrooms, stimulate research collaborations, create jobs, and even help strengthen diplomatic ties.

As argued by Lomer (2018), Blair's policy was primarily a marketing and recruitment drive that was focused on attracting 50,000 international students within 6 years to capitalise on the financial, political and cultural benefits to the UK because the United Kingdom wanted to boost its economy considering international students as the source of revenue. By embracing talent from abroad, the UK, on the other hand, wanted to enhance its position as a major player in the global knowledge economy (Bolsmann and Miller 2008). So, to achieve these goals, Blair announced several measures to promote Britain as a leading hub for international scholarship (Blair 2006). His government pledged to spend £15 million on schemes designed to attract foreign students, including marketing campaigns, support services, and partnerships with universities around the globe. Additionally, easier and more generous procedures were introduced to facilitate student visa applications and reduce bureaucratic obstacles. By welcoming international students' academic as well as diversified cultural characteristics, the then broader multicultural policies sought to make the UK more welcoming for international students, advancing its academic, economic, and diplomatic interests.

However, despite these favourable conditions, the trend of Nepalese students emigrating to the UK was limited, largely due to Nepal's emigration policies and lack of media influence. Some Nepalese students did migrate during this period, with a few returning to Nepal or settling permanently in the UK. Among those who stayed was Mr DS, a qualified accountant who now worked for the NHS. He arrived in the UK in 2004 as a student to study ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants).

Back then, there were fewer Nepalese in the UK compared to today, but there were plenty of job opportunities. It wasn't hard to find work in your field of study. During my final year of ACCA, another Nepalese student told me about an accounting firm where he was a trainee accountant. Thanks to his referral, I secured a job there. I started a part-time position in the beginning, but soon the owner was very satisfied with my work and promised me to offer full time. After I qualified as an accountant, he offered me a full-time role and provided sponsorship. This allowed me to switch to a

highly skilled visa. Although the process was complex and expensive, it ultimately enabled me to stay in the UK permanently- Mr DS.

Through the analysis of the 1st phase of education-related policies grounded in a broad multicultural framework, I can argue that the policies facilitated the integration of international students in the UK through initiatives like cultural exchange programs, language support services, and student organisations. These efforts also helped international students, connect with peers from similar backgrounds and engage with the broader British student community, fostering a crucial sense of belonging. Additionally, by offering academic and professional development opportunities such as internships, post-study work opportunities, career fairs, and networking events, these initiatives enabled students to gain valuable work experience, develop essential skills, and build professional networks, enhancing their academic experience and preparing them for global careers. Furthermore, by encouraging intercultural dialogue and understanding, these policies fostered social cohesion and mutual respect, enriching British society and promoting diversity.

However, despite certain improvements in the area of international student mobility in the UK, as New Labour's education-related policies viewed higher education and international students as the major sources of revenue and economic growth, this policy was criticised for emphasising financial benefits over educational standards or immigration regulation (Leathwood and Hayton 2002). According to these scholars, the then Government emphasised on market and revenue generated from international education mobility rather than prioritising international students' education achievement, their profession, settlement, and their overall integration in the UK. Consequently, the policy was shifted to its next phase.

6.3.2. Phase Two: Evolving Civic Approach in Education-Related Immigration

As public, as well as political criticism, grew arguing that the government could not control immigration, the New Labour government, at some stage, was seeking a good opportunity to bring some changes in immigration rules including in the domain of international students' immigration in the UK. In 2006, following public consultation, the Government published proposals to modernise and strengthen the immigration system by bringing Point- Based System (PBS) comprising 5 tiers: Tier 1 – highly skilled individuals who contribute to growth and productivity; Tier 2 – skilled workers with a job offer to fill gaps in the UK labour force, e.g. nursing; Tier 3 – low-skilled workers to fill specific temporary labour shortages (this Tier is not currently in use); Tier 4 – students; and Tier 5 – Youth Mobility and temporary workers: people coming to the UK to satisfy primarily non-economic objectives (Vine 2012:10). As mentioned in the Government's documents, under Tier 4 of the PBS, an applicant was required to meet a defined points threshold to be successful in their

application. The current threshold was 40 points. They must also prove that they have sufficient proficiency in the English Language. To secure points, they must provide a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) from their sponsor and provide evidence that they can financially support themselves, known as maintenance. Out of 40 points, CAS was given 30 points, and the rest was due to the financial status of the student (Parliamentary Committee and Accounts 2012).

The introduction of the Tier 4 visa system in the United Kingdom in 2008 represented a significant shift in the country's approach to international student mobility (Lomer 2018). To improve national security and ensure that only genuine students were admitted into the country, Tier 4 introduced stricter requirements, including mandatory English language proficiency tests and financial requirements for students wishing to study in the UK (Vine 2012). Additionally, the increased scrutiny of education providers and agents who recruit overseas students led to increased compliance requirements for colleges and universities, which placed a significant burden on institutions, which were required to navigate complex regulatory requirements while maintaining their commitment to providing a high-quality education for all students (Bolsmann and Miller 2008; Leathwood and Hayton 2002; Madge et al. 2015). Additionally, the visa system meant that students would be required to leave the country upon completing their studies, limiting the potential for long-term settlement in the UK. In my analysis, that policy particularly hampered the aspirations of Nepalese students who had an ambition of permanent settlement in the UK.

In the 2010 general election, although the governing administration led by Gordon Brown was defeated after 13 years of the Labour Party's rule, none of the political parties received the mandate to form a majority government. As a result, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democratic Party formed a coalition government, making David Cameron the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Following the formation of the Conservative Party-led coalition government in 2010, as vowed by the party to lower overall migration levels, the government made some significant changes in its immigration and border policies (Parliamentary Committee and Accounts 2012). As a result, along with the restrictions applied in the border securities and to deter illegal immigrants, the international student visa system was also tightened as part of the party's commitments. One notable change involved increasing the English language proficiency requirements for applicants, making it more challenging for those whose first language wasn't English (Moskal 2016; Parliamentary Committee and Accounts 2012). On top of this, another measure, including conducting mandatory border interviews for credibility assessments, was introduced to prevent unwanted students. This kind of imposition of the screening system at the border, in my argument, can be linked with the concept of 'integration from abroad', which is the tool to tighten immigration flow, not an integration policy, as set in the civic integration approach (Goodman 2010a; Joppke 2017d).

During her tenure as Home Secretary under David Cameron's government, Theresa May played a crucial role in shaping education-based immigration policies. As someone who advocated reducing net migration figures significantly, she perceived international students as the primary source of the issue and targeted them accordingly (Parliamentary Committee and Accounts 2012). This resulted in the introduction of stringent rules and regulations governing student admissions, an extension of stay, and post-study work opportunities in the UK. The reforms aimed to deter prospective international students by portraying the UK as less hospitable towards migrants seeking academic pursuits (Lomer 2018; Moskal 2016). As a result, new overseas entrants to UK universities fell significantly leading to financial loss to the universities in 2010/11 (GOV.UK 2021).

On top of that, Theresa May, introduced a set of policies to make life difficult for those who couldn't prove they had the right paperwork. These policies aimed to create a 'hostile environment' for illegal immigrants, including cutting off undocumented migrants from using essential services such as the NHS and the police and making it illegal for landlords to rent to them or for them to work (Griffiths and Yeo 2021b). Following the 'hostile environment' policy, professionals, including doctors, landlords, police officers, and teachers, were tasked with checking immigration status, and the Home Office was given access to data from public sector organisations. That impacted the immigration and integration status of international students as well. Consequently, on Wednesday 29 August 2012, as international students were on their way to Britain to begin their university courses, the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) revoked London Metropolitan University's Highly Trusted status for sponsoring international students: thousands found they could not take up their places (UKBA 2012).

Similarly, in April 2012 the Tier 1 Post-Study Work Visa, which allowed Tier 4 students to stay on and work for two years after their studies, was abolished (GOV.UK 2021). These changes had bitter impacts on Nepalese students. For example, changes to the Post Study Work (PSW) route meant that non-EU/EEA graduates no longer had automatic rights to remain in the UK after completing their courses. That effectively reduced the duration permitted to stay in the UK and hindered job prospects, resulting in 98% of non-EU students leaving the UK who had completed their course during 2019/2020 (William Walsh 2021). Similarly, stricter maintenance funds requirements compelled sponsoring families to demonstrate substantial savings before supporting relatives studying abroad. In sum, these policies not only deterred the students from entering the UK but also made life difficult by restricting their working hours, thereby hindering their overall economic integration.

6.3.3. Restricted Working Rules Hampering Overall Integration

Although the economic dimension is not the sole indicator of integration, similar to other categories, in students' case also it is crucial for integration. Besides tuition and accommodation, these migrants must cover other expenses with limited funds from home unless they earn here. The high value of the British Pound compared to the Nepalese currency makes their financial burden a top priority. This constraint forced them to delicately balance academic commitments with the need to cover vital expenses like tuition fees, accommodation, and food. This financial pressure often drove them to take on multiple part-time jobs (in most cases, a cash-in-hand type), leading to exhaustion and potentially impacting their academic performance. On top of that, many reported confronting the distressing impacts of racial and linguistic discrimination. Unfair treatment in the workplace due to ethnicity or language proficiency was standard among most of them.

Mr K came to the UK in 2019 to study master's in economics. After completing the course, he had a visa left for 6 months. He has not decided what to do after 6 months but he said he has got something on his mind, and for that, he needs a lot of money. That was the reason he was working hard, almost every day. Following our appointment, I went to see Mr K in his room. It was about 4 p.m. on a cold wintery day. When I reached there, he had been ready to go to his night shift work. Before starting our interview, he made me aware that he was only available for 2 hours. He had to reach somewhere in London to work in a café in the meat market. He worked there from 7 pm to 7 am, four days a week, that is cash-in-hand. Observing his behaviour and his living conditions, I could easily realise the hardship he must have been going through.

It is not easy to live in London. Now I realise living in London is completely different from our imagination from Nepal. If you have money, yes, it is good, otherwise, no. I have now realised the importance of work and wages. I work every day. I do 4 days night shift, which is in cash and 2 days I work legally in a store. First of all, it is very difficult to find work because many employers or agencies do not prefer to recruit students. Again, there is a restriction of 20 hours of work a week. With those wages, it is impossible to survive. So, the option is cash-in-hand work in restaurants and construction sites. Yes, you get this kind of manual work via network and linkage, but the money is nominal. You don't get even half of the money that you were supposed to get. You can imagine how difficult it is to save money to manage all these expenses. Honestly, it is very hard for us to balance work and study. This is why many students, like me, cannot pass their exams- Mr K.

During the interviews, I could see his distress and frustration. His expressions were full of stress and pain. When he told me about his familial background and his parents' expectations of academic achievement and financial returns, that reminded my early days of arrival and the hardships I went through.

In addition to the financial challenges, most became the victims of workplace discrimination. Regmi, Naidoo, and Regmi (2009) have stated about the workplace discrimination of Nepalese health workers in the UK; however, part-time students and cash-in-hand workers' experiences of discrimination were worst among all. It not only undermined their self-confidence but also hampered the feeling of a sense of belonging within the society in which they were supposed to integrate. Such discrimination could lead to mental stress and anxiety. During the interviews, many shared their experiences of being marginalised and distressed.

Mr L arrived in the UK in 2022 to pursue an MA in English Literature, aspiring to become an English teacher. However, after a few months, he realised that wasn't the right path for him. Changing courses was too late and impractical, as it would require switching colleges and a lot of money. Thus, for now, he focused on earning and saving as much as possible, considering a future change in his course or visa status. He was not happy with the government's restriction on work limit for students. That was why, he juggled different jobs almost every day of the week, and in cash. When asked about balancing work and study, he admitted it was harder than he had anticipated.

I go to college once a week and the rest of the days I work. I work almost every day. Sometimes I take a rest on Sundays. Although it is not easy to work on a construction site, I have no choice. First, employers prefer full-time workers over part-time students. Second, even if you find part-time work, you're restricted to 20 hours a week. I work one 8-hour day in a store for National Insurance purposes, but the rest of the time, I work as a labourer on a construction site. The government should allow students to work at their choice. It is an individual responsibility to pass their exam and complete the study. There should be a choice whether to work, study or do both. The government's rule is giving students extra stress because one has to juggle multiple jobs to cover expenses. Everyone knows this- Mr L.

Although the new scheme of PSW has allowed students to extend their visas, the cost involved in it was very high, and it was proven to be a financial burden to the students who wanted to apply for this. On the one hand, they were not allowed to work full-time as a full-time student; on the other, they had to pay the university fees and bear all other expenses. After completing their studies, if they wanted to apply for the PSW visa, that would cost them £715 for application fees and £1248 for a two-year health surcharge. They also needed to pay fees for legal advice and assistance. For most of the participants, the financial burden was very frustrating. Most of them said they brought the money from back home- Nepal to pay for all those expenses.

The financial aspect was seen as one of the most crucial factors impacting Nepalese students' everyday life in the UK. Almost all my respondents indicated this aspect complaining against the work restriction policy. Their experiences of borrowing money from back home against their parents' interest, were sad. It was because middle-class Nepalese parents normally expect remittance from their emigrated sons/ daughters. But the UK's case turned out to be the opposite, that most of the students brought money from home instead of sending home. Let me present what Mr D said to me:

I paid more than £30000 for university fees for two years, and I spent nearly £15000 on accommodation and food. I hardly earned £5000 in those two years of time. All the money that I needed; I asked my parents back home, and they needed to take a loan in high interest or sell the asset. If you convert it into Nepalese currency, that is really much money. I don't know when to save that much money from this kind of work. Meanwhile, I am considering inviting my wife to come and join me. Therefore, I also need to save a good sum of money. Unless you can live in the UK permanently, there is no chance of getting a return on all that investment- Mr D.

Based on the information, all participants faced the bitter reality of experiencing a significant financial burden during their stay in the UK. Most of them had brought money from Nepal to invest in their education and living expenses in the UK, hoping to secure good jobs and earn good money. Families in Nepal also invested a considerable amount of money in their children's education in the UK, often resorting to loans with high interest rates or selling their assets. It was because, as mentioned in the previous section, they were driven by the desire for social status and reputation and also with the hope of higher remittance. Recently, this has emerged as a critical issue in Nepal. Although Nepal receives nearly a quarter of its GDP through remittance from its emigrated people, the government incurs substantial losses in foreign currency in this education mobility (Ratha et al. 2016; Sansar and Bureau 2019; The World Bank 2020). This perspective specifically reveals an adverse pattern within the cohort of Nepalese in the UK, particularly more evident among students. This trend stems from either their inability to accumulate remittance savings or their desire to financially prepare for potential settlement in the UK.

Along with the financial hardships, many Nepalese students, especially those who arrived recently, were unable to maintain their social connections and diasporic relationships, which have been vital for integration (Daly 2010; Kezar 2014; Kindler 2015b). Being far from their home country, they often lacked supportive social circles. They felt lonely and often isolated because of the lack of friends and a group of like-minded people. As discussed before, these students spent most of their time looking for work opportunities, and the rest they used for their studies. As a result, they barely had time to mingle with broader communities. Because of the time and money issues, those students preferred staying indoors rather than travelling around to attend different socio-cultural

activities organised by the Nepalese diaspora society. Consequently, they missed the opportunities to mix up with others, hampering their social integration.

To conclude this section, I present part of my conversation with Ms Sth, whose narrative was introduced at the beginning of this chapter, to reinforce the points discussed.

Ah, please don't ask how I pass the time. Honestly, I do not have enough time. 2 days a week, I go to college, which is far from here and I need to sacrifice all these days for college. Rest, I need to do coursework and assignments. I work in 3 different places in different shifts. On top of that, shopping, cooking, and cleaning up our shared- accommodation. No time to go out with friends and relatives. If I get some, I take a rest. But there is not any left for me, hahaha- Ms Sth.

6.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter highlighted a recent trend of education-related migration as a global phenomenon, particularly focusing on the United Kingdom as a highly preferred destination for higher education. The UK's historical ties with its former dominions, and its position among European nations have historically attracted a large number of international students. Nevertheless, despite not being a member of the Commonwealth, a large number of Nepalese students have chosen the UK as their top choice for higher education. The commercialisation of international education has significantly influenced students' decisions to study abroad, particularly for individuals from regions like Nepal, where migration to the UK is associated with social status and economic opportunities.

Motivations for Nepalese students included the pursuit of prestigious degrees, better job prospects, access to global employment opportunities, and the desire for permanent settlement in the UK. Originally Nepalese students were supposed to return to Nepal after completing their studies, but many Nepalese students ended up being 'de facto' permanent residents in the UK. Most of the Nepalese students thought that their qualifications would open doors for them to find some way to work and stay long-term in the UK. Thus, the desire for permanent settlement and further integration was the main factor proving Nepalese students as like highly skilled migrants who shared similar integration policy effects.

Thus, considering this category of Nepalese as one of the major categories, I investigated their multidimensional immigration and integration patterns in the UK. Against the education-related immigration and integration policies adopted by the UK, and closely linking these policies, with multiculturalism and more critically with the recent shift in civic concept, I tried to analyse the policies' impacts on their entire immigration journey- from Nepal to the UK.

In line with the broader multiculturalism approach, education-related immigration policies during the New Labour administration were relatively more welcoming for students because Labour wanted to boost the economic structure of the nations by promoting the immigration of international students. By advertising British universities as the hubs for quality education, the policies were enacted to establish the education sector as an industry- education industry. During that period, compared to the recent policies, the policies were more flexible and closely linked with the students' cultural exchange, social cohesion, economic engagement, and overall integration pattern. However, it did not mean, the then Labour Government was generous to international students' immigration to the UK. At least, during that time, various forms of multicultural policies were in hand, and they were, at some points, more relaxing than today.

This chapter, in particular, as one of the major arguments of my research, critically examined the recent shift towards civic integration policies in the UK, particularly under the Conservative Party's administration, which significantly hindered the entire journey of Nepalese students' integration in the country. During Theresa May's tenure as Home Secretary, education-related policies were notably toughened and restricted as part of broader immigration control measures. These policies aimed to limit the entry and settlement opportunities for international students, including those from Nepal. During this period, a series of stringent measures were introduced, including mandatory English language tests for pre-entry, interviews at the border, higher visa applicant fees, elevated income and tax thresholds, restricted working hours, and the abolition of the Post Study Work (PSW) permit. Additionally, bans on dependent entry and English language tests for dependents were enforced. These measures directly impacted a large number of Nepalese students aspiring to study in the UK or willing to live here permanently.

The implication of these policies left huge impacts on Nepalese students and their families not only affecting their ability to enter and settle in the UK but also disrupting their overall integration patterns once in the country. The increased barriers and restrictions placed on international students made it more challenging for Nepalese students to navigate the education system and access opportunities for employment and integration. Again, it is essential to emphasise that, much like the situation of highly skilled migrants, economic integration played a central role in the overall integration patterns of Nepalese students in the UK. This was specifically significant given the considerable financial investment students must make to come to the UK. Furthermore, the abolition of the PSW permit deprived Nepalese students of the chance to gain valuable work experience after completing their studies, hindering their prospects for long-term integration, and contributing to the UK job market. Overall, the recent trend of civic integration policies raised significant barriers for Nepalese students, impeding their entire journey of integration in the UK hindering their opportunities for academic achievement and ruining their dream to make the UK their second home.

Additionally, in this chapter, I highlighted the issues caused by the pedagogical difference between Nepal and the UK. I argued that Nepalese students found it completely different in entire pedagogical systems in the UK than in Nepal affecting their overall education process. This inconsistency was discovered to affect feelings of mental health potentially affecting academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being of Nepalese students in the UK. One significant area of struggle involved adaptation of the education system, and socio-cultural engagement, as mixing with a new culture could be an overwhelming and disorienting experience for them. Differences in customs, traditions, social norms, and daily practices could foster feelings of alienation, making it difficult to maintain meaningful connections with locals and students from diverse backgrounds.

Because of the tougher requirements set in the policies, Nepalese students were found to have problems finding jobs in their related fields. Besides this, due to the limited period of two years of leave, especially in the PSW stage, they did not have enough time for career development. Most of them were found doing low-skill work despite their higher qualification. They pointed out different barriers, such as poor social connection, limitation of visa period and discrimination. Additionally, financial burdens and family pressures were mentally depressing for them. On top of these, many of them reported the pain of family separation as their family reunification route was also as tough as it has been stated in civic integration requirements. Consequently, on the one hand, their dream of permanent settlement was not only getting dim but also getting darker and uncertain.

Nepalese students in the UK not only struggled to connect with British communities but also faced challenges in building networks within their own Nepalese diaspora. Balancing academic and economic demands obliged them to manage with limited social time, compounded by factors like poor social connections, lack of information, unfamiliarity with systems, and financial stress. Consequently, their integration was hindered, as they were less involved in Nepalese diasporic activities due to their isolated social networks. This isolation not only deprived them of community support but also affected their sense of belonging and connectedness in their new environment.

While there were four distinct categories, I found that highly skilled migrants and students experienced almost identical patterns of integration, which was consistent with the views of some scholars who have likened the migration experiences of students and skilled migrants. Despite their different immigration pathways, both groups, in many ways, encountered similar challenges and experiences when it came to integrating into British society. The student's intention to live in the UK after completing their studies was linked with a similar policy issue that the highly skilled migrants encountered.

In the case of Nepalese students, given the United Kingdom's unique diplomatic ties with Nepal, it should show generosity in its policies to facilitate the immigration and integration of Nepalese students in the UK. The interplay of these challenges with UK education policies underscores the need for a holistic approach to integration. Policies that acknowledge and accommodate students' qualifications and skills while facilitating opportunities for economic engagement. It can play a pivotal role in mitigating financial challenges.

Therefore, to enhance their integration, it's vital to address these barriers by providing resources, support systems, and opportunities for social interaction within both British and Nepalese communities, fostering a sense of belonging and well-being among Nepalese students in the UK. On top of that, I recommend that the United Kingdom loosen its education-related immigration and integration policies if it wants to maintain its historical reputation as an important hub for quality education and the workplace for global talents. This could involve offering international students equal fees and a longer period of work experience through the PSW visa system. By providing them with the option of labour market integration and permanent settlement, the United Kingdom can attract potential students and skilled workers to contribute to the competitive global labour market.

Chapter Seven: Dependent Visa Categories of Nepalese Migrants and their Integration in the UK

7.1. Introduction

While the primary focus of this chapter is to explore the migration trajectory of the dependent visa category within Nepalese migration to the UK, it offers a comprehensive overview of Nepalese women's immigration and integration in the UK. This occurred because the majority of Nepalese who held a visa as dependants, in the UK, were women, namely the wives or partners of the male forerunners. That type of gender intersectionality in this trend was closely associated with the patriarchal norms of Nepalese families.

To begin with, this chapter first establishes the concept of gendered migration patterns and presents a global context of women's participation. Subsequently, it situates Nepalese women within this framework, analysing their recent rise in international migration, particularly to the UK. Shifting the focus to integration outcomes, against the backdrop of integration policies, similar to other categories, the chapter explores the experiences of Gurkha women. Considering their similar characteristics intertwined with their entire migration journey, this chapter then combines students' and highly skilled migrants' dependents in a larger category and rigorously analyses their integration experiences. To acknowledge the complexities faced by these women, a dedicated section explores the challenges and opportunities they encounter. Finally, the chapter concludes by highlighting the varied integration experiences across dependent categories, emphasising the specific challenges faced by Gurkha women compared to other groups.

The patriarchal nature of Nepalese society and the preference for sons over daughters are deeply rooted in traditional gender norms and expectations (Maslak 2003). The predominant belief that only sons can prolong the family name, and ancestry further reinforces this bias. On the contrary, daughters are often perceived as burdens, destined to leave their biological families to join their husbands' households. This leads to the cultural expectation of dowries and gifts for their future in-laws. Consequently, most Nepalese families are less motivated to invest in their daughters' education, and this situation has been aggravated by economic hardship, marginalisation, or residence in rural communities (Maharjan 2023). This systemic imbalance in education has far-reaching implications, extending to their international migration opportunities.

The limited opportunities for Nepalese women in terms of education and migration can be attributed to several factors as mentioned above. Along with these, particularly, traditional families lack confidence and comfort in allowing their daughters to migrate abroad alone, citing concerns

about their abilities, safety, and security. Consequently, they usually prefer their daughters to migrate only after marriage. This trend has resulted in women being categorised as dependent or family migrants despite, in some cases, possessing the qualifications and skills necessary to migrate independently.

Various socio-cultural factors substantially limit the educational opportunities available to Nepalese girls. The Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey of 2019, jointly conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and UNICEF, raised concern about the noticeable gender disparity in education access among Nepalese girls (Maslak 2003; Maharjan 2023). The report also highlighted a concerning trend as girls progress to higher education levels. Particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, girls face higher barriers to attending upper basic and secondary schools. This gender-biased situation has been fuelled by factors such as conflict, poverty, child labour, child marriage, and gender-based violence, all hindering girls' access to education. The compounded effects of gender disparities and cultural norms have disproportionately affected Nepalese women within and beyond its borders, continuing a cycle of unequal opportunities.

Despite this tradition, in recent years, Nepal has undergone substantial changes across its socioeconomic, political, and cultural landscapes, leading to a noticeable increase in women's participation in international migration. Particularly since the 2000s, this trend has gained visible momentum. However, the migration patterns of Nepalese women often lack autonomy, with men predominantly driving the migration trend while women accompany them as family migrants (Bhadra 2007a). This pattern is particularly evident in the context of migration to the UK. As the population of Nepalese women in the UK has grown, it has become essential to understand the context of their immigration and integration. This chapter aims to explore the experiences of these dependent Nepalese women as they navigate their immigration and integration into the United Kingdom.

Thus, considering the Nepalese socio-economic and cultural structures based on the traditional patriarchal structure, where primarily men are viewed as prime movers and women have been seen as secondary/ dependent migrants, this chapter highlights the interplay between the visa categories of Nepalese women's migration to the UK and their integration in line with the integration policies in the UK. Based on the widespread assumption that migrations follow a gendered model according to which men move in search of jobs, while their wives follow them as dependents for family reunification, this chapter explores the intricacies of immigration patterns linked with various visa categories of Nepalese women and their overall integration patterns in the UK.

Drawing from the insights, it was evident that socio-cultural structural arrangements within households, workplaces, and national policies affect women's both pre-migration and integration experiences. The journey of migration decision and integration prerequisites were determined by so many cultural factors in Nepal. Once in the UK, it was evident that multiculturalism, similar to other categories, in this trajectory also, to some extent played a pivotal role in fostering their integration. These inclusive policies of diversities provided them with cultural adaptability, a sense of belonging and empowerment in gender roles with the opportunities to transcend traditional gender norms. By facilitating social networks within broader communities, multicultural frameworks promoted their cultural, religious, and social belonging and security among Nepalese women in the UK. In comparison to Nepal, in many situations, Nepalese women gained the confidence to fight against gender disparities and expose them to a broader socio-cultural stage.

On the contrary, the recent shift towards civic integration policies placed significant obstacles in the immigration and integration journey of Nepalese women in the UK, particularly affecting them more than other migrant groups. These policies with stringent measures, such as mandatory pre-entry English language tests, border interviews, increased visa application fees and the need for unnecessary legalities made Nepalese women's entry to the UK very difficult, and almost impossible for those who were from rural areas, poor family backgrounds and uneducated. Additionally, Nepalese women frequently experienced prolonged separations from their husbands in the UK, navigating through extensive documentation requirements and substantial financial commitments they encountered in Nepal before the entry clearance. These challenges created considerable burdens for Nepalese women, hindering their ability to reunite with their husbands in the UK.

The challenges and hurdles created by the tougher policies did not end in Nepal but posed more obstacles in the UK. Once in the UK, Nepalese women encountered further hurdles in employability, gaining access to the major services, and passing the English test, a requirement for naturalisation. The stringent requirement of this test posed significant challenges for many Nepalese women, especially those who were less educated, old and in some cases illiterate. Failing to obtain British citizenship not only affected their ability to travel freely but also resulted in prolonged separations from their families, as they faced restrictions on re-entry to the UK if they travelled abroad. Additionally, the lack of British citizenship limited their access to essential government services and benefits, further affecting their sense of inclusion and acceptance within society.

7.2. An Overview of Women's Participation in International Migration and Nepalese Women's Migration to the UK

Migration is deeply gendered; however, until the 1970s, most research and publications on international migration focused on male migrants only, and women remained invisible (Duda-Mikulin 2013; Purkayastha 2005). Yet, along with the growing trend of industrialisation and the need for a mass labour supply, women's participation in the wage labour market began to be recognised, and since then, there has been a significant presence of women in global migration (Aziz 2015; Ewa Duda Mikulin 2013; Kofman 2005b). After the late 80s, this trend grew rapidly in the European labour market, where women's migration gained good recognition. Especially since the 1990s, the increase in female labour migration has also become more complex, interconnected and global in scale, attracting considerable attention from academics and policy spheres (Aziz 2015; Ballarino and Panichella 2017; Kofman and Raghuram 2006).

Recently, women's participation in migration has emerged as a significant aspect of international migration, playing a crucial role in shaping the global demographics of the immigrant population (Kofman and Raghuram 2006; Raghuram 2008). According to recent data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2022, women and girls accounted for 49 per cent of all international migrants. In some cases, particularly in more developed regions, the proportion of women among international migrants reached as high as 51 per cent. This indicates that women constituted approximately half of the estimated 280 million individuals engaged in international migration worldwide during that period. The statistics highlight the importance of considering gender dynamics in the context of international migration. Considering gender perspectives in migration composition, scholars have argued that women's participation in international migration has substantially shaped migratory patterns and their associated social, economic, and cultural implications (Kofman 2005; Raghuram 2008a).

The 21st century has witnessed a progressive change as women have increasingly ventured into sectors traditionally dominated by men, such as technology, healthcare, engineering, and academia (Kofman and Raghuram 2006; Purkayastha 2005). In the context of South Asia, the report highlights the changing trends in this region as the percentage of women among international migrants has experienced a notable increase. Specifically, the figures demonstrate a rise from 46.7 per cent to 48.3 per cent in recent years. However, according to the Nepal Labour Migration Report, the share of Nepalese women accounted for only 8.5 per cent in this period (Bhadra 2007a). Behind this lower proportion, many socio-cultural, gender-biased cultural norms, political, and Nepal labour migration policies have played key roles.

Historically, there has been a conventional trend of reciprocal migration between Nepal and India, with Nepalese women migrating to India for various purposes. This migration from generations was not solely driven by employment opportunities but also by factors such as finding suitable marriage partners, pursuing higher education and training, and seeking a permanent settlement (Bhadra 2007b; Mishra 2022). The open border policy between Nepal and India has facilitated this conventional migration. However, Nepalese women's migration to the UK is a new phenomenon.

Along with some recent changes in Nepalese socio-economic and political sectors, there has been a noticeable shift in Nepalese women's migration patterns, and they are increasingly opting for destinations beyond India, particularly in Western countries (Malla and Rosenbaum 2016b). Modern labour migration dynamics, both in Nepal and in the global context, have influenced this trend. Therefore, the trend of Nepalese women migrating to countries such as Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, and Gulf countries for employment opportunities, has been on the rise. These countries offer employment opportunities, especially to young women, in sectors like caregiving, nursing, hospitality, and domestic work, with the attraction of higher wages. These migration options also have been supported by the Nepal Government's labour migration policies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal 2020). Similarly, there has been a significant surge in Nepalese women migrating to Western nations like the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom since the early 2000s (Mishra 2022). This recent trend is also driven by higher education migration driven by the aspiration of better job opportunities, improved life prospects, economic freedom, and the motive of permanent settlement- similar to other categories of Nepalese migrants in the UK.

In chapters four, five, and six of this thesis, I've highlighted three primary visa categories for Nepalese immigration to the UK: Gurkhas, highly skilled migrants, and those pursuing education-related routes. This chapter highlights the immigration and integration patterns of dependent women across these three visa categories, and the subsequent section delves into the immigration and integration of Gurkha women in the UK.

7.3. A Journey from the House to the Home Office: Gurkhas' Women's Migration and Integration in the UK

Here I have used two metaphoric words: **House** and **Home Office** to indicate Nepal and the United Kingdom respectively. House refers to the homeland, the country of origin-Nepal and the Home Office means the only authority having control over immigration and integration policies in the UK.

Chapter 4 of this thesis has focused on the immigration and integration trajectory of Gurkhas in the UK, specifically highlighting the experiences of male Gurkhas. However, the chapter has not covered the immigration and integration experiences of Gurkhas' wives. So, the main purpose of this section is to highlight immigration and the integration of Gurkha women in the UK.

Along with the increasing trend of Gurkhas' migration to the UK since 2009, studying the multidimensional integration status of Gurkhas' wives has become crucial. This is because it provides a broader perspective for sociological researchers to analyse various aspects of this category, specifically the soldiers' wives' integration prospects. As there has not been enough study about their immigration and integration experiences, the answer to the question of how these women acknowledge their migration and settlement in the UK still suffers from a lack of information. Thus, understanding the real-life experiences of these ethnic women from the rural areas in Nepal to the war stations where they occasionally joined their husbands and finally to the permanent settlement in the UK, has become a significant dimension of the current research.

Due to the nature of the Gurkha armed service, Nepalese women had no provision to join the Gurkha service until 2020, as for more than 200 years, the Gurkha Brigade remained open only for men. Consequently, it was impossible to find retired Gurkha women in the UK for the interviews. As an alternative, I conducted interviews with the Gurkhas' wives. Unlike their husbands, Gurkhas' wives did not have experience involved in wars and battles. Still, they deserved a wealth of experience relocating to various places, struggling to adapt to different cultures and experiencing separation from their war veterans. In a real sense, these women's battle against sociocultural, economic, familial and mental stress was no less difficult than their husbands' battle against the enemies of the British. Some scholars have tried to highlight the war veterans' wives' combat against their sociocultural and mental trauma while their husbands were at war portraying a mosaic picture reflecting various problems faced by war veterans' wives, who waited for their husband's safe return (Solomon et al. 1992).

However, the sentiments of Gurkhas' wives in combating socio-cultural, mental, economic, and gender discrimination have been overlooked. Very little has been known about the lives of the Gurkhas' wives while their young husbands were on the bloody battlefields for the British flag. In other words, while the Gurkhas fought in wars for British imperialism, the Gurkhas' wives in remote villages in Nepal struggled to overcome the challenges posed by illiteracy, discrimination, poverty, violence, and the emotional burden of seeing their young husbands go off to war. Living in villages and engaged in traditional gender roles, they spent their most productive young age doing domestic work while awaiting their husbands' return. Since these women remained in low profile in remote villages in Nepal, this aspect still has occupied very little space in scholarly writings. So, this aspect needs further research.

Considering the significance of this aspect, through the in-depth interviews, I explored the multidimensional immigration and integration experience of these women. However, despite belonging to the same migrant community as an insider researcher, as argued by Saidin (2016), I encountered challenges in conducting these interviews. Various factors, including cultural, linguistic, and gender differences, influenced the difficulties. Firstly, most of the Gurkhas' wives belonged to different ethnic, racial, and caste groups than mine. While these factors have less impact on their everyday lives in the context of the UK, they still hold significant value within the context of Nepal and the Nepalese cultural pattern among the Nepalese communities in the UK. Secondly, these women predominantly spoke different dialects, primarily Gurung, which differs from Nepali; I speak Nepal's main language. Many of these old women faced difficulties speaking Nepali fluently and preferred to communicate in their dialect. Moreover, they hesitated in conversing with an unfamiliar person with a different gender identity.

With the help of one of the Gurkha men, I arranged to meet Ms K, an 81-year-old Gurkha's widow. Her husband died in 2021 due to COVID-19, and she was living with her daughter's family. Before our meeting, the mediator (her son-in-law) explained the purpose of the meeting and interviews; however, she was uncomfortable talking to me. As discussed by Skinner (2012), to make my interviewee familiar with the topic, I had to spend a lot of time talking about the various aspects of life and cultures in Nepal. While doing so, I was very aware of my position as an insider and an outsider at the same time (Kerstetter 2012). Once she realised that I also belonged to the same community as an insider and I knew about village life, culture, religion and other aspects of the traditional women's ways of living in Nepal, she became comfortable talking to me. Then I listened to her using all my senses and paying full attention. When I observed so many other factors while listening to her narratives, I realised why Les Back has emphasised the art of listening (Back 2007).

I was the eldest child of my parents. So, I had to help them with agricultural work. I never went to school. When I was 19 years old, one of our relatives came to ask my hand for a British Gurkha-Lahure[8], and I got married. At that time, it was fate for a girl to get married to a British army. Since I married, I hardly got to live with my husband because he was always at war. We only lived together when he came back on holiday. I had difficulty looking after the children and doing the household work. Although I got some chances to visit countries like Hongkong, Brunei and India, I had never come to the UK. Many of our relatives came to the UK this time, and we also came here to live permanently. I don't know much about this place, culture, language and lifestyle. I find it difficult to do anything I want to do. I have become completely like a handicapped. I need

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[8] Lahure is synonymously used to indicate a man who has been in the British Army.

assistance with everything, like shopping and travelling. So, I do what others advise and help me – Ms K.

Also, Gurkha women were hesitant, less confident, introverted and less enthusiastic about socialising with other categories of Nepalese women. They had limited access to diasporic networks other than their ethnic organisations. As described above, most were old and limited to domestic work; they could barely engage in other activities. Because of that, they were less aware of any socio-political activities organised by the local communities and councils. The English language was their biggest problem, so they lacked information about the outside world. Along with these all, these traditional women were found going through many physical as well as mental stresses. Although they suffered from different health-related issues, they felt shy and hesitant to discuss their health condition. Neither could they arrange an appointment with their GP nor visit the hospital alone. Instead, many preferred staying home and applying allopathic or home remedies for their diseases. Adhikary et al. (2008) also have raised Nepalese migrants', especially women's health issues in the UK.

Don't ask about my ill health. I have all the illnesses that you can imagine- sugar, arthritis, asthma and all. I hardly can walk around as my knees pain. I have been waiting for a long time to see a doctor to show my knee. It never comes our turn in the hospital on time. I can't visit the GP alone or buy medicine myself. It is very difficult to get an appointment in a hospital. I sometimes rely on our herbs and medicines from Nepal- Ms K.

As stated by these women, Nepalese culture has a widespread belief and value placed on the opportunity to marry a Lahure. This sentiment was popular in the past but remains relevant even today. The appeal of marrying a Lahure is attributed to several factors. Firstly, their profession has potential financial benefits, as Lahure was supposed to get very good pay from the British. Additionally, these warriors' physical fitness, ability, and elevated social status contribute to their desirability as marriage partners. Moreover, it is still believed that marrying a Lahure opens opportunities for international travel, especially where Gurkhas are stationed. Due to these various reasons, the concept of Lahure is deeply rooted in various folk songs, traditions, and cultural practices in Nepal. For young women, especially those from specific ethnic communities like Gurung, Limbu and Rai, becoming a Gurkha's spouse represents wealth, social standing, and a sense of destiny. However, to what extent these women must sacrifice their lives to maintain dignity has been unclear. This aspect needs further research.

Ms Gurung also came to the UK following her Gurkha husband in 2008. And it has been almost 15 years living in the UK. However, for her, this place always looked as strange as she first arrived. She knew only a few people and only a few places. Almost all the time, she lived in a council flat,

where she had different neighbours with different languages and cultures. Her retired husband was also very old but still liked to go out to visit his Nambaries, but for her, it was not of any interest. Like many other Gurkha women, she also preferred staying indoors.

It is an honour for our Gurkhas that the British government allowed us to live permanently in the UK. It is much better to live in the UK. Our people say there are many facilities, like transportation, education and health care. However, I cannot use them because of a lack of knowledge. The English language is the main problem. I don't understand any words. So, I find it difficult to travel, visit my GP, do our everyday shopping and go to the bank. My husband asks for help from our youths and relatives who speak English. I do not know much about anything except our daily use of things. We miss our country and our relatives, but what to say? We chose to come here. I don't have long enough to live. So, I am not too worried about all these things- Ms Gurung.

From the interviews, I discovered that, despite having spent a decade or more in the UK, these women exhibited limited awareness regarding their immigration and integration journey. They lacked comprehensive knowledge of the reasons behind their relocation. However, they were found to be primarily motivated by the fact that their husbands and relatives also migrated to the UK. Their limited awareness could be attributed to the unique nature of their husbands' military service and their lack of understanding regarding the immigration processes associated with their husbands' migration. Furthermore, most of these women were from remote villages in Nepal and they possessed limited education; in most cases, they did not go to school; instead, they spent most of their young age doing agricultural work and caring for their families. By the time they got the opportunity to relocate to the UK, they were already old and physically weak. Consequently, their understanding of their lives in the UK remained limited as they followed their husbands' footsteps and accepted the general way of life.

Sometimes our husbands take us to functions and events, which I really enjoy. I get to meet many women like me, often from the same region in Nepal. We talk, laugh, and sometimes dance together. On special occasions, our 'Nambaries' (fellow soldiers) invite us, and we go there. I don't know much about the rules and laws here; I just follow my husband and other relatives and do what they tell me. There are many Nepali shops in Plumstead, and I like to go shopping there occasionally. I don't need to speak English in those shops. If I do need to speak English, I just laugh and leave. I feel like I'm mute here, hahaha- Ms Gurung.

From their stories, I discovered that their knowledge of this subject was limited. They followed the way of life their husbands led and relied on their trusted relatives' guidance. While some had their sons and daughters to assist them in navigating life in the UK, most depended on their relatives and the local charities operated by the Nepalese communities. Many Gurkha women in the UK

didn't know much about migration laws or policies that influence their everyday livelihood, but they found comfort in Britain's multicultural setup. They could live like traditional Lahure women, wear their traditional clothes, visit temples and local parks and visit their relatives locally. Local shops run by fellow migrants have made their everyday grocery shopping easy as the shopkeeper could speak Nepali. Some cultural events related to the Gurkha culture and other Nepalese events occasionally organised by the local community, at some points, have fostered their socialisation at a limited level.

However, because of these complications influenced by the language barrier, cultural differences, poor social network, and lack of mixing up with other communities, these women's integration was slower and relatively unsatisfactory compared to other categories of Nepalese women in the UK. It appeared that these aged women, like their retired husbands, were struggling to acquire valuable knowledge about their new lives in the UK.

Besides this, they lacked access to the labour market or any other economic activities. Compared with other categories of Nepalese women, Gurkha women suffered from poorer transnational as well as diasporic networks. Due to the lack of diasporic networks and social connections, they faced restrictions in social mobility. Inefficiency in the English language has not only posed a barrier, obstructing their ability to navigate daily life in broader British society but also has barred them from acquiring British citizenship, hindering their participation in political activities. On top of that, they have been discouraged from acquiring some services like bank loans, mortgages, and civic rights due to the absence of citizenship. Other factors, including age, illiteracy, reliance on spouses and families, language and cultural unfamiliarity, inadequate labour market participation, health issues related to ageing, and a lack of diasporic support networks, have collectively contributed to the lower level of integration status of these women in the UK.

7.4. In the Footsteps of Skilled and Educated Partners: Nepalese Women's UK Ventures

Unlike Gurkhas' wives, other categories of women were not permitted to accompany their partners on their migration journey. Instead, they had to meet specific requirements outlined in the dependent visa application processes and qualify as dependents to join their husbands. In comparison to the policies governing highly skilled migrants and education-related migration, there were notable differences in the visa processes and requirements for primary applicants. However, when considering the dependents of skilled migrants or students, there were minimal variations in their overall immigration procedures. Both categories of dependents were subject to similar policy implications to qualify as dependents. Therefore, this section sheds light on the experiences of

these women, as a single category, in the UK within the framework of immigration and integration policies.

Beginning with a narrative of a highly skilled Nepalese migrant's wife, who possessed higher education, skills and experience of living abroad, yet chose to migrate to the UK on a dependent visa rather than applying as a primary applicant, I want to highlight the interplay between the male-dominant patriarchal familial structure of Nepal where women are seen within the traditional gender roles rather than as independent exposer and the migration opportunities. This kind of socio-cultural fact, on the one hand, makes it easy to portray livelihood patterns linked with the limited opportunities they get in Nepal. On the other, this aspect offers valuable sociological insight while exploring their migration patterns linked with equal opportunities, socio-economic freedom, gender equality and many more.

While studying in India, I planned to go to the USA for higher study or migrate to the UK as a highly skilled migrant. When I returned to Nepal for my marriage, I realised that my would-be-husband was living in the UK under the highly skilled visa scheme. My parents' interest was also to send me abroad after getting married. For them, it was easier for me to come to the UK. In fact, I could have applied as a highly skilled migrant because I have a higher qualification than my husband, but I was obliged to choose to follow a dependent route- Ms KK.

Ms KK's narrative serves as an important illustration of the complex interplay between gender dynamics, familial expectations, and individual aspirations within Nepalese society. Through her experience, we gain valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of migration, wherein personal choices are often shaped by broader socio-cultural forces. From this aspect, Ms KK's migration represented not only a physical transition from one country to another but also a symbolic shift from dependency to independence.

In many cases, the independent decision-making of women regarding migration has been suppressed, extending from dependent visa categories to cases involving female students seeking to pursue higher education in the UK. Women often encounter more stringent barriers to accessing higher education opportunities compared to their male counterparts, despite increasing awareness of the significance of educating and empowering daughters, particularly among urban families. This phenomenon was particularly evident among Nepalese women seeking educational opportunities abroad, where many potential female students faced discrimination in their desire for higher study in the UK. Only a select few, predominantly those from urban backgrounds and whose parents prioritise their daughters' education and empowerment, managed to overcome these barriers. Consequently, a considerable number of promising female students found themselves barred from pursuing higher education in the UK due to societal norms, familial expectations, and systemic

obstacles. This disparity underscores the persistence of gender-based inequalities and highlights the urgent need for concerted efforts to dismantle barriers preventing women from fully realising their educational and professional potential, both in the UK and globally.

Ms SH's narrative was also very similar to Ms KK and others. She explained that her parents could afford her and her brother's education at a private school in Nepal. When her brother went to Australia for further studies after completing his MBA, she also wanted to go, but her parents insisted she get married first. Her banker husband had better chances of qualifying as a highly skilled migrant for the UK. He then applied for the visa and got it, and their new conjugal life began here in the UK.

Some of my relatives were in Australia and I was thinking of going there, but it did not turn up as I planned. You know the fact, we are daughters! My parents were not confident about sending me abroad on my own. They insisted I get married first before I plan to go abroad. Obeying their decision, I got married to a banker. After our marriage, although he was not very interested in leaving his high-profile banking job, I persuaded him to apply for a highly skilled migrant visa. In the first place, he was undecided, but as I kept on asking, he began the process. Luckily, our application was succeeded. After nearly six months of our marriage, luckily, we got a chance to come here- Ms SH.

Both of these women were the representatives of those, who were better off than their counterparts, but were the victims of intersectional oppression, where Nepalese women have been tangled with the distinct forms of oppression linked with gender, caste, culture and sexuality; as discussed by Davis (2006). Despite the fact of having better qualifications, experiences and financial status, in most cases, these women were compelled to follow their husbands' footsteps, and this case was more evident in both categories- highly skilled and students.

Unlike Ms KK and Ms SH, Ms SD, a 22-year-old woman, came to the UK as a student dependent. Due to her educational background, she was not eligible to migrate as the main applicant, so she followed in her student husband's footsteps. According to her, the journey was not easy. Her limited qualifications and lack of proficiency in English created problems at every step, from the visa application process in Nepal to the immigration clearance in the UK.

I could not continue my studies after my mother's death because I had to take care of my brothers and help my father with his agricultural work in the village. A year after my mother's death, my father arranged my marriage. I knew nothing about the man I was marrying, but I had to agree with my father's decision. After the marriage, I learned that my husband was in the process of coming to the UK as a student. He had started the process but needed a large amount of money, which his

parents could not provide. My father decided to sell a piece of land to invest in my future. Fortunately, we got the visa and came to the UK- Ms SD.

When I asked her about her migration journey from Nepal to London, she said: *I faced numerous problems during my immigration journey from Nepal to the UK. Initially, the visa application process was daunting due to my limited education and poor command of the English language. The pre-interview requirements were stringent, and I struggled to understand and complete the complex paperwork. During the interview at the embassy, the language barrier posed a significant challenge as I couldn't comprehend many of the questions asked in English, making the process even more stressful. Upon arrival in London, the immigration clearance was another major hurdle. The officers questioned me extensively about my intentions and my husband's student status. My nervousness and difficulty communicating in English made the situation even more overwhelming.*

7.5. Navigating Integration Between Opportunities and Challenges

My research has revealed that while migration has provided Nepalese women with new experiences and improved economic prospects, distancing them from traditional gender roles in Nepal, it has also posed unique challenges as they navigate their new lives in the UK (Bohra-Mishra 2011b; Malla and Shrestha 2000; Mishra 2022). From the interviews I conducted, it was evident that migration to the UK offered Nepalese women numerous opportunities for personal growth and empowerment, alongside significant challenges that they must overcome. This transition from Nepal to the UK required resilience and determination as these women negotiated the complexities of integration. Their stories highlighted both the opportunities and obstacles they faced, contributing to a broader understanding of the integration process.

Many Nepalese women found migration to the UK a better alternative for their overall enhancement than living in Nepal. For them, migration to the United Kingdom has been a promising avenue for personal and societal progress. They believed this migration has helped them foster better livelihoods and increased life standards and quality in various aspects of their lives. A young woman, like Ms Subedi's story of transition, serves the significance of this aspect.

After arriving in the UK as the dependent of a student, Ms SD was initially overwhelmed by the complexity of the system. With limited education and a poor command of the English language, she was nervous, hopeless and confused. However, after a few months, she began to adapt to life in the UK. Starting as a trainee beautician, she began her first job at a Nepalese-owned parlour. There, she learned to work in a new environment, improved her communication skills, and gained a better understanding of the local culture. On top of that, she was able to make friends and establish good relationships with the customers, who also were almost all Nepalese. That helped

her to mix up with other women in the community. Seeing the financial potential in the beauty industry, she decided to pursue a career in this field. Convincing her husband, she enrolled in a community college to take a relevant course. After six months of training and part-time work experience, she became a full-time beautician. With her husband's visa still valid for over a year, she planned to continue working and saving money.

I was not used to doing any wage- work in Nepal because I did not have to. But after coming here, I learnt the importance of being independent. I was so surprised when I first saw a female bus driver in London because I had never seen a woman driving a bus in Nepal. Then I realised women's participation in any work, as men do. It motivated me to be economically active and financially independent. However, it was not easy for me to find work. Similarly, because of the restricted working-hour policies, my husband was frustrated in finding part-time work, which left him unemployed for a long time. That forced me to find work to survive. Luckily, I got a job in a beauty parlour, which also belonged to a Nepali aunty. Although I had taken training in beautician before coming to the UK, I had never got a chance to practise in a parlour. That aunty taught me how to work and behave with clients. She gave me work every day and I also did it. After a few months, following her advice, I enrolled in a college in a beautician course. That aunty told me I needed a license if I wanted to work as a full-time beautician. I went to college part-time and continued to work. Now, I am enjoying working as a full-time beautician. I quite like it, because I meet many Nepali women coming here. I am thinking of continuing it unless my husband completes his studies- Ms SD.

At this point, I argue that, in some cases, these women have been able to challenge traditional expectations. They have proven they can succeed if given equal opportunities and a suitable environment. Although it has not been easy for them to adapt to a new culture in the UK, they seem to have shown determination and resilience in pursuing economic independence. The research shows that many Nepalese women who came to the UK as dependents or spouses, to some extent, were found to have been able to turn their lives around and become active labour market participants. In some cases, they earned even more money than their husbands.

After a few attempts, I managed to meet Ms KD, who came to the UK with her husband, an accountant. Being a mother of two young children, Ms KD was still very active in the Nepalese community in Southeast London. Although she had not been involved in such activities in Nepal, she began to engage in various initiatives after arriving in the UK. According to her, she took the initiative to establish a local women's organisation and hosted several activities to empower women in her community. She shared her experiences of being active and engaged in various activities thereby promoting women's participation in such activities and empowering them. When I asked her about her experience of living in here, she said:

I had heard about the equality and freedom for women in Western countries when I was in Nepal. Now, that has become true for us. When I learned about cultural freedom, gender equality, and the importance of women's participation in local activities, I began to form a group of friends, relatives, and sisters. Most of the members of our group equally engaged in activities to promote our culture, religion, Nepalese festivals, and heritage, as well as women's empowerment. To date, we have held dozens of programs. We don't do big things, but we try to preserve our dance, music, arts, festivals, and the Nepali language. We teach these to the new generation. Occasionally, we invite women from other communities to join our dance and charitable events. We are very proud of these efforts, which we never had the opportunity to do in Nepal- Ms KD.

Apart from local women's groups and community-based committees, most of them seemed to have utilised their diasporic network set by their husbands, explored the opportunity and engaged in cultural activities. As some of them were highly educated and had good work and career experiences in Nepal, compared to Gurkha women, they were found to be more integrated in the UK. A significant focal point was their endeavour to establish an autonomous identity.

On the contrary, beginning from their home to extending to the Home Office- UK, they encountered countless challenges. For instance, firstly, facing unfamiliar policies governing their migration journey, they had to come across various pre-entry requirements for visa application. Similarly, once in the UK, they began to struggle with adapting to a new culture, dealing with English language barriers, and accessing the job market and essential services. For these women, it was like climbing uphill all the time, to navigate their new life in the UK.

When I first arrived in the UK, I was overwhelmed by the unfamiliar culture. Adapting to a new culture was daunting, and the English language barrier made it even harder. Simple tasks like grocery shopping or visiting the doctor became stressful events because I couldn't fully understand or communicate. Finding a job was a challenge, as my qualifications from Nepal weren't recognised, and I didn't know where to start. Accessing essential services was another uphill battle; the systems were so different from what I was used to back home. Without a network or community support, I felt isolated and had no one to turn to for guidance. I often faced discrimination due to my ethnicity and immigrant status, which severely limited my professional growth and social inclusion. Being away from my family left me feeling isolated and homesick, compounded by the stress of adapting to a new environment. Balancing work and home life was incredibly stressful. The lack of affordable childcare meant I had to juggle long working hours and domestic duties without sufficient support- Ms CH.

In addition to the previously discussed factors, the research highlighted a significant challenge faced by Nepalese women striving to achieve permanent residency status in the UK, which was their main reason for migration. This issue was particularly pronounced among the dependents of students, as their entire integration experience hinged on their student husband's visa status. Conversely, the quest for permanent settlement was less pressing for the dependents of Gurkha and highly skilled migrants. However, similar to Gurkha women, the desire for nationality was most prominent among the dependents of highly skilled migrants. Due to the requirements of civic integration policies, many struggled to obtain citizenship. I have consistently pointed out the negative consequences of not acquiring British nationality. The process of moving from a temporary visa status to permanent residency and eventually securing citizenship was challenging due to policy barriers. Stringent immigration policies created anxiety and uncertainty for these women, affecting their ability to establish a stable and secure life in the UK.

The story of Ms BR, the wife of an engineer, reflected the broader struggles faced by many dependents of highly skilled migrants in their quest to acquire a nationality. Her experience underscored the significant impact that stringent policies had on their overall integration journey. It was clear that dependents of highly skilled migrants were particularly affected by these rigorous requirements.

To become a British citizen, I first had to pass the English test, but I failed it many times. I can speak a little English but writing and using the computer for the test are really hard for me. Each time I failed, it cost us a lot of money that we didn't have. My family was unhappy every time I failed, and it made me feel very ashamed and useless in front of our friends and family. These problems have made it hard for me to settle down and build a secure life here. My husband is upset that I can't get a mortgage to buy a house, and that makes me feel even worse. I feel like there's no point in being here if I can't do this myself- Ms BR.

My research has discovered the numerous challenges they faced. These challenges spanned from Kathmandu to Kent, as stated by Gellner (2014). They frequently encountered discrimination and bias based on their ethnicity and immigrant status, which limited their professional advancement and social inclusion. Traditional norms imposed the expectation for women to simultaneously fulfil multiple roles in the workplace and at home- as breadwinners, they must contribute financially while also being primary caregivers for their children and managing domestic duties. This dual role has placed immense pressure on them, as they were navigating long working hours without sufficient support systems and struggling with the lack of affordable and accessible childcare facilities. Moreover, the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles limits their career advancement. It hindered the pursuit of their aspirations, leading to guilt and inadequacy when societal expectations could not be met in either domain.

Additionally, I discovered significant differences between rural and ethnic women from Nepal and those who migrated from cities, especially when it came to their integration experiences in the UK. Women from rural areas of Nepal encountered various inequalities like discrimination, limited diasporic networks and further education options, and being confined to domestic roles. These factors impacted their integration within the Nepalese communities and with broader British societies in the UK. The cultural and social gaps resulted in a notable divide, making the integration process less satisfactory for rural women compared to their urban counterparts. However, this doesn't mean that women from cities did not face socio-cultural issues. They did, but they generally had more opportunities and encountered fewer disparities. Yet, considering Nepalese women's limited exposure within the country as a whole, migration – whether within Nepal or beyond its borders – can be seen as an opportunity to overcome these disparities and access a broader range of opportunities.

7.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter offered a detailed examination of the immigration and integration experiences of Nepalese women in the UK across distinct visa categories, aligning their integration trajectories with various integration policies in the UK. By comparing their different pathways and integration policies in hand, this chapter argued that Nepalese women migrating to the UK revealed three distinct trajectories with varying degrees of integration experiences.

To lay the foundation for further discussion, this chapter began by outlining recent trends in women's participation in global migration. It then focused specifically on the migration patterns of Nepalese women to Western countries, with a particular emphasis on the UK. By examining the influence of patriarchal familial norms on women's independent migration, the chapter highlighted how Nepalese women often migrated under dependent or family migration categories. Despite the changing landscape of the modern trend of women's independent economic migration, the role of the partner remained central, with Nepalese women often accompanying their husbands as dependents. This trend has been prevalent not only in visa categories of Gurkha and students but also in highly skilled migration, where women often represented dependents rather than principal applicants. This nuanced context has underscored the intersection of traditional patriarchal values of the male-dominant Nepalese society and contemporary migration dynamics shaping these women's integration into the UK. Against this backdrop, this chapter, then analysed the impacts of immigration and integration policies on their outcomes, providing a comprehensive assessment of their integration experiences in the UK.

Beginning with Gurkha wives, who typically migrated as dependents of Gurkha servicemen, the journey of Gurkhas' wives in immigrating to and integrating into the UK revealed a nuanced interplay between their migration background and integration policies in the UK. Because of the legacy of Gurkha's services to the UK, these women were found to be familiar with their migration journey but posed very limited knowledge of the policies and rules involved. However, while analysing the policy effect on their integration pattern, I have argued that multiculturalism, to some extent, has notably fostered their strong sense of ethnic belonging within their communities, as they upheld cultural traditions and participated in community gatherings, maintaining ties to their Gurkha heritage. Although they posed a limited connection with other Nepalese, at least, these connections within diasporic networks offered crucial support and a comforting familiarity in their new environment.

However, despite this deep ethnic belonging, Gurkhas' wives often encountered hurdles in meeting the requirements of civic integration, particularly concerning language proficiency. The stringent criteria for citizenship, often involving language assessments, posed significant challenges, especially for most of these women, who had very limited English skills. Such barriers not only impeded their access to citizenship rights and full engagement in civic activities and exacerbated feelings of exclusion but also barred them from gaining access to major services in the country.

Compared with other visa categories of Nepalese women's integration, Gurkha women's slowest and dissatisfactory integration outcome has become a subject of regular debate in the Nepalese diaspora. It was because, without bringing these women into the main string of community cohesion within the Nepalese diasporic community, it was not possible to bring them into the mainstream of British society, for their successful integration. Yet, factors like limited diasporic networks, advanced age, lack of support, ill health, and loneliness remained as integration hurdles. They exhibited less concern regarding changing policies and laws as these matters were primarily addressed by their husbands, community groups, and other family members. Nevertheless, they expressed interest in accessing facilities as equally as the locals.

Women associated with the highly skilled route, following their partners as family migrants, emerged as better integrated and more stable. These women demonstrated a stronger sense of belonging and affiliation with both the Nepalese diaspora and local British societies. Their education, sense of the importance of community cohesion and their age, especially those of young students and students' dependents, contributed to their higher participation in the labour market that reflected a deeper integration into the socio-economic fabric of the UK.

In contrast to this, among education-related migrant women, this chapter found different levels of integration. Those following the student visa route, either as principal applicants or dependents,

faced challenges due to policy constraints, limiting work hours and disrupting the balance between academic pursuits and employment. The absence of robust migration networks further restricted access to mutual aid and assistance for these. However, within this category, women arriving with partners showcased a comparatively higher degree of connection and settlement. Dependent or student partners, not bound by work hour limitations, contributed significantly to covering expenses, offering a more stable pathway.

Consequently, financial pressures, particularly concerning university fees and expenses, to some extent, hindered their engagement in diasporic activities as the dependents were always engaged in earning money. This comparative analysis exhibited the nuanced experiences of integration among Nepalese women in the UK, shaped by the specific trajectory of their migration. Furthermore, this chapter highlighted the challenges in areas of educational qualifications and job prospects, discrimination, and gender-based disparities from home to the workplace persisted in the need for policies that address these systemic inequalities and promote gender equality effectively.

The chapter has revealed that commonly, employers refrained from hiring full-time students for part-time positions, compelling them to seek low-wage cash-in-hand work in small businesses hindering their professional career path. Additionally, their plight was combined with the emotional strain of separation from their Nepalese families and friends, necessitating adaptation to diverse socio-cultural frameworks in the UK. These women encountered distinct academic curricula and subjects, alongside the frequent changes in British education-related immigration regulations, further aggravating their struggles compared to other groups. Their limited interaction time with the broader community hampered their integration efforts, resulting in visible challenges in their integration patterns. However, unlike the Gurkha women, this category of women was found to be keen on adapting to local culture and navigating their settlement more effectively. Despite facing various challenges, they were found to be optimistic about their future life.

In conclusion, the diverse experiences of Nepalese women across different visa categories highlighted the complexity of their integration journey, emphasising the need for tailored support from the Nepalese diaspora, policymakers, and receiving communities. Specifically, efforts to enhance the integration of Gurkhas' wives should acknowledge and address the intersectionality of cultural identity, language proficiency, and civic participation. Implementing policies that relax working limits, streamline spouse visa processes, and recognise Nepalese degrees for job requirements also can significantly enhance the overall integration of other categories of Nepalese women in the UK. By fostering a true sense of belonging and inclusion within Nepalese communities and local British society, these recommendations can pave the way for successful integration and socio-economic empowerment of Nepalese women in the UK.

Chapter Eight: Discussion, Recommendation and Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

Considering the longstanding historical ties between Nepal and the United Kingdom, along with the distinct immigration and integration policies adopted by the UK, this thesis has rigorously explored the multifaceted integration experiences of four specific visa categories: Gurkhas, highly skilled individuals, students, and dependents, particularly women, from Nepal in the UK. The diplomatic relationship between Nepal and the UK, established in 1814 and significantly shaped by the service of the Gurkhas in the British armed forces, has created a unique and enduring bond between the two countries. Although Nepal was never a British colony, the Gurkhas' pivotal role in British military history has solidified a distinctive diplomatic connection. This study has contextualised the recent increase in Nepalese migration to the UK, gaining momentum since the early 2000s, within this historical framework.

This thesis has emphasised the intricate socio-cultural, economic, educational, and demographic characteristics inherent in different visa categories. Through rigorous and comprehensive investigations, the research has revealed how the complexities of education, gender, caste, class, and ethnicity have shaped the integration experiences of Nepalese immigrants. The thesis has examined how the diverse visa categories and their associated immigration policies contributed significantly to the complexity and uniqueness of the migration and integration phenomena. For instance, the integration experiences of Gurkhas, rooted in military service, differed markedly from those of highly skilled individuals, whose migration was driven by economic opportunities. Similarly, students and dependents, particularly women, faced distinct challenges and opportunities shaped by educational aspirations and familial responsibilities.

Furthermore, this thesis has examined how immigrants' integration experiences interact with policy implications, highlighting the effects of the UK's broader multicultural framework. My research has discovered that in comparison with other policies, the policies based on the multicultural approach have, to some extent, supported the integration of various categories of Nepalese immigrants by fostering an environment of cultural acceptance and diversity (Asari, Halikiopoulou, and Mock 2008; Aschroft 2019; Uberoi 2017). By promoting socio-cultural inclusivity, these policies have enabled Nepalese migrants to enhance their sense of belonging and identity while actively participating in social, cultural, and economic spheres. At the same time, they have been able to preserve and promote their cultural heritage within British society.

Conversely, by scrutinising the recent trend of civic integration policy and characterising it as a tool to control immigration rather than an effective integration approach, this research has also

examined the adverse effects of the recent shift towards civic integration policies. These policies, which emphasise language proficiency and adherence to British values, have imposed additional challenges for immigrants (Goodman 2012d; Joppke 2007a). The thesis has critically assessed how such civic integration requirements can disproportionately affect those from less privileged backgrounds or those with limited resources, thereby complicating their entire integration process and potentially exacerbating existing inequalities.

Additionally, this study has highlighted the interplay of various factors within these visa categories, combined with the relevant immigration and integration policies, transforming this subject into a significant focal point for sociological inquiry. The policies governing these visa categories have not only influenced the demographic composition of the Nepalese immigrant community but also impacted their socio-economic mobility, community formation, and identity negotiation processes. The gendered dimensions of migration, for instance, reveal that dependent women often navigate unique integration pathways influenced by both traditional gender roles and the opportunities provided by the receiving country.

Consequently, the topic of Nepalese migrants' integration in the UK has gained considerable attention from researchers, underscoring its importance in understanding contemporary migration patterns, cultural dynamics, economic impacts, and overall integration processes. The findings provide valuable insights into the broader context of global migration and integration studies, emphasising the need for nuanced immigration policies that consider the diverse backgrounds and experiences of migrants. This analysis underscores the critical intersection of historical ties, immigration policies, and integration outcomes. The research contributes to an existing body of a broader theoretical understanding of how migration policies shape the lived experiences of immigrants, thereby offering a comprehensive framework for future studies on global migration and integration.

For this rigorous exploration, my positionality both as a subject of the research and a researcher, has played a vital role in making my methods more reliable and efficient (Bourdieu 1989a). While doing so, I have applied my interpersonal integration experiences as a method. This approach has ensured the reliability of my data while maintaining a cautious awareness of reflexivity in my study. Using in-depth interviews as the primary source of data collection, I have aimed to capture the rich, real-life integration experiences of my fellow migrants in the UK. The section below presents a brief insight into the methodological outcome of my thesis.

8.2. Methodological Implication

I have emphasised that the methodological aspect of this research, intertwined with my personal experiences of migration and integration, was crucial. My methodology, enriched by my real-life integration experiences, not only allowed me to delve deeply into the intricacies of the Nepalese community but also enhanced my data analysis process. This dual role as both a research subject and researcher provided me with unique insights and a profound understanding of the challenges faced by different categories of Nepalese during their integration, thereby signifying the effectiveness of my methods.

While discussing methodological implications, I have recalled my pre-migration reminiscences and linked them with my methods. I have signified the qualitative method in immigration research and highlighted my dual positionality. The adoption of qualitative methodology, with in-depth interviews as the primary data collection tool, served as the bedrock upon which this research was built (Crotty 1998; Holden and Lynch 2004; Marvasti 2004). The qualitative approach equipped this research with rigour, depth and richness of data to analyse the entire immigration and integration journey intertwined with the complex, nuanced and multidimensional facets. Moreover, the in-depth interviews proved to be the optimal technique to delve extensively into participants' lived realities and foreground the voices and narratives of Nepalese migrants themselves. The open-ended, discursive format facilitated organic interpretations of the meanings, emotions, challenges and transformations encoded within each migration story. The resulting data offered profound insights into the interplay of motivations, identities, capital, and sociocultural forces shaping the migration trajectories of four different categories of Nepalese.

Moreover, the iterative qualitative inquiry process allowed the research questions, analytical themes and sampling strategies to evolve responsively based on new understandings that emerged from the data. My positionalities as both a researcher and a research subject as a member of the Nepalese diaspora lent further reflexivity and comprehension of immigrants' standpoints (Kenway and McLeod 2004). This methodological standpoint enhanced the context-sensitivity of the study to the changing landscapes within the Nepalese migrant community in the UK.

Ultimately, the richly textured findings generated through in-depth qualitative exploration have made substantive contributions to migration theory by advancing scholarly conceptions of the multidimensionality of immigration and integration. The empirically grounded insights have provided a strong foundation to inform immigration policies and interventions targeting improved integration outcomes.

In summary, the qualitative methodology adopted in this thesis has been proven to be the best-fit technique for migration scholarship seeking to explore the complex interplay between immigrant agency and social structures that quantitative studies could not have captured. Thus, my method has amplified ethnic minority migrants' voices while building academic knowledge on the Nepalese experience of migration.

Having explored the methodological implications of my research, synthesising the outcomes is essential to fully understand the integration experiences of the four different categories of Nepalese in the UK. Therefore, the subsequent section highlights the multifaceted immigration and integration outcomes, offering valuable insights for future policy development and implementation.

8.3. Outcome Synthesis

To explore the entire journey of immigration of Nepalese migrants, I first examined different push and pull factors that motivated them to decide to migrate to the UK. Then, I explored their settlement and integration patterns against the backdrop of the integration policies in the UK. Based on the detailed exploration of different visa categories for Nepalese migrants, as highlighted in chapters 4,5,6 and 7, this section specifically outlines the immigration and integration outcomes of four visa categories for Nepalese migrants in the UK. Based on the migration pathways, and the policies involved in their entire immigration journey, this section synthesises the interplays of various socio-cultural, ethnic, caste and geographical factors, examining how these elements have collectively influenced the overall immigration and integration patterns of Nepalese in the UK.

While synthesising the integration outcomes of all four different visa categories, on the one hand, I have tried to highlight the positive effects of multiculturalism in integration, on the contrary, on the other hand, I have scrutinised the adverse impacts of recent civic integration approaches in overall integration journeys.

8.3.1. Gurkhas' Integration Experiences

My research has explored different factors that influenced the Gurkhas' decision to migrate to the country for which they have sacrificed their lives for the last two centuries. Unlike other categories, the context of Gurkhas' immigration and integration was not guided by economic aspects such as the motives for labour market engagement. However, their motives for migration were entirely influenced by the recent changes in British legislation in 2004 and 2009, which allowed the retired Gurkhas to migrate to the UK, and their migration to the UK has been deeply motivated by the hope of permanent settlement, equal pay and pensions, a secured future, easy access to the main

services such as housing, health and free education for their children. Similarly, the quality of retired life, and right to British nationality were found to be dominant. Because of their age and health condition, they were not very keen on labour market access and financial prosperity.

My investigation has found that the integration of Gurkhas in the UK has been a complex process, influenced by various factors such as martial culture, age, education, diasporic networks, and ethnic categorisation. To a significant extent, multiculturalism has initially fostered their integration by providing a sense of cultural freedom and religious secularity. This inclusive policy framework has allowed Gurkhas to form different ethnic organisations, which served as community hubs where they celebrated their traditions, festivals, and cultural practices. These organisations not only have helped them maintain their cultural heritage but also provided support networks that facilitated their adaptation to British society. Moreover, the multicultural policies in the UK have promoted an environment of acceptance and respect for diverse cultures, which has been beneficial for the Gurkhas. Within this inclusive environment, they have been able to practise their religion, customs, and martial heritage without fear of discrimination or loss of identity. As a result, the Gurkhas have been able to contribute to the cultural mosaic of the UK. This has enabled them to strike a balance between preserving their unique martial heritage, and cultural identity thereby integrating into the broader British society.

However, I have found the persistence in Gurkhas' experience of marginalisation. The lack of recognition for their martial heritage has left them feeling excluded within the broader immigrant communities. Additionally, changing patterns of their demand for their war skills in contemporary British society have negatively contributed to a sense of marginalisation. This has been compounded by the declining recognition of their fighting skills, and their sacrifice for British imperialism among the new generation of White British, leading to feelings of being discarded. Moreover, limited communal support and insufficient acknowledgement of their cultures and ethnicity both within the Nepalese diaspora and the wider British society have further impacted their sense of belonging making them feel isolated and excluded.

Similarly, they perceived unequal access to essential services like healthcare, housing, and education for their children as barriers to their complete inclusion in society. Although the Gurkhas' primary motives for migration were for a secure retirement life linked with better access to services like housing, health care and equal pay and pensions, many reported their dissatisfaction with the benefits that they got. Among many, health care service was the major for their migration motives, but many opted to seek medical treatment in Nepal due to their frustration with dealing with the GP, English language inefficiency, the lengthy queues and waiting lists in the NHS.

In addition to this, my study has discovered that Gurkhas faced obstacles in participating in civic-political activities and accessing government services due to a lack of information and social networks. Due to their limited ethnic engagement, many Gurkhas were unaware of the broader diasporic activities. For many reasons, such as age and ethnic clustering, many Gurkhas were found less connected with other Nepalese communities. That resulted in their poor and slower integration outcomes.

Despite their two century-long involvement with British imperialism, Gurkhas were found barred from participating in civic activities. Inefficiency in the English language, on the one hand, has been a significant obstacle hampering their socialisation with broader British society, and other the other, the restricted measures set in the recent civic integration requirements such as the compulsion of the English language tests, the process of naturalisation, and the cost involved in the whole visa-switching process have left them on the brink of integration (Goodman 2012e; Kostakopoulou 2010c). From Gurkhas' point of view, considering their services, the provision of these unnecessary tests and requirements has banned them from being a British national hampering their demand for equal pay and pensions as to their British counterparts.

In summary, my research has discovered the slower and less satisfactory integration of Gurkhas in the UK, revealing a critical need for targeted support policies. I have signalled the necessity for more inclusive policy measures that address the specific needs of the Gurkhas for successful integration. These policies should include language and cultural training programs, ensuring equal access to essential government services such as healthcare, housing, pay, and pensions. Additionally, initiatives that promote the recognition and celebration of Gurkhas' heritage within the broader UK context are crucial for fostering a more inclusive society. While multiculturalism initially promoted cultural freedom, it fell short in fostering this understanding among the new generation of the white British population and in recognising and legitimising the Gurkhas' heritage within the broader UK context. The current restrictive civic integration policy has been a significant obstacle to their successful integration, highlighting the urgent need for a more relaxed policy, considering their contributions to the nation. So, for me, addressing the specific needs of the Gurkhas has been crucial for their effective integration into British society.

8.3.2. Highly Skilled Nepalese and Their Integration Patterns

Significantly, my research has delved into the increasing popularity of the highly skilled visa as a popular migration choice for professionals from the global south, including Nepalese individuals seeking relocation to the global north, particularly the UK. Based on the findings, I can argue that the primary drivers for this choice included enhanced career prospects, lucrative employment opportunities, greater job security, globally acknowledged education, and financial autonomy.

Additionally, their decision to pursue migration through the highly skilled visa route was further influenced by factors such as an unstable political situation caused by the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. More specifically, influenced by social networks, familial expectations, and educational prospects for their children in the UK, especially the social prestige compound with residing in the UK, was highly evaluated as one of the drivers.

Out of four different categories, highly skilled migrants were found to be better settled and have more sense of belonging. Exercising the multicultural policies associated with freedom of cultural celebration, secularism, and the benefit of establishing different professional organisations, these migrants seemed to have expanded their social capital by establishing a recognised professional diaspora in the UK. Through their diasporic linkage, highly skilled Nepalese were able to maintain good transnational relationships and exchange social capital. However, the Nepalese government's policy of exclusion for dual nationality has hampered their interest in their involvement in socio-economic and political engagement in Nepal. I suggest that the Nepalese government should implement flexible and more welcoming returning policies to tap the skills and social capital of these professionals. Otherwise, Nepal can't stop the one-way trajectory of such a workforce, known as brain drain (Skeldon 2009a).

My research has discovered that, following arrival of highly skilled Nepalese professionals and their efforts to integrate into the UK, has added further value to the whole of this emerging immigrant community, which was primarily established by the Gurkhas. Because of their proficiency in the English language, on the one hand, they were able to communicate with the locals and, on the other, it enabled them to acquire information about the services and facilities. By utilising their civic political rights, many of this category of Nepalese were able to directly participate in the mainstream of politics. Some ran for the parliamentary election. This kind of involvement not only recognised them among the locals but also inspired other Nepalese communities, living in different countries, to try to integrate into their societies.

As previously stated, especially for this category of migrants, economic integration has been viewed as the core of integration. Despite their skills and qualifications, I have explored that, in many cases, Nepalese highly skilled migrants were struggling to integrate into the competitive labour market by finding a suitable job in the field of their expertise. Because of such constraints, many of them were found engaged in so-called low-skilled manual work, hampering their social status and dignity. Many of them were found struggling to maintain their economic prosperity as good as it was in Nepal. This aspect always remained as one of the main markers of their entire integration outcome. Non-recognition of Nepalese education degrees in the UK, discrimination at the workplace, unequal pay and benefits, restrictions in work nature and a specific threshold of

taxable income for visa-switching requirements have made their economic transformation harder than their expectation.

While English language tests and interviews posed occasional challenges, particularly in family reunification scenarios, the well-educated main applicants often navigated these requirements successfully. Despite these challenges, the predominant motive for permanent settlement seems to have motivated them to naturalisation and obtain British citizenship. However, dependents, particularly uneducated wives, faced hurdles in joining their husbands in the UK or naturalising due to these civic requirements. In some instances, such conditions contributed to family separation, denial of civic rights and in some cases, opting out of the settlement process.

In sum, compared to other migrant categories such as Gurkhas, students, and dependents, highly skilled migrants exhibited a more positive and integrated experience. They were more confident and assertive as they had the most access to systems and facilities. They showed less interest in socialising with other migrant categories, such as Gurkhas and students because they had their profession-based diasporic organisations and groups to foster broader integration-promoting networks. Their greater economic freedom and prosperity were considered higher social class and status. Securing suitable employment within their fields of expertise often proved difficult, hindering their professional growth and economic stability. Additionally, the complexities surrounding visa switching and naturalisation processes placed additional stress on familial circumstances, further complicating their integration journey. These barriers highlighted the need for more supportive policies and resources to fully harness the potential of highly skilled Nepalese migrants and ensure their seamless integration into British society.

8.3.3. Nepalese Students and Their Integration Outcome

Considering Nepalese students as de facto permanent migrants, along with the policies surrounding their educational transition, I have explored their integration policies associated with their major ambition of permanent settlement in the UK.

I found that Nepalese students' emigration from Nepal and integration experiences in the UK, were shaped by individual circumstances. Factors such as financial resources, age, gender, social networks, academic pursuits, marital status, and visa durations influenced every aspect of their entire migration journey. Academic background, financial status, social network and information about the British educational as well as socio-cultural system, shaped their emigration process in Nepal. Although these factors had fewer roles to play once in the UK, they had huge impacts during their visa application process in Nepal. Many of these students shared their frustration

caused by the visa rejection on their first attempt due to these factors, such as financial shortages in their bank.

Once in the UK, while some celebrated cultural diversity and personal freedom that fostered independence and a sense of belonging, others encountered challenges. I found them struggling to comprehend these policies. The uncertainties surrounding visa regulation and post-study work (PSW), added extra stress affecting their mental health condition. Due to the volatile environment caused by the policy shifts, I found many students confused regarding their studies and future work. Navigating university requirements and exam expectations was proven to be a major challenge due to the differing pedagogical approaches between Nepal and the UK. Many of them shared with me of failing to adapt to the UK's academic expectations. Similarly, in many cases, I found that universities were not always prepared to address the unique needs of Nepalese students caught in the dilemma of policy changes.

Moreover, students found difficulties in finding full-time jobs, engaging in economic activities, and establishing their transnational network with Nepal through sending remittances. They found it difficult to balance their everyday life with part-time employment, often resorting to cash-in-hand, low-wage jobs with extended hours and their financial obligations. Consequently, on the one hand, they faced pressure to fulfil policy prerequisites for visa extensions and visa switches. On the other, they had limited leisure time for broader community engagement but unlimited financial responsibilities to meet. This strain manifested in heightened mental health issues and stress among Nepalese students compared to other migrant categories. Because of the limited access to the labour market and financial constraints persisted by the limited opportunities, and poor diasporic connections, Nepalese students felt discriminated against within the Nepalese communities.

In sum, my data revealed that Nepalese students in the UK faced significant challenges despite the multicultural environment offering cultural diversity and personal freedom. Fluctuating immigration policies and differing academic expectations, coupled with financial constraints and limited job opportunities, led to increased stress and mental health issues. Their integration was further hampered by a limited diasporic network, less social engagement, and poorer connections with both the Nepalese diaspora and local communities. This combination of factors created a complex and often difficult integration experience for these students.

8.3.4. Nepalese Women's Immigration Journey to the UK

Considering the gender aspect of my thesis, I have identified the migration of Nepalese women to the UK as a significant category. Given that most of these women entered on dependent visas, I

have categorised all three trajectories of women under this dependent category and analysed their entire immigration journey accordingly. Against the backdrop of the policies implemented in this category, my research has focused exclusively on the real-life immigration and integration experiences of Nepalese women in the UK. I have explored these women's transformational journey, moving from traditional roles in Nepal to becoming active economic contributors in the UK. Compared among all categories of women, I observed a similar trend as of principal male migrants among Nepalese women. Similar to their male counterparts, factors like caste, ethnicity, visa routes and economic status significantly shaped their integration experiences. While doing so, I have specifically categorised Gurkha women as a distinct category, and rest two categories have been listed under one big category. Depending on their various trajectories, my research has also discovered variations in their integration experiences.

8.3.4.a. Gurkha Women's Integration Experiences

Notably, the immigration journey of Gurkha wives was completely different from that of other Nepalese women. Initially, their motivation for emigration was not driven by personal choice but rather by their commitment to their veteran husbands. Thus, these women just followed their husbands without knowing much about the procedures and policies that either supported or hindered their migration journey to the UK. Upon arriving in the UK, the integration process posed considerable challenges for Gurkha wives, attributed to factors such as age, unfamiliarity with the local context, limited English proficiency, and poor social network and diaspora connections.

I found them to have comfort and connection within their ethnic communities. They frequently engaged in cultural events and communal gatherings alongside fellow Gurkha families, celebrating these moments to honour their heritage and strengthen close-knit familial connections. Additionally, the presence of Nepalese grocery stores facilitated a sense of familiarity, as Gurkha women frequently visited local markets, engaging in both shopping and socialising with fellow shoppers. Furthermore, a crucial part of how Gurkha women fit into their new home involved wearing their traditional clothes and jewellery. This was not just about showing their culture; it was also about feeling like they belonged to this country for which their husbands had sacrificed. By proudly wearing these items, Gurkha women not only enjoyed the freedom of cultural diversities but also proudly showed who they were and found ease in the diverse mix of cultures in the UK. To some extent, they felt comfortable living in such a diversified fabric of British society and held a sense of belonging.

However, despite their cultural freedom, Gurkha women faced substantial hurdles due to their restricted English proficiency and unfamiliarity with everyday life in the UK, severely limiting their

access to essential services. Among Nepalese women residing in the UK, they were notably the least integrated, often feeling isolated and constrained in their activities. The stringent civic integration policies, such as mandatory English language proficiency for naturalisation and acquiring citizenship, have further hindered their full inclusion in civic-political activities. This not only has affected eligibility for naturalisation and citizenship but also restricted access to essential rights such as voting rights. Additionally, due to the lack of familiarity with administrative procedures, Gurkha women, especially the widows, have encountered difficulties in accessing routine healthcare services, access to council housing, and other pension credits that they were supposed to receive on behalf of their husbands. This has negatively promoted their sense of discrimination and marginalisation, as they struggled to navigate bureaucratic systems without adequate support or assistance.

Along with the implications of the policies in this category, my analysis has discovered numerous other factors, such as old age, ill health, limited social mobility, and poor diasporic networks contributing to Gurkha women's lowest integrating outcomes in the UK. Among all the English language inefficiency was seen as the most hampering issue in their entire immigration journey.

8.3.4.b. Negotiating the Opportunities and Challenges: Other Categories of Nepalese Women's Integration Outcome

In contrast to Gurkha women, those who were highly skilled and student dependents displayed a greater degree of awareness and were more knowledgeable about their reasons for migrating, their objectives, and their settlement strategies. Whether they accompanied their husbands from Nepal or later joined them in the UK, these women appeared to understand the immigration process clearly. Due to their relatively young age and level of education, both of these categories of women were found to have achieved relatively smoother integration processes, primarily due to factors such as educational opportunities, professional networks, and access to resources. Interestingly, in some cases, I found these women being engaged in more skilled work than their highly skilled husbands. My data have thus highlighted that for these two categories of women, despite the challenges, migration proved to be an opportunity to enhance their economic freedom.

My thesis has highlighted my observation about these women trying to fit themselves within the framework of the diversified fabric of British multicultural society by freely expressing and celebrating their cultural identities. By utilising secularism and ritual observation, these women enjoyed equal treatment of individuals from diverse religious backgrounds, fostering social harmony and tolerance. Diasporic connections have provided them a bridge to their homeland, offering a sense of continuity and support in their new country. Engaging in community activities,

along with their husbands, has fostered community cohesion, as they contributed to the vibrancy of local communities and built bonds with fellow migrants and the nationals of the receiving nation. These interactions, to some point, have promoted social integration, mutual understanding, and friendship across cultural boundaries, enhancing the multicultural fabric of UK society. In addition to these, by establishing different forums and organisations solely led by these women, they have played a crucial role in broadening diasporic networks and social capital in the UK, and in Nepal.

Despite these all, these categories of Nepalese women have faced several challenges in their new environment. Commencing from their household tradition to the Home Office policies, these women have come across innumerable hurdles and implications while negotiating their new life in the UK. The discouraging aspects of civic integration policies have posed significant barriers to the successful integration of these women. Mandatory requirements, such as language proficiency exams and knowledge tests on British history and culture have presented formidable challenges in entry clearance and family unification. Because of such discouraging requirements, in some cases, spouses have been denied entry clearance to come and join their husbands in the UK. My study has highlighted some cases of family separation caused by the spouse visa refusal.

Their struggle against such measures did not end in Nepal but rather continues in the UK. Once in the UK, particularly, due to limited English proficiency inhibited their ability to navigate essential services, hindering access to employment opportunities. Moreover, the pressure to fulfil these requirements often worsened their feelings of isolation and marginalisation, as they struggled to meet stringent criteria for naturalisation and citizenship. My data have highlighted their dissatisfaction with these measures, which have barred them from civic-political inclusion, making them feel like second-class citizens.

My study has discovered that, especially, Nepalese students' dependents arriving in the UK after introducing new immigration policies faced significant hurdles. They were subject to tighter restrictions like blocked access to public funds, healthcare surcharges, and English language requirements. Those with small children faced particular struggles - lack of access to childcare benefits and public funds created major financial burdens. Without the affordability of childcare, these dependents could not actively seek employment or education opportunities for themselves. My data have revealed that the denial of public funds also prevented them from integrating programs and language classes. I have discovered that the series of policies significantly hindered in the sector of civic-political integration prospects for Nepalese student dependents in the UK by blocking their access to government service systems and other resources essential for their successful integration into British society.

My data have highlighted that despite having faced numerous challenges, migration to the UK has opened doors for opportunities for these women. It has allowed them to overcome traditional gender disparities, seek economic freedom, and empower themselves to become more independent and economically active. Through migration, these women have been able to gain access to better employment prospects that may have been limited in Nepal for them. By utilising the resources they have access to, they have been able to enhance their skills, broaden their horizons, become financially independent and contribute actively to their families and the diaspora. I have discovered that migration has served as a transformative journey for these women, empowering them to break free from social constraints, pursue their aspirations, and chart their path towards better future prospects.

In sum, due to their husbands' services, Gurkha women often felt entitled to the UK and maintained close ties with their Gurkha communities. Highly skilled dependents- women exhibited superior confidence and assertiveness, prioritising profession-based diasporic networks over socialising with other migrant women. Conversely, students' dependent women faced discrimination within their community due to limited access to the labour market, lower economic status, and poorer diasporic connections. These hierarchical perceptions created conflicts and constraints, hindering overall diasporic integration among women. Hence, addressing such biases and inequality is important for successful integration outcomes.

8.4. Theoretical Contributions

By situating the research within the lived experiences of non-colonial and non-European migrants-Nepalese, this thesis has contributed to the growing body of scholarship on the integration of non-colonial migrants in the UK, thereby advancing the theoretical discourse on this context. With a particular emphasis on the Gurkha soldiers' immigration and integration, it has provided critical insights into how UK immigration and integration policies have played roles in shaping their entire migration journey. Through an in-depth qualitative inquiry grounded in migrants' real-life experiences, this study has offered a nuanced examination of the intricate interplay between caste, class, gender, social networks, and economic factors associated with the pre-migration and post-migration outcomes.

Additionally, this research has emphasised that integration is neither a linear nor a homogeneous process but is instead shaped by diverse experiences across different migrant groups. By critically examining the variations among distinct visa categories and analysing the policies that influence these varied immigration trajectories, this study has contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the intersection between integration policies and individual circumstances. For example, the immigration experiences of highly skilled migrants differ markedly from those of Gurkhas and

dependent women. This thesis has demonstrated that each group has encountered unique social and institutional barriers, highlighting the need to consider how visa categories, in conjunction with variables such as age, gender, education, and skill levels, interact with broader socio-economic and policy frameworks.

Adopting an intersectional framework, this research has highlighted the intra-group differences within the Nepalese migrant population, underscoring the necessity for more nuanced analysis that account for the diverse experiences of individuals within this community. This approach has challenged the conventional tendency to view migrant groups as homogeneous entities, emphasising the critical importance of disaggregating migrant populations for more rigorous and insightful analysis. By exposing these internal complexities, the study has advocated for the development of more targeted and equitable integration policies that are responsive to the distinct challenges encountered by various subgroups. Ultimately, the findings highlight the imperative of recognising and addressing these intersecting factors in order to formulate policies that promote more inclusive and effective pathways to integration.

Along with its valuable contribution to the existing body of literature, this thesis can be a good reference for future research on Nepalese migration and the broader dynamics of South Asian migration. It has also highlighted the potential for longitudinal studies that track integration outcomes over extended periods, offering deeper insights into the evolving experiences of migrants and the long-term impacts of immigration policies. Similarly, the research has identified the second-generation Nepalese as a crucial area for exploration, particularly concerning issues of identity, belonging, and community formation. Understanding how these dynamics unfold within the second generation could significantly enhance knowledge of the enduring effects of migration across generations.

8.5. Recommendation for Multi-Level Integration Policy Implementation

Based on my research, this thesis contends that a singular integration policy is insufficient, and a tailored mechanism should be established, considering the specific needs of each migrant category. The recommendation emphasises the importance of developing policies that are adaptable and responsive to the diverse trajectories and contributions of different migrant groups. Thus, I have emphasised that urging policymakers to recognise the unique needs of various migrant categories and building a more selective strategy would be a more effective approach to the integration mechanism. I have insisted that rather than adopting a uniform policy for all migrants, receiving nations should craft specific measures catering to the distinctive requirements

of different immigrant communities. The complexity of integrating diverse trajectories of Nepalese migrants into British society, necessitates a nuanced and tailored policy approach, challenging the prevailing tendency to primarily focus on refugee integration in the UK. The current one-size-fits-all approach, particularly directed at refugees and illegal migrants, has not been suitable to promote the integration of different trajectories of Nepalese migrants. Thus, my research has highlighted that a differentiated approach is crucial.

In the context of Gurkhas' immigration and integration: Considering their distinct and patriotic service to Britain and British people, immigration and integration policies should recognise Gurkhas' invaluable services by introducing initiatives that ease their pre-migration process in Nepal. For me, family migration criteria should be simplified to encourage family reunification. After arriving in the UK, the government should provide free but compulsory English language training to develop their communication skill, especially for their wives. By facilitating easy access to essential services such as healthcare, pension credit, and housing services, the government can foster their settlement. Furthermore, promoting political engagement through the provision of naturalisation options is crucial. Equalising pay and pensions with their British counterparts is essential for enhancing Gurkhas' sense of belonging and security, making them feel equally valued. Additional recommendations include fostering their cultural identity and community ties, ensuring they feel respected and integral to British society.

In the context of the highly skilled visa category: Recognising that Nepalese highly skilled individuals have been invited to address the shortage of skilled labour in the country, it is necessary to treat them as valuable assets rather than relegating them from labour market competition, and to the low-skill jobs. Not recognising their skills and foreign qualifications could limit their potential and underestimate their expertise, creating a significant problem in the integration of skilled Nepalese migrants. Thus, I have argued that the government must acknowledge and validate their academic qualifications and international experience as a foundational step. Furthermore, a targeted approach is essential to integrate them effectively into the competitive British job market. Providing specific training tailored to align with the requirements of the local workforce can enhance their skills and elevate them to the status of a competitive workforce. Ensuring equal access to major systems such as education, benefits, and child credits before naturalisation is crucial in fostering an inclusive environment for Nepalese professionals. Additionally, by making their spouse/ dependent entry process more relaxed, the government can assist in their integration.

In the context of education-related migrants' category: Despite being initially categorised as temporary migrants expected to return after completing their academic degrees, aligned with a global context of the de-facto permanent migrants, many Nepalese students aspire to settle

permanently in the UK by switching their visa and residential status. Thus, by recognising them as potential permanent migrants, it is important to develop specific policies tailored to bring them into the mainstream of society. I have argued that by recognising these young migrants as a potential workforce, the government should actively promote their participation in the UK labour market, fostering inclusivity rather than discrimination.

The frequent changes in education-related policies have created a volatile situation confusing Nepalese students about their academic aspiration and their future prospects. Thus, as per my argument, there should be a stable policy provision in this category. Recent alterations in dependent visa rules have imposed economic challenges, necessitating a reconsideration to allow students' spouses to join them and contribute to the workforce. Instead, to enhance cultural integration, local bodies can encourage Nepalese students' participation in various socio-cultural activities, contributing to the enrichment of the local cultural fabric. By providing language and educational support programs to help Nepalese students better navigate the academic environment and understand local pedagogies. Additionally, the government can offer resources to bridge the gap between their educational backgrounds and the requirements of British universities. Not only the policymakers, the Nepalese diaspora and different community groups also should be tailoring different approaches to the unique needs of Nepalese student migrants is imperative for their successful integration into the diverse fabric of British society.

In the context of the dependent visa category: My research has revealed that the immigration and integration journey of Nepalese women has been influenced by numerous factors, ranging from traditional gender roles in Nepal to the challenges of accessing government systems in the UK. Thus, based on my findings, I can recommend several policy shifts to facilitate this migration journey. Firstly, the family reunification process should be made more flexible to support familial cohesion. Secondly, the visa application process should be simplified to reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and compulsory border interviews should be eliminated to ease the entry process. Additionally, once in the UK, the government should actively promote cultural integration and a sense of belonging through community programmes and initiatives that target gender discrimination. Efforts must also be made to eliminate discrimination in the workplace and at home, ensuring that Nepalese women feel safe and valued in all aspects of their lives. Furthermore, expanding their diasporic network can provide essential support and resources, enhancing their overall integration. By implementing these recommendations, the UK can create a more inclusive and supportive environment, making migration a more viable and positive alternative for Nepalese women.

8.6. Pathways for Future Research

While my research has focused on a specific case study involving a relatively small population of Nepalese migrants in the UK, it has produced valuable insights that can inform future studies of Nepalese immigrants and diverse migrant populations in the UK and beyond. In this section, I have briefly highlighted potential areas for future researchers.

Undocumented and Asylum-Seeking Nepalese: While my study has highlighted the integration experiences of Nepalese migrants following distinct immigration pathways, future research could focus on undocumented or asylum-seeking Nepalese migrants. Exploring the challenges and experiences of this vulnerable group could provide important insights into their lives in the UK.

Nepalese Migrants from Third Countries: While my study focused on Nepalese who migrated directly from Nepal, future research can investigate Nepalese migrants who have arrived in the UK from third countries, such as India and Portugal. Comparing their integration experiences with those of direct migrants could reveal interesting patterns.

Second Generation of Nepalese in the UK: While the current research has extensively covered the immigration and integration challenges faced by the first generation of Nepalese, exploring the second generation's integration status could produce distinct outcomes. Building upon the foundational research presented here, investigating this aspect will hold promise as a significant area for further study.

In conclusion, my research has laid a foundation for understanding the integration of Nepalese migrants in the UK. Still, future investigations have ample room to explore these diverse and complex aspects more comprehensively. I hope this study serves as a stepping stone to inspire further research within the Nepalese community and among other migrant populations in various contexts.

8.7. Limitations of My Research

My research has limitations including the timeframe, methodology, sample size, and geographic coverage in both Nepal and the UK. These factors highlight the constraints of the study. To begin, I adopted qualitative methods including in-depth interviews, for the data collection. Mainly, I applied different analytical tools such as thematic analysis to interpret my data. While these methods

offered detailed exploratory insights, they have inherent limitations (Srivastava and Hopwood 2009b). The reliance on a subjective, interpretive approach leaves room for potential unconscious researcher bias. Moreover, in some cases, participants' self-reported narratives may be influenced by factors like exaggeration, response biases, and reluctance to disclose sensitive details. Although I have tried my best to alleviate these concerns, they may persist as common qualitative research challenges. Additionally, the non-random purposive sampling method used to recruit participants could sometimes restrict sample representativeness (Luborsky and Rubinstein 1995). Similarly, depending on the population distribution, I have used most of my sampling from greater London, which may carry demographic biases. Consequently, the gathered narratives may disproportionately reflect certain voices, such as gender imbalance and integration experiences over others.

In addition to this, as a Nepalese migrant studying my own community, I occupied a complex dual role as both a subject and object in this qualitative study (Back and Brah 2012; Bourdieu 1989a). On one hand, my insider position afforded invaluable access, trust, and empathy when engaging with fellow migrants' narratives. Our shared culture, language, and migration journeys facilitated me to delve into deeper connections, however, this also meant that, despite my best efforts to generate unbiased results, my personal experiences inherently introduced subjectivity into the research process. My interpretation of the data has been shaped by my position as a migrant, which may not represent the diversity of experiences within the community. While reflexivity has helped me to identify biases, in some cases, it might not have eliminated them. Hence, I had to remain vigilant about my insider status. While these methodological constraints, in some stances, might have restricted the depth of inquiry, I still can argue that my findings have reflected an empirical and authentic as well as meaningful foundation to inform future research in similar research areas.

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Appendices

1. List of Abbreviations:

Short Form	Full Form
BNA	British Nationality Act
CICC	Citizens of Independent Commonwealth Countries
CIA	Commonwealth Immigration Act
RRA	Race Relations Act
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
EC	European Commission
VC	Victoria Cross
MBE	Member of the Order of British Empire
NHS	National Health Service
TCN	Third Country National
UK	United Kingdom
IOM	International Organisation of Migration
GCC	Gulf Corporate Council
DOEF	Department of Foreign Employment
ADB	Asian Development Bank
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
CPN-M	Communist Party Nepal-Maoists
APF	Armed Police Force
USA	United States of America
EU	European Union
ONS	Office of National Statistics
CNS	Centre for Nepalese Studies
CBP	Common Basic Principles
M&D	Migration and Development
BNP	British National Party
ESOL	English for Speaker for Other Language
GP	General Practitioner
BNCC	Britain Nepal Chamber of Commerce
REISC	Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee

GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HSMP	Highly Skilled Migrant Programme
DV	Diversity Visa
NRNA	Non-Residential Nepalese Association
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ILR	Indefinite Leave to Remain
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
PSW	Post Study Work
CAS	Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency

2. Sample Interview Questions

All my participants were Nepalese. So, I asked all my questions in the Nepali language. Focusing on their visa and migration pathways, I asked different interview questions, however, I also used some generic introductory questions with all participants. The generic questions were the same for everyone about their background and overall, UK experience.

The generic questions were as follows:

i.   Can you tell me briefly about your background and journey to the UK?
ii. What motivated you to migrate to the UK?
iii. How long have you been living in the UK?
iv. Do you live in a rented/ owned/ council or any other accommodation?
v.   Before migrating to the UK, can you tell me a bit about your background?
vi. Before you arrived, what were your perceptions or expectations about life in the UK?
vii. How easy or difficult was the initial transition when you first arrived in the UK?
viii. What have been some of the biggest challenges you've faced since moving to the UK?
ix. What support systems, if any, have you relied on since being in the UK?
x.   How well do you feel you have adjusted to day-to-day life in the UK?
xi. Can you describe any major cultural differences you have experienced living in the UK?
xii. How connected do you feel to the local British community where you live?
xiii. How would you describe your quality of life and well-being since migrating to the UK?
xiv. Looking ahead, what are your long-term plans regarding staying in the UK? Do you see your future here?
xv. Could you describe your experience of migrating to and living in the UK so far?

2.1. Questions Related to the Gurkhas' Immigration and Integration:

One of the major pathways out of the four trajectories was the migration of Gurkhas to the UK. Due to their distinct service feature with the British armed forces, the study of their immigration and integration journey has been considered very significant for this research. Therefore, I formulated specific interview questions to explore the entire immigration and integration experience of Gurkhas. The questions are listed below.

1. What motivated you to join the British Gurkha regiment initially?
2. How did your family feel about you serving in the British army?
3. What were some of your main duties and roles as a Gurkha?
4. What was your rank upon retirement from the Gurkhas?
5. Why did you decide to settle in the UK post-retirement?
6. How smooth or difficult was your transition into civilian life in the UK?
7. What government benefits did you receive upon retirement and settlement?
8. Were there any challenges accessing your full pension and settlement rights?
9. How sufficient is your Gurkha pension to cover living costs in the UK?
10. Have you faced any obstacles accessing housing, healthcare, or other services?
11. How well integrated do you feel the Gurkha community is in the UK?
12. What Gurkha cultural practices or traditions do you still follow?
13. Are you involved in any Gurkha ethnic or welfare organizations?
14. Do you feel your Gurkha identity is recognized and valued in the UK?
15. What recommendations would you make to improve integration for retired Gurkhas?
16. Are there any additional settlement benefits Gurkhas should be entitled to?
17. Did you receive housing or other settlement assistance from the government?
18. Are you aware of all the benefits and services you are entitled to as a Gurkha?
19. Does the government provide sufficient support services to retiring Gurkhas?
20. How can settlement benefits and integration services be improved for Gurkhas?

2.2. Questions Related to the Highly Skilled Migrants Category:

Between 2004 and 2009, a significant number of highly skilled Nepalese migrants and their families, including myself, migrated to the UK through the high-skilled visa route. Given their qualifications and socioeconomic profile, exploring their immigration and integration experiences was considered significant and could offer important insights. To explore their entire journey, motivations, challenges, and integration experiences, I set some questions as below.

1. What motivated you to migrate to the UK as a high-skilled migrant?
2. How did you choose the UK specifically as your destination?
3. How easy or difficult was the visa application process?
4. What qualifications made you eligible for the high-skilled visa?
5. What were your initial impressions when you arrived in the UK?
6. How did you find suitable employment in your area of expertise?
7. What key challenges have you faced since migrating to the UK?
8. How well do you feel integrated within British society?
9. Are you involved in any professional immigrant organisations?
10. How do you maintain ties to Nepalese culture while abroad?
11. What factors have most aided your integration in the UK?
12. What obstacles have you encountered to full integration?
13. Are there any public services or resources you cannot access?
14. How do you perceive your identity and sense of belonging in the UK?
15. Do you feel recognised for your skills, expertise, and contributions?
16. Are there any policies or provisions that could better support skilled migrants?
17. How do you foresee your future in the UK in the long term?
18. Have you made plans regarding citizenship or permanent settlement?
19. Professionally, where do you see your career in 5-10 years?
20. What advice would you give to new Nepalese skilled migrants?

2.3. Interview Questions Regarding Higher Education Visa Route:

Since 2007, higher education has become a major driver of migration, with many Nepalese students and dependents opting for the UK's student visa route. Given their de-facto settlement motivations, examining their immigration and integration experiences was crucial for my research. So, to explore their entire pattern of immigration and integration, I asked the following questions.

1. What motivated you to pursue higher studies in the UK?
2. How did you choose the UK as your study destination?
3. How smooth or challenging was the student visa application process?
4. How are you funding your education and living expenses in the UK?
5. What impressed or surprised you most when you first arrived to study in the UK?
6. How would you describe your overall student experience in the UK so far?
7. What have been the biggest challenges you've faced as an international student?
8. How much opportunity do you have to engage with British students and culture?
9. Do you feel supported by your university and local community?
10. Are you involved in any Nepalese student associations or groups?
11. How connected do you feel to life beyond campus in the UK?
12. What factors have most helped or hindered your integration as a student?
13. How well can you access healthcare, transport, housing and other services?
14. Do you plan to stay in the UK after finishing your studies?
15. Have you faced any barriers towards full social, civic, or economic integration?
16. What could help international students better integrate into British society?
17. How do you perceive your identity and sense of belonging in the UK?
18. Looking ahead 5-10 years, where do you see yourself living and working?
19. If staying in the UK, what concerns do you have regarding settlement and citizenship?
20. What recommendations would you make to improve student migrant experiences?

2.4. Interview Questions Related to the Dependent Visa Category:

Even though recent migration trends have experienced a significant proportion of women participants, for many reasons, Nepalese women have been considered as secondary or family migrants, and this trajectory has been categorised as dependents in this thesis. Examining their gendered immigration and integration experiences has been considered significant. To capture their motivations, challenges, opportunities, discrimination and their dual roles, I asked the following questions.

1. What motivated you to migrate to the UK as a dependent?
2. How smooth/difficult was the visa application process?
3. What were your first impressions when you arrived in the UK?
4. How much independence do you have in daily life as a dependent?
5. What key challenges have you faced since arriving in the UK?
6. How do you find living in a more gender-equal society compared to Nepal?
7. How do traditional gender roles impact your integration experience?
8. Have you experienced any discrimination as a Nepalese woman in the UK?
9. How connected do you feel to the local British community?
10. What cultural or social adjustment issues have you experienced?
11. How well integrated do you feel within wider British society?
12. How do you maintain elements of your Nepalese identity and culture?
13. How do you perceive your sense of identity and belonging in the UK?
14. In what ways has your economic role changed since migrating to the UK?
15. How do you manage family responsibilities and economic ambitions?
16. Have you faced challenges reconciling gender expectations with work aspirations?
17. How supportive is your family of you working or studying?
18. Do you feel pressure to conform to traditional gender roles?
19. Looking ahead, where do you see yourself living long-term?
20. What changes could improve integration for Nepalese women?
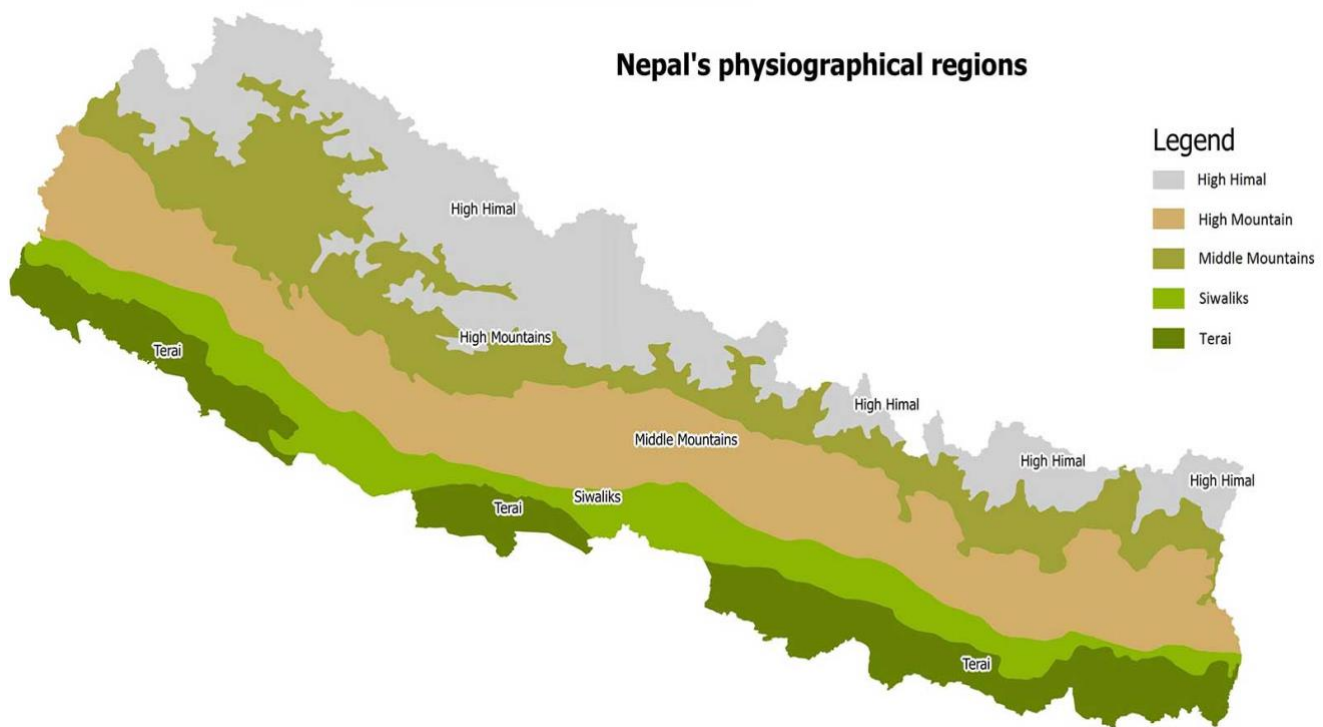
3. Images

Figure 1: Physical Map of the Country of Origin – Nepal
src: https://www.holymountaintreks.com/geography-of-nepal/