

Nepal-Bharat Ties

Living the Cultural Bond Through the Ages



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Publisher's Words

The relationship between Nepal and Bharat has been deepened by shared religious, social, cultural, economic, and political ties. The people-to-people connection between the two nations is also notably harmonious. Despite the cordial nature of these grassroots relations, it is well known that tensions occasionally arise at the government-to-government and political or diplomatic levels. To prevent such tension, it is important to engage in regular discussion, study, and research on the various dimensions of Nepal-Bharat relations.

Despite the cordial relations between the people of Nepal and Bharat at all levels, certain research and investigative efforts appear essential to further strengthen mutual understanding and deepen bilateral ties. In Nepal, many national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are active at both social and governmental levels. However, it is rarely seen that Bharatiya NGOs with headquarters based in a Bharatiya state are directly working in collaboration with Nepali NGOs. Having said that, there are a few religious, spiritual, cultural, and social networks and institutions that are active in Nepal, the names of which have been documented in this research. These organisations often conduct programmes in both Nepal and Bharat. Nepalese individuals travel to Bharat to participate in such programmes and receive training, and likewise, Bharatiya nationals also come to Nepal to participate in various training and events.

Therefore, the research was conducted to understand how the regular activities, such as programmes, training sessions, and exchange visits organised by these religious, social, and cultural organisations, have contributed to deepening Nepal-Bharat relations and enhancing mutual understanding. It also aimed to explore the achievements and experiences gained at the people-to-people level and to assess the ongoing and emerging socio-cultural dimensions of Nepal-Bharat relations.

This study was conducted by the researcher within Nepal's geographical boundaries. So, quite naturally, the report's original version and its initial publication were rendered in the Nepali language. However, from the beginning, NeNAP had a clear intention for the publication to be shared in both Nepal and Bharat. With this objective in mind, we proceeded accordingly. Since it was also intended for distribution in Bharat, we had a clear plan to translate and publish it in English as well. Following that plan, the first edition-3,000 copies in Nepali-was published in 2081 B.S. (2024 A.D.). We are now truly delighted to present this English edition. We sincerely thank the researcher for his valuable contribution, which made this publication possible.

This study reveals that the diverse activities of these organisations, as a whole, contribute to strengthening the relationship between the two countries. It was also found that some institutions remain unaware of the potential role they could play in enhancing bilateral ties. This highlights the importance of strengthening institutional efforts to further deepen and enhance Nepal-Bharat relations.

Gratitude

We are pleased to present and publish this report, which has been prepared through an in-depth study of the contributions made by various social and religious organisations operating in Nepal and Bharat towards strengthening bilateral relations. This report highlights the concerns and activities of organisations that have established connections with citizens of both countries. We are confident that these efforts, directly or indirectly, have played a vital role in enhancing Nepal-Bharat relations through socio-cultural engagement.

It is well known that Nepal and Bharat have shared a multidimensional, historical, and cultural relationship since ancient times. These two nations, rich in heritage, exchange a deep-rooted sense of shared traditions and enduring brotherhood. This report seeks to highlight the dedicated efforts of various organisations working to reinforce the deep-rooted ties between the people of Nepal and Bharat. It also aims to reflect the perspectives and understanding of these active institutions concerning Nepal-Bharat relations.

We believe that this publication will be valuable for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners committed to the continued growth and prosperity of Nepal-Bharat bilateral relations. Sincere gratitude is extended to all the organisations and individuals who contributed their time, knowledge, and experience to shape this study into a book. We are confident that this report not only highlights the deep-rooted ties between Nepal and Bharat but also helps pave the

way for future initiatives and enhanced cooperation between the two nations.

In conclusion, we, on behalf of the Neeti Anusandhan Pratishthan, Nepal (NeNAP), express our sincere gratitude to all organisations, institutional representatives, scholars, and especially to the researcher Mr Shreekrishna Aniruddh Gautam for their valuable support in preparing the contents of this study report. Since the translation of this book was done by the researcher himself, we believe it has helped preserve the originality of the content. We would once again like to thank Mr Shreekrishna Aniruddh Gautam for his contribution.

Dr. Keshav Raj Panthee
Executive Director
Neeti Anusandhan Pratishthan, Nepal (NeNAP)

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About the Researcher

Shreekrishna Aniruddh Gautam is a prominent political analyst, a devoted advocate of democracy, and an expert on federalism. A firm believer in the learnings of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, Gautam is also a skilled cultural researcher. His thought-provoking columns and subject-based analytical articles have been published in Kantipur and various other newspapers and journals.



Researcher's Note

As the study progressed, the initial plan underwent several revisions and changes, eventually resulting in something quite different from what was originally envisioned. The initial idea was to present it simply as a study report focused on the operational activities of Bharatiya socio-cultural, especially religious, organisations active in Nepal.

However, upon delving into the subject matter, it became clear that the initial approach would fall short of doing justice to the deep-rooted socio-cultural harmony between our two nations and the meaningful objective of its preservation and promotion. It was observed that most of the related organisations were not particularly familiar with the deep-rooted socio-cultural congruence that has historically existed between Nepal and Bharat. Many of them shared only surface-level information and focused more on their internal management challenges rather than on the actual context within Nepal. Additionally, some of these so-called concerned institutions appeared to be more ritualistic than genuinely aware of the existing cultural ties. In light of this, I requested the Neeti Anusandhan Pratishthan, Nepal (NeNAP), to reconsider the initial scope of the study. As a result, this research was reshaped into an interactive study aimed at reflecting the built-in dimensions of the existing socio-cultural relations between our two nations. I am deeply grateful to the leadership of NeNAP for recognising this perspective and generously allowing the time needed to pursue a broader approach.

The inspiration and possibility of this study are rightfully credited to Mr Deepak Kumar Adhikari, Director of NeNAP. It was upon his initiation and request that I explore

how cultural and social organisations based in Bharat are operating in Nepal and to what extent their presence and activities have contributed to the expansion and promotion of the longstanding relationship between our two nations. As I have already mentioned, the initial plan was to do an analytical and interactive study mainly focused on the Nepal-based branches of Bharatiya social and cultural—especially religious—organisations and to look into how they’re operating within Nepal. But as the work progressed, the scope of the subject grew much broader. It became clear that just focusing on specific organisations wouldn’t capture the full picture. So, the study was expanded to explore the wider socio-cultural context of Nepal-Bharat relations.

While turning this concept into reality, I visited the offices and worksites of several organisations and spoke with their representatives to learn more about their activities and impact. In Kathmandu, I’m particularly grateful to Shaligram Singh from Patanjali Yog Peeth for giving me his time and sharing detailed information about their work. Similarly, in Butwal, I was warmly received by social activist and entrepreneur Manoj Mittal, who introduced me to the various activities at the Brahma Kumaris Ashram. His kindness and insights were invaluable. During my visits to Janakpur, Jaleshwar, and Matihani, I received generous support from Manoj Sah, a researcher based in Janakpur who provided important context, especially on the religious and cultural ties in the bordering regions, and helped coordinate meetings and visits. I also had the opportunity to visit the Prem Rawat Foundation in Tasarpu, Dhading. Prem Dhungel, affiliated with the foundation, explained

in detail their regular meal programmes for students from underprivileged families, for which I'm sincerely thankful. Even though the Prem Rawat Foundation is an international organisation, its active presence in Bharat made it relevant to include in this study.

Religious and cultural organisations headquartered in Bharat and also active in Nepal were engaged through both group discussions (twice) and individual interactions. Except for a few, most representatives were unable to clearly articulate the essence of their organisational activities or the impact these have had on society. This highlighted a key observation that while many of these organisations want to promote harmony between the two countries, they often lack the training to do so effectively. As a result, their impact remains limited, and they mostly act as observers of social issues rather than active problem-solvers. Organisations like Shri Vaishnav, Ramakrishna Mission, International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Patanjali Yogpeeth, Brahma Kumaris, and Maharshi Mahesh Yogi's institutions are certainly engaged in regular activities, but there was little evidence of any meaningful effort made to foster strong positive sentiment in Nepal-Bharat relations. Having said that, their work may have an indirect impact, which is something not to be overlooked. Yet, what becomes evident is that their focus remains primarily on their own organisational missions, rather than integrating meaningfully into the wider societal context. Their presence in Nepal, while institutionally visible, does not appear to have a wide or deeply rooted impact on community life.

The key point here is that if institutions engaged in spiritual, religious, and cultural work, which are led by individuals who genuinely understand the deeper dimensions of Nepal-Bharat relations, would coordinate with organisations that are structurally active in both countries, they could play a meaningful role in enhancing mutual harmony. However, most of these organisations currently seem focused only on their own sectarian missions, with little evident effort toward fostering broader goodwill between the two nations.

I recognise that this study reflects both the direct and indirect views shared by these organisations. It certainly incorporates key insights from interactions with organisations headquartered in Bharat or connected to Bharat. There is definitely room to further expand and update this study. And to do so, collective dialogues across various Pradeshes of Nepal could be encouraged.

The topics presented in this interactive study aim to provide an introduction to the historical and socio-cultural dimensions of Nepal-Bharat relations and to help the involved organisations appreciate the ease that comes with more harmonious ties between the two nations.

Most of the organisations' representatives participated in two interactive workshops held in Kathmandu; whatever information was gathered, if not adequate, was definitely valuable. I am truly grateful to the representatives for sharing insights about their organisations' activities. These sessions revealed both ongoing efforts and gaps, highlighting what kinds of work are being done and how, but also where efforts are lacking. It was evident that work

should move beyond rituals and be pursued with greater active engagement.

Additionally, without the special assistance of Prem Raj Neupane and Mohan Shrestha in facilitating these interactions, organising the events would have been much more difficult.

While the conversations and interactive sessions were valuable, they weren't enough to fully reflect the unique depth of Nepal-Bharat social and cultural ties. This led me to shape the study in a more interactive format, drawing in a wider set of perspectives. I reiterate I'm genuinely grateful to Deepak Kumar Adhikari for his patience in accommodating my repeated requests for extended time. Thanks are also due to Santosh Acharya, the then administrative head at NeNAP, whose timely support and resources made this publication possible. Special appreciation goes to the current Executive Director, Keshav Raj Panthee, whose willingness to extend deadlines allowed me to revisit and refine my research and writing. I remain sincerely thankful.

With sincere appreciation towards all who were directly or indirectly involved in this study, I am sincerely grateful for the information, support, suggestions, and encouragement provided throughout the process.

Shreekrishna Aniruddh Gautam
Bhadra, 2081
Bagmati Nagar, Kathmandu
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Descendants of a Shared Civilisational Ethos

The relationship between Nepal and Bharat¹ is more than special-it is truly unique. However, the uniqueness of the bilateral relationship between any two civilisational twins does not necessarily signify anything extraordinary in itself. In the case of Nepal and Bharat, such uniqueness is hardly surprising. What is peculiar, however, is when this relationship is portrayed as anomalous-often as an attempt to present one another as alien or distant. Culturally speaking, there is nothing alien or distant about our two countries; they are not non-conforming when it comes to people-to-people relations.

There are indeed people today who argue that the Nepal-Bharat relationship is neither unique nor special. Yet such a view fails to reflect the true spirit of the people on both sides. Admittedly, there is no shortage of those who see Nepal and Bharat as merely distantly related, but they do not speak for the lived ethos of ordinary people in either country. At the grassroots level, communities in both nations see the relationship as deeply interwoven -knit together by history, culture, and shared civilisational ties, with no visible distinctions in sentiment, kinship, or everyday experience across the political boundary (except for the hindrances posed by recently invented so-called help desks).

It is the people's perception that truly matters, for that is where reality resides. This view is not confined among the

1. Here, "Bharat" refers to the political entity that gained independence from British rule in 1947. In contrast, Cultural Bharat, or Bharatvarsha, refers to the vast subcontinent stretching from Gandhar-now Afghanistan-to Burma-now Myanmar-and from Kashmir to the Bharatiya Ocean. This cultural sphere, often referred to as South Asia, represents a shared civilisational and cultural space. Here, "Bharat" refers to the present-day state depicted on modern maps.

generality, also echoes in scholarly works too. In *Kirata Janakirti* by the renowned cultural scholar Suniti Kumar Chatterji, in *Nepal: A Historical Study of a Hindu Kingdom* by French academic Sylvie Lévy, and in *Nepal: Strategy for Survival* by Leo E. Rose, all agree that while Nepal and Bharat are distinct sovereign states, they share the same socio-cultural foundations. Scholars who have deeply studied Nepal's language, culture, and history accept this uniqueness, and their research rests on that very foundation. In fact, there is a general consensus that both countries are descendants of a shared civilisational parentage. Some have stated this directly; others, more subtly. Their perspectives may differ, but the truth remains: from ancient times, Nepal has preserved its independence while simultaneously protecting, promoting, and enriching a shared cultural heritage.

Hence, Nepal and Bharat, though separate politically, share every aspect of their identity in the socio-cultural realm. If we set aside political distinctions, it becomes evident that, despite having different names, both countries stem from the same socio-cultural lineage. This is not a claim that requires repeated justification-it is self-evident. Let me emphasise once again-beyond political boundaries both nations are carriers of a shared ancestry. They have been shaped by the same civilisational forces, share a common antiquity, and their profound social and cultural bonds are expressed and reaffirmed in every interaction, across every terrain.

This is why they are interwoven-separated in appearance but

one in core. It is this intimacy that renders their relationship both unique and unparalleled. Culturally speaking, Nepal refers to Bharat and Bharat to Nepal almost interchangeably, as if each were the other.

Civilisation, culture, and traditions-all are strikingly similar, and their geographies are interconnected. Of course, in terms of physical size and population, Bharat is the larger and more populous country. Geographically, Bharat is 22 times larger than Nepal, and today its population tops about 45 times that of Nepal. Even so, it is noteworthy that many of the diverse streams and ethnic communities found in Bharat are also present in Nepal and that the sects and traditions are mirrored on both sides-and they continue to interact actively. The same sects found in Nepal exist in Bharat: Shaiva, Shakta, Vaishnav, and their subdivisions. Likewise, there are Kirat traditions, Mahayana Buddhists, and even a few Theravadins. These broader categories, along with the micro-level braiding, make the religious and cultural landscapes of both countries deeply interconnected.

In addition to traditional institutions, several religious groups that emerged more recently have gained notable popularity in Nepal. Among the prominent ones are Om Shanti, the Sathya Sai movement, and the Pranami tradition. Though their practices may differ, they identify as Hindu within the broader community. Their main centres are in Bharat-Om Shanti in Rajasthan, Sathya Sai in Andhra Pradesh, and Pranami in Gujarat-but they maintain extensive networks in Nepal. Importantly, these sub-sects sustain a vibrant flow of people, with Nepalis visiting centres in Bharat and

Bharatiyas travelling to Nepal.

While these organisations have indeed contributed positively to Nepal-Bharat relations, their influence has not been widely visible at the public level. Despite this regular exchange and likely indirect impact, these groups have yet to significantly shape the public perception of Bharat in a way that fosters mutual goodwill—a situation that still warrants attention.

In contrast, organisations such as the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh Nepal, the Pragyik Vidyarthi Parishad, the Vishva Hindu Parishad Nepal, the Janjati Kalyan Ashram, and the Ekal Vidyalaya, which share the Sangh School of thought, have exerted a more visible influence. Their activities have addressed various dimensions of Nepal-Bharat relations and have provided platforms for greater understanding. Unlike more sectarian groups, these social organisations maintain direct contact with the people and have a noticeably positive impact. In this regard, they play a more effective role in fostering mutual understanding and strengthening the ties between our two countries.

Nepal, Northern and Northeastern Bharat

Scholars of society and culture have studied Nepal and northern and northeastern Bharat as members of the same cultural family-foremost among them being Suniti Kumar Chatterji. The Licchavi and Malla dynasties played a defining role in fostering deep connections between Nepal and Bharat. The Licchavis arrived in Nepal with their deities and settled permanently, helping preserve ancient traditions in the Kathmandu Valley. Interestingly, some customs that disappeared from Bharat which were prevalent during the Licchavi and Malla periods, have continued to survive in Nepal-this has been well incorporated and elaborated by a renowned scholar Dilliraman Regmi in his works Ancient Nepal and Medieval Nepal.

Indeed, the present cannot be fully understood without reference to these exchanges of the ancient and medieval periods, which is why I introduce this chapter with historical background, even though prehistoric and early historic contexts fall outside the formal mandate of this study.

All the languages, customs, and cultural patterns found in northern and northeastern Bharat are also present in Nepal. This could just as easily be said the other way around-people similar to those in Nepal can be found across northern and northeastern Bharat. Even the lineage of South Bharat is not absent. Setting politics aside for a moment, it becomes apparent that the same people inhabit both sides of the border. The same applies to the gods and goddesses-those worshipped in Nepal are also revered in Bharat, and vice versa. A partial perspective would be incomplete; one must look in both directions to grasp the full picture.

The Tantric tradition, for example, has historically connected Nepal's Shakti Peeths with places like Kamakhya in Assam.

The Buddhist traditions of northeastern Bharat-Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, in particular-are closely aligned with those in Nepal, and the mutual flow of devotees is constant. Among Buddhist pilgrims visiting Lumbini-the birthplace of Gautam Buddha-those from Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh are especially prominent. Buddhist and Hindu pilgrimage sites in Nepal and Bharat link the peoples of both countries, not just spiritually but culturally. Those who visit Lumbini also visit Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Kushinagar in Bharat.

It is customary for pilgrims who visit Purnagiri in Uttarakhand of Bharat to proceed to the Siddhanath temple in Nepal's Sudur-Pashchim Pradesh. In another tradition, Doleswar Mahadev in Bhaktapur, Nepal, is believed to be the head of Lord Shiva's divine form, while Kedarnath in Bharat is regarded as back of the body-thus forming a spiritual whole. Those who undertake pilgrimages to the Chardhams and twelve Jyotirlingas in Bharat are expected to also visit Pashupatinath in Nepal; skipping it is considered an incomplete pilgrimage.

Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, Bharat, and Mithilanchal in Nepal's Madhesh Pradesh are the birthplaces of Lord Ram and his consort, Devi Sita, respectively. Devotion to Ram is incomplete without the remembrance of Sita-or, say, without associating Sita with Ram. The glory of Ayodhya cannot be fully appreciated without reference to Janakpur. Both lie in the broader region of the northern Gangetic plains, which today is split across two countries by a political boundary. Conversations with residents on both sides of the border reveal a strong sense of shared identity, with complaints only about the inconveniences caused by newly imposed border management systems that hinder traditional and

religious movement across the boundary.

These historical and cultural heritage sites are common to both countries. For example, while Bodh Gaya in Bihar is where Siddhartha attained enlightenment, his birthplace-Lumbini-is in Nepal. The province in which it lies is named after Lumbini to honour this heritage. Yet, remembering Lumbini also means remembering Bodh Gaya and Sarnath and Kushinagar. While the state may not always emphasise this connection, societies on both sides have a duty to keep it alive.

Between Nepal and Bharat lies a political boundary-a Westphalian demarcation-but culturally, this line holds little meaning, especially for those who live along the frontier. On one side stands Bharat's Seema Suraksha Bal (SSB); on the other, Nepal's Sashstra Prahari Bal that is Armed Police Force. Customs posts mark the boundary. Recently, most border crossings have introduced "help desks" that require identity documents, raising concerns that, though there are no physical fences, psychological barriers are being built at the margins.

This represents the increasing dominance of the state over cultural ties. In reality, it is the presence of the state machineries that creates the notion of Nepal and Bharat as different. In terms of religious worship-whether Shaivism, Vaishnavism, or Shaktism-the traditions are the same on both sides. Yet, as the state exerts more control over the relationship, the tendency to say "us" and "them" grows. States should not become obstacles to cultural proximity-they should be enablers. After all, the Sanatan tradition exists on both sides, as do Buddhism and Kirat traditions. In fact, in the language of Buddha himself, *Esa dhammo*

sanantano (“this Dharma is Sanatan”), Buddhists are also followers of Sanatan Dharma.

Of course, some in the Buddhist community reject this interpretation, and so, let us avoid debate on this point and recognise them as they wish to be seen. The esteemed scholar Suniti Kumar Chatterji believed that Brahmanical, Jain, and Buddhist traditions together form the broader Hindu identity. He even considered Sikhs part of this extended family (Kirat Janakirti). However, due to the influence of colonial education systems, imposed interpretations, and ethnically narrow state ideologies, we now classify branches of the same civilisational tree as distinct and separate religions—just as Catholics and Protestants are treated as separate in the West.

In truth, whether one looks at the Sanatan or Buddhist traditions in Bharat, they mirror those of Nepal, with only slight regional variation. The vows taken, the iconography, and even local practices all bear the unmistakable imprint of a shared civilisational heritage. For instance, in the Losar festivals of the Gurung, Tamang, and Sherpa communities, one can clearly see the influence of the broader South Asian cultural sphere.

While there may be differences in outward appearances between the Buddhist, Kirat, and Hindu traditions, their core and essence are the same. They are not competitors—they complement each other. The religious practices of Nepal’s hill communities are the same as those in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Sikkim in Bharat. Whether one looks north to south or east to west, the same truth holds—what divides them is merely a ten-yard strip of land. What separates Matihani from Madhwapur? Nothing but that ten-yard line.

What makes Illam different from Mirik? Or Dadeldhura from Pithoragarh? Just the border. People on both sides are in the same terrain separated by Westphalian pillars.

Nepali priests serve in Bharatiya pilgrimage sites, while priests from southern Bharat perform rituals at Pashupatinath. This exchange is distinctive and must be deepened. More effort is needed-not less-especially as certain elements continue their attempts to disrupt these long-standing connections, living traditions.

Deities revered for generations on both sides of the border are the objects of veneration for both people. During the Bharatiya awakening against British rule, a spiritual renaissance also emerged. After the 1857 Uprising was suppressed, a new wave of spiritual revival began. For nearly five centuries, Bharat's consciousness was suppressed-first by invaders such as Ghoris, Khiljis, Tughlaqs, and Mughals, and then by European-backed merchant rulers, later adding two more centuries of subjugation. Nepal, by contrast, never came under foreign fist, so its traditions remained intact. These preserved Nepali traditions, scriptures, and holy sites are shared treasures of the larger Hindu and Buddhist world, Kirat included.

After the Nirvana of the Buddha, the Buddhist tradition flourished in most of South Asia, especially during the reign of Emperor Ashoka, expanding it to as far as Japan in the East and Central Asia through Kashmir and Afghanistan. Under Emperor Ashoka, Buddhism became the state religion of Bharat, and its centre was Magadha, the seat of the Emperor, leading to a decline in Vedic practices. Much later, Adi Shankaracharya revived, reaffirmed and reformed

the Vedic tradition, restoring Sanatan Dharma's influence from the Nilgiris to the Gangetic plains and highlands. In Nepal, however, there was already harmony and gradual convergence between Hindu and Buddhist paths much before these broader revivals took shape. Though individual studies have explored this dynamic, institutional research is still lacking. Nowhere else have the Hindu and Buddhist traditions been interwoven so beautifully as in Nepal—particularly in the Kathmandu Valley and its surroundings, which remain a shared legacy of Nepal and Bharat.

Similarly, in Bengal, just across Nepal's border, the Brahmo Samaj was founded in 1828 by Dwarkanath Tagore and Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Its influence reached Nepal as well. Even earlier, during the Mughal era, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu led a great Vaishnava movement from Bengal. These reformist and devotional traditions reached Nepal. Tulsi Das's Ramcharitmanas is being sung along with Bhanubhakta Ramayan with equal veneration. Tulsidas's Ram devotion and Surdas's Shreekrishna bhakti too had made inroads into Nepal during their lifetimes. Though this information is widely believed in Nepal but it is still waiting to be authenticated by research. The poems of Mirabai and the couplets of Kabir deeply touched Nepal too. Swami Dayananda Saraswati's Arya Samaj and Swami Vivekananda's Advaita philosophy continue to influence lives of Nepali generality as well. Just as various spiritual and reformist organisations remain active in Bharat, so too do they thrive in Nepal.

A Unique Relationship Rooted in Natural Affinity

In the very first paragraph, I referred to the relationship between Nepal and Bharat as “unique,” by which I meant that when such a claim is made, it demands an in-depth exploration of what justifies the term unique. It is with this objective that this dialogue-based study was initiated. At its core lies the tangible reality of socio-cultural interconnectedness. It is this interconnectedness that naturally binds the people of both countries in an inseparable continuum. And it is from this bond that a profound sense of affinity emerges. It is precisely because of this natural affinity that the relationship between the two countries is described as unique, even incomparable.

Of course, it is not uncommon for diplomatic protocol to refer to relationships as “unique,” even in the absence of genuine affinity. For example, Nepal and the United States are often said to share a unique relationship-but this statement is merely ceremonial. Nepal’s relationship with the United States is grounded in mutual interests-sometimes petty, as it should be, and occasionally strategic. The same applies to Russia, Germany, and other countries. While such nations may describe their ties with Nepal as unique, the reality does not bear this out. Often, the word “unique” in these contexts lacks real significance.

Now, who does Bharat have a truly unique relationship with? Can it entrust its own border security to its other immediate neighbours-Bhutanese, Bangladeshis, Burmese, Sri Lankans? The answer, frankly, is no. Besides Bharatiya

themselves, Bharat entrusts no one more than Nepalis. Why has Bharat entrusted Nepalis with the security of its borders? And why has Nepal permitted its citizens to help guard Bharatiya frontiers? This goes beyond private homes or office security guards. We're talking about national borders here-and the willingness to lay down lives in their defence. Such trust does not stem from mere formality.

Nepalis are stationed not only along Bharat's border with Pakistan but also on its frontier with China-even though Nepal shares a long border with China as well. Bharat's border with China stretches from Kashmir and Ladakh to Uttarakhand, and further east to Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh barring Nepal and Bhutan. These borders are guarded by Bharatiyas and Nepalis alike.

Such an arrangement cannot be explained solely by a "special" relationship-it implies something deeper: an emotional bond. For Nepalis to risk their lives for Bharat, and for Bharat to place such trust in Nepalis, speaks volumes. There must be a sense of oneness, a heart-to-heart spiritual proximity for such trust to exist. Somewhere deep down, Nepalis believe that if Bharat is insecure, Nepal cannot remain safe either.

This isn't merely a matter of physical geography; it is also about shared social values, cultural heritage, and faiths that span both nations. Even before modern-day Nepal and Bharat came into being-before the existence of national boundaries-the sacred sites we see today already existed on the vast landmass that embraced the Himalayas in the north and stretched down into the great waters of the ocean.

In fact, it would not be wrong to say that during the Licchavi period, Nepal took the form of a cultural nation. This continued into the Malla era. Meanwhile, in Europe, the idea of the nation-state gained global recognition following the Treaty of Westphalia (1648 CE), which formalised the political delineation of expansive empires and warring principalities. Then after concept of the state became tied to fixed territorial boundaries. However, a nation need not be limited by the confines of a state.

In this sense, the Nepali nation extends beyond the territory of the modern Nepali state. From ancient times, Nepal has been connected to various parts of Bharat, and by extension, to the larger Bharatiya cultural sphere. Indeed, the idea of cultural Bharat once extended as far as present-day Indonesia, but this does not mean Indonesia was ever part of the Bharatiya state. Nepal, in contrast, was not only part of that broader Indic cultural milieu but one of its vital cradles-interacting with and contributing to Bharat's various cultural sites.

Scholars believe that the Licchavis and Mallas came from Vaishali and Magadha, and that the Shah kings arrived from central and western Bharat. Over time, these rulers formed ties with the indigenous Kirats and became localised. In this way, Nepal's administrative and cultural systems took on a distinct shape, though they continued interacting closely with people living across modern Bharat. On the ground level, this interaction between people remained fluid and mutually influential.

As various groups-Kirats, Licchavis, Shahs, Mallas, Hill Brahmins, Rajputs, Indigenous tribes, Terai Castes and many linguistic communities-interacted and mingled, Nepal gradually assumed its present social form. Thus, while Nepal is not identical to Bharatiya state society, it bears a striking resemblance with cultural landscape. In essence, they are the same, though local expressions may differ.

Geographically, locations such as Varanasi, Somnath, Rameshwaram, and Dwarka in Bharat, and Muktinath, Pashupatinath, and Janakpur in Nepal, are culturally and spiritually bound to one another, as previously mentioned. There is no border between them, nor should there be though politics may draw lines, the safeguarding of these shared spiritual heritage sites is a joint responsibility of both nations.

Consider this: when a Nepali visits Vaishno Devi or Amarnath in Bharat, they do not feel as if they are on foreign soil. Similarly, Bharatiya pilgrims visiting temples in Nepal do not feel like outsiders. There is a shared cultural consciousness.

That's why Bharat's relationship with Nepal is unlike its relationship with other neighbouring countries such as China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, Sri Lanka (connected by the Ram Setu), or the Maldives. Even those countries that were once part of Bharat-like Pakistan and Bangladesh-do not share the same level of grassroots emotional closeness that Nepal does with Bharat.

In short, this is a relationship of unparalleled uniqueness. And it is this very uniqueness that justifies the use of the word incomparable.

If physical proximity alone determined emotional closeness, then Bangladesh, which shares over 4,150 kilometres of border with Bharat, should be the closest. China shares about 3,500 km, Pakistan around 3,200 km, Burma 1,600 km, and Bhutan about 700 km of land border with Bharat. Sri Lanka and the Maldives are connected by sea. But again, emotional intimacy does not arise solely from proximity or language. Linguistically, Bharat shares more with Bangladesh and Pakistan-Bengali in the east, Punjabi in the northwest. By this logic, these two should be the closest. But they are not. Why? Because what makes a relationship emotionally intimate and unique is the shared civilisational belief system that binds the two nations on a societal and spiritual level. That is what connects people from the heart—and Nepal and Bharat share this in full measure.

A Relationship that Obliterates Borders

The phrase “a relationship that obliterates borders” may sound politically incorrect at first. Nepal and Bharat are indeed two separate sovereign nations. Since the agreement reached in 1860 between Nepal’s then Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana and the British colonial administration in Bharat, the two countries have been physically separated by a demarcated border. After gaining independence from British rule in 1947, Bharat adopted its own constitution, which came into effect on January 26, 1950, as its supreme law. Nepal, on the other hand, has adopted four major constitutions to date (in 1959, 1962, 1990, and 2015), the latest of which was written by an elected Constituent Assembly. In saying that the two nations share a border-blurring relationship, the intention is not to deny their distinct identities.

Each country has its own constitution, flag, and national symbols. And yet, despite the repeated declarations that these are two different nations, the people on either side share a bond that goes beyond borderlines. This border-blurring relationship isn’t just about geographical proximity or economic interdependence—it is rooted in a deeper truth already elaborated above: emotional affinity born from shared civilisation, and a continuity of cultural belonging. In contrast, while Bharat shares civilisational roots with Pakistan and Bangladesh and both sides often invoke that lineage, the intimacy is nowhere near as natural or evident as it is between Nepal and Bharat.

Two of the major civilisational centres of the Bharatiya subcontinent-Takshashila and the larger portion of the Indus Valley-now fall within Pakistan's borders after Bharat's partition at its independence in August 1947. Yet, they are considered part of the broader Bharatiya civilisational framework. In the case of Pakistan, the cultural continuity has ruptured. Not only has its civilisational inheritance grown faint, but Pakistan's identity-due to its sustained animosity and denial-has actively distanced itself from its ancient past. This is not to question Pakistan's existence, but to note that it has not come to embody the shared civilisational heritage of the subcontinent the way Bharat and Nepal do.

As already stated, the civilisational bond between Nepal and Bharat predates the formation of modern political Bharat. I refer to "modern political Bharat" intentionally, because Bharat, as a civilisation, is among the oldest in the world, and Nepal's identity is inextricably tied to that expansive, ancient world called Bharatvarsha. Nepal, too, has existed on that shared civilisational plane, with an uninterrupted continuity.

Modern Bharat, having endured over 700 years of foreign rule, was partitioned at independence into Bharat, West Pakistan, and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). This gave rise to enduring conflict. Bharat and Pakistan have fought three full-fledged wars and engaged in the Kargil conflict-some even count that as the fourth war. After Sikkim's integration into Bharat in 1975, the Bharatiya state's

territorial, demographic, and geographic footprint expanded further.

Sikkim, in terms of language and ethnicity, appears to be an extension of eastern Nepal, much like how Uttarakhand resembles Nepal's far-western region. Uttarakhand's culture may be labeled an extension of Nepal's hill culture, but Nepal's far west aligns more closely, in terms of language and ethnicity, with the Kumaon-Garhwal region. Before 1816, both these regions were part of greater Nepal. Across the Himalayan arc—from Ladakh to Arunachal—lies a belt of shared ethnic, linguistic, and spiritual identities. This can broadly be described as Himalayan Buddhism.

Although Nepal is geographically distant from Sindh and Takshashila, it continues to see itself as a part of that legacy—because these are civilisational truths tied to faith and psychology. Unlike Pakistan, which has severed ties with its ancient spiritual and cultural roots, Nepal still identifies with Takshashila and the Indus Valley, just as Bharat does.

Linguistic and Ethnic Continuity

When viewed through the lens of linguistic and ethnic continuity, Nepal's connection with Bharat reveals four major patterns. The Indo-Aryan language family spans from Karnali in Nepal all the way to Kashmir in Bharat, covering the entire Mahabharat range. The Tibeto-Burman languages extend across the Himalayan region, the Mahabharat range, and into Assam and Mizoram. Communities belonging to the Dravidian language family are found as far north as Nepal's Terai. Similarly, speakers of the Austroasiatic family stretch from eastern Nepal to Meghalaya in Bharat's northeast.

Why raise these linguistic and ethnic linkages? Because especially between Nepal and Bharat's northeast, there remains a compelling need for deeper academic inquiry and interactive engagement. Often, when Nepal-Bharat relations are discussed, the focus is limited to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal. This fails to capture the full social and cultural spectrum. A truly representative understanding requires looking east, south, and west. Apart from scholars like Bharat's Suniti Kumar Chatterji and Nepal's Baburam Acharya, few have explored these lines of cultural and linguistic continuity. In reality, Nepalese are most populous in Bharat's northeast, and linguistically, the west holds deep resonance with Nepal as well.

Incomparable Closeness

These two nations-Nepal and Bharat-are not just neighbours on the map; they are custodians of a living cultural heritage, a continuum of civilisation. From the Hindu Kush stretching southeastward toward Arakan, from the majestic Himalayas to the coasts of Sri Lanka, this subcontinent is the birthplace of the world's oldest text-the Rigveda. It is the sacred soil that gave rise to the six systems of Hindu philosophy: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta.

This is the land of sages and seers-Yajnavalkya, Gargi, Ashtavakra, and King Janak. It is the land graced by the avatars of Lord Vishnu-Shri Ram and Shreekrishna. Gautam Buddha belonged to Kapilvastu, which is now in Nepal. He was born in Lumbini, a place that also falls within Nepal's borders. He attained enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, Bharat-the term "Bodh" was added to Gaya because of him. His first sermon was delivered in Sarnath, and his final nirvana occurred in Kushinagar.

Born in Lumbini and raised in Tilaurakot of Kapilvastu (both in Nepal), Buddha's life also connects deeply with Bharat, encompassing Sarnath, Kushinagar, and Bodh Gaya. By any interpretation, Buddha belongs to both Nepal and Bharat. Spiritually, therefore, these two nations cannot be seen as aliens.

Whether in the traditions of Sindhu-Sarasvati, the Gangetic belt, the Dravidian south, or the Kirat highlands-this

civilisational inheritance is not exclusive to Bharat alone. It extends fully into Nepal. This is not a matter of ideology but a lived truth.

As we now tread this profound subject, we must go even deeper-into the very question of origin. How did the Indus Valley Civilisation fall? For long, it was claimed that Aryans from Central Asia destroyed it. But modern archaeological research is debunking that. Evidence increasingly points to natural causes of decline and population migration. Aryans were not an ethnic group but a civilisational identity. The people of the Bharatiya subcontinent-Nepal included-are all descendants of the same civilisational tree. The roots are shared. The branches, though many, all stem from the same great cultural trunk.

The Sindhu Valley gave rise to the Ganga, Narmada, and Kaveri civilisations. Of these, the Ganga lineage extended into Nepal as the Bagmati Civilisation. All rivers in Nepal eventually flow into the Ganga. It is the Ganga that ultimately carries them to the ocean. Therefore, Nepal's religious and cultural expressions-no matter how locally rooted-are part of the larger Himavat-Gangetic tradition.

Culture does not evolve in isolation. Societies grow in the lap of geography. Human behaviour is shaped by interaction with nature. Local variations arise from that interplay. But to declare such variations as “fundamentally different” is an uninformed assertion. Nepal's various riverine and hill cultures-from Bagmati to Koshi, Narayani to Karnali-all represent branches of the larger Aryavarta civilisation.

Many Dimensions of Relationship

Nepal borders five Bharatiya states, and six of Nepal's seven provinces touch Bharatiya territory. The lives of people across these borders are intricately linked.

Nepal shares its western border with Bharat's Uttarakhand state, and not just the boundary-the language and way of life on both sides are almost identical. All of Uttarakhand's sacred shrines-Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Haridwar, and Rishikesh-are regarded by Nepalis as their own. To the southwest lies Uttar Pradesh, long considered a second home to Nepalis. The intimate relationship between Kashi (Varanasi) and Kantipur (Kathmandu) is as old as that of Vishwanath and Pashupatinath. Hence, even while residing in Nepal, many feel they are spiritually dwelling in Kashi. Places like Ayodhya, Mathura, Vrindavan, Prayag, and Gorakhpur are not just familiar names to Nepalis-they are deeply bound to these centres with a profound sense of inner belonging.

In truth, the interaction between Uttar Pradesh and Nepal should not be viewed as a formal engagement between strangers, but as a familial conversation. Even cities like Kashi and Prayag, far from the border, remain integral parts of Nepali life. Until as recently as the early 1990s (around 2046 BS), Kashi's educational institutions served as the principal centres of higher learning for Nepalis.

Before the establishment of the Nepal Sanskrit University, institutions like Kashi Vidyapith and Sampurnanand Sanskrit University in Varanasi were central to Sanskrit education in Nepal. Many of Nepal's senior administrators

and leaders were educated at Banaras Hindu University (BHU), and even now, Nepali students continue to enroll there. In recent years, however, the focus has shifted to other Bharatiya cities like Delhi, Pune, and Bangalore, and many quality institutions have emerged within Nepal itself. As a result, the tradition of studying in Kashi has declined, partly due to a lack of timely adaptation in that relationship.

Additionally, global transformations have led many Nepalis to seek higher education beyond Bharat. Even Nepal's own institutions face declining enrolments as students look abroad. Previously, this was a local trend; today, it's globalised. Unfortunately, policymakers and institutions have failed to grasp that outdated traditions cannot be sustained without the capacity and appeal to match global changes.

Another reason students look beyond Bharat is due to the rise of INGOs and NGOs in Nepal and the influence of proximity to foreigners. More tangibly, the expansion of English-medium schools and the ease of acquiring passports have also played a major role. As internal and global transformations are inevitable, the failure of both nations to respond accordingly has resulted in a shift in educational destinations. In this age of globalisation, especially in education, the lack of structured cooperation between Nepal and Bharat has upset the balance and influenced public perception.

The neglect of educational cooperation by socio-cultural institutions has disrupted the traditional bridge through which Bharatiya were once understood in Nepal. This has had broader social effects.

Undoubtedly, Bihar-Bharat's east-central state-is Nepal's cultural partner. Nepalis view Bihar as their own, for it shares deep historical ties with Nepal, especially the Kathmandu Valley. Licchavi and Malla rulers came from what is now Bihar. The Sen dynasty ruled regions across both territories. And even earlier, during the 4th to 6th centuries BCE, the Vajji Confederacy thrived as a republican state. At that time, there was no political Nepal or Bharat as we know them today. The Shakya republic, where Gautam Buddha's father Suddhodana ruled, had no rigid borders either. Those borders came much later. The whole subcontinent was one shared cultural civilisation-Bharatvarsha. That understanding still exists, but without adapting it to current realities, it risks becoming mere nostalgia.

At Matihani in Nepal and Madhwapur in Bharat, or at Jaleswar and Bhitamod, Nepal's Armed Police and Bharat's Border Security Force mark the political boundaries-but culturally, as I said before, the people on either side are the same. The language, customs, everything is identical. Nepal's Mithila stretches across the border. During the Sen rule, parts of southern and southeastern Nepal and northern Bihar were one kingdom. Similarly, Nepalis see Bengal and Sikkim as naturally connected.

Until the early 20th century, alongside Devanagari, many Nepalis in Terhathum and Panchthar could read Bengali script. This was common well into the mid-century. (My maternal grandmother, for instance, could read and interpret the Bengali Mahabharata fluently). Over time, as Kathmandu-centric education expanded, Bengali literacy declined. Still, from a social and cultural standpoint, North

Bengal and Sikkim can be viewed as extensions of eastern Nepal.

The Bharatiya states bordering Nepal are intertwined with Nepali daily life, and both countries have formally recognised the unrestricted movement of people. Ethnic groups like the Rajbanshis in eastern Nepal and those in Assam and West Bengal may live under different national flags, but culturally and socially, they are one. When Draupadi Murmu of Bharat's Odisha became President, Santhals in Nepal felt a shared sense of elevation. There are countless instances where the border seems to dissolve. In fact, this reciprocity exists even with Bharatiya states not bordering Nepal.

All Bharatiya states are dear to Nepalis-not for political reasons, but because Nepal is, in essence, part of Bharatkhand, part of cultural Bharatvarsha-while being politically independent and sovereign. Failing to acknowledge this duality-that the countries are politically distinct but culturally united-leads to strains in bilateral relations. Furthermore, pseudo-nationalists on both sides continue to deny these deep-rooted connections, fostering division. Their full-time mission has been to ignore the truth and drive a wedge between the people.

One of the primary objectives of this study is to highlight that Nepal and Bharat are culturally and religiously one, while politically sovereign and independent. This distinction must be clearly understood and reflected in policymaking. The truth must not be hidden. Our bilateral relationship should be built on the reality of what is-not on illusions. A relationship rooted in truth breeds no artificiality and

prevents rupture. Disagreements may arise but need not become divisions.

Sadly, what does not exist is being portrayed as fact, and what does exist is being hidden. In the relationship between two culturally aligned nations, political priorities are being imposed. Devices to control the natural movement of people are being introduced under various pretexts.

Such distortions are creating artificial narratives that destabilise the harmony at the grassroots level. This emotional distance is being deliberately engineered. And behind this lies political interest-and more deeply, an agenda to fracture the social and cultural ties of both peoples.

The aim of this study is to create a counter-narrative to such divisive rhetoric and to reinforce a relationship rooted in truth and mutuality. It also aims to understand the role of various organisations working as cultural bridges between the two countries-how they are functioning and to what effect. There are dozens of such institutions that, whenever the age-old emotional bond between the two countries is wounded, rise to help heal it.

Positively viewed, dozens of religious and spiritual organisations, originally founded in Bharat and now active in Nepal, are striving to maintain this cultural unity. Among them, 18 institutions were particularly noted, and among those, 5-7 have made a tangible impact in strengthening the relationship. While these organisations promote mutual respect, shared meals, and close interpersonal relations across communities, these efforts must also reflect in state policies.

The Feeling of Being at Home

Despite efforts by various interest groups to paint Nepal and Bharat as culturally distinct, the social and cultural connections at the grassroots remain so deep that neither country's people see the other as foreign. Bharatiya pilgrims visiting Nepali shrines do not feel they've left their own land—they experience the same spiritual fragrance. Such longstanding affinity has occasionally been disrupted by unpleasant behaviour from both sides. Nepali pilgrims in Gaya have reported exploitation by priests. In Gokul and other northern Bharatiya pilgrimage sites, there have been instances of theft or mistreatment. Police in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Assam have a poor reputation in this regard.

Similarly, Bharatiya pilgrims in Nepal have faced issues with guides, transport operators, hotel staff, and at times, even the police. Such experiences not only affect individual travellers but also undermine the broader emotional connection between the two nations. For example, many Bharatiya pilgrims to Muktinath report being overcharged. Ensuring fairness is the responsibility not just of the state but also of religious institutions and travel agencies. Some Buddhist pilgrims even complain of being taxed while visiting Nepali stupas. Bharatiya visitors should be treated as locals at Nepali pilgrimage sites. This is not merely a religious or cultural matter but also a legal one. Just as Bharatiya should treat Nepalis as their own, Nepalis must do the same for Bharatiya.

Shared Destinations

Our deities are shared. Our pilgrimage sites are shared. So too are our religious and spiritual institutions. Pashupatinath and Kedarnath, Vishwanath and Somnath, Muktinath and Badrinath, Janakpur and Ayodhya, Mathura, Vrindavan, Jagannath Puri, Dwarkadhish, Vaishnodevi, Kamakhya, and Pindeshwar-all hold equal importance for both sides. Alongside these timeless centres, new institutions suited to contemporary times have also emerged. Their names and brief explanations are incorporated in the annexe.

The Message of Study and Dialogue

Nepal-Bharat relations are not limited to official, political, or diplomatic channels. They are vast and expansive. While colonial legacies still linger in diplomatic dealings, none remain at the grassroots. This is where the true relationship lies. Its reflection can be seen in the ongoing socio-cultural reciprocity.

Hence, this study is primarily aimed at understanding the work being done by actors active in the socio-cultural space-how they are helping give voice to this enduring people-to-people relationship.

Among the institutions listed in the annex, especially those engaged in religious and spiritual work, the efforts made to connect people from both sides were commendable. Yet, there was little evidence of proactive steps to deepen the relationship further or to broaden their work to connect with diverse sections of society. These institutions need awareness and training. Their primary focus may be spiritual upliftment, but their mission becomes much easier when mutual relations between the two countries remain harmonious.

The socio-cultural ties between Nepal and Bharat are undoubtedly unique. This study is centred on that uniqueness. But the message of this uniqueness must also resonate in everyday life. If not repeatedly reinforced, there is a risk that only formal political relations will dominate bilateral affairs, as is increasingly the case.

It must also be said that just as Bharatiya cultural icons are revered in Nepal, space must be made in Bharat to honour Nepali icons too with equal veneration. Mutual reverence for cultural symbols further cements the bonds. When this happens, such recognition can form the basis for more meaningful dialogue-whether it's resolving bilateral issues or conducting negotiations-guided by the spirit of shared cultural heritage. Because when mutuality is the foundation, similarities outweigh differences, and diplomacy becomes less about devices and more about trust. In such an atmosphere of sincerity, even complex problems can be resolved with ease.

Annexe 1: Charting the Ties between Nepal and Bharat

This annex presents a structured overview of shared religious, spiritual, and socio-cultural institutions operating across Nepal and Bharat, their associated activities, and thematic points discussed during the interactive engagements.

Civilisational Twins: Shared Heritage

Deities and sacred geographies are shared: Pashupatinath and Kedarnath, Vishwanath and Somnath, Muktinath and Badrinath, Janakpurdham and Ayodhya, Mathura, Vrindavan, Jagannath Puri, Dwarkadheesh, Vaishnodevi, Kamakhya, and Pindeshwar. Alongside these ancient links, new organisations and spiritual centres have emerged across Nepal and Bharat.

Key Organisation Centres in Bharat and Nepal

ISKCON (Krishna Bhavanamrit)

Bharat: New Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad

Nepal: Budhanilkantha, Kathmandu

Ramakrishna Paramhans Mission

Bharat: Almora, Kolkata, Rajkot, Jaipur, New Delhi, Mumbai, Srinagar

Nepal: Gyaneshwar (Kathmandu)

Satya Sai Centres

Bharat: Puttaparthi, Whitefield-Bangalore

Nepal: Naxal (Kathmandu)

Art of Living

Bharat: Bangalore, Indore, Karimnagar

Nepal: Sifal, Shankhamul (Kathmandu)

I also gathered information through a review of available materials and meeting with representatives of these organisations. While many of these organisations are quite active within their own boundaries, it would be difficult to say they play a significant role in strengthening broader Nepal-Bharat relations. None the less, their contribution may still be felt in more indirect ways.

Institutions with Direct Dialogue

- Brahma Kumaris, Butwal
- Ramakrishna Mission, Kathmandu
- Patanjali Yogpeeth, Kathmandu
- Maharshi Mahesh Yogi Ashram, Taudaha
- Janajati Kalyan Ashram, Kathmandu
- Prem Rawat Foundation, Tasarpu, Dhading

Representative Institutions Studied

- Arya Samaj
- Ramakrishna Mission
- Sri Aurobindo Ashram
- Vaishnav Sampradayas: Nimbarka, Ramanuja, Ramananda
- Satya Sai Baba
- Om Shanti / Brahma Kumaris
- Maharshi Mahesh Yogi
- Prem Rawat Foundation (Atmagyan)
- Sri Krishna Pranami
- Kripalu Ji Maharaj

- Anukul Thakur, Radhaswami
- Patanjali
- Osho
- Sri Sri Ravi Shankar
- Sadhguru
- Vipassana Centres
- Manav Dharma
- Gayatri Parivar

Community-Based Socio-Cultural Organisations

- Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh Nepal
- Pragyik Vidyarthi Parishad Nepal
- Janjati Kalyan Ashram, Nepal, Aamako Maya Chhatrawaas
- Pashupati Sikshya Prashar Samiti
- Rashtra Sevika Nepal
- Sewa International
- Nepal Shikshan Parishad
- Vishwa Hindu Parishad Nepal
- Janakalyan Pratishthan
- Ekal Foundation (Ekal Vidyalaya Yojana)
- Rashtriya Shramik Mahasangh

Socio-Economic Relationship-Based Organisations

- Gandhi Smarak Mahaguthi, Bhadra Kali
- Swami Vivekananda Sanskritik Kendra
- Bharatiya Citizen Association

- Nepal-Bharat Chamber of Commerce
- Service-Oriented Organisations
- Marwari Sewa Samiti
- Agarwal Samaz

Organisations Working beyond Caste and Ethnicity

Most of these organisations have made efforts to create an environment of inclusivity among people. While the symbols of faith may differ and their approaches may vary, the essence remains the same. Many spiritual, social, and cultural organisations are working beyond the boundaries of caste and ethnic discrimination.

Organisations Focused on Devotion and Spiritual Practices

The centers of ISCKON promotes the Gaudiya Vaishnav tradition of devotion and they also have a network in about ten locations across Nepal. Its main center in Nepal is in Budhanilkantha, with activities in all three districts of the Kathmandu Valley. ISKCON also has an international network including Bharat and Nepal. In Nepal, it centers in places like Budhanilkantha, Tahachal, Basbari, Narayangadh, Gaur, Lahan, Karputar (Lamjung), Butwal, Bhairahawa, Tansen, and Dharan. Because of its global reach and many European and American followers, it reflects a worldwide interest in Hinduism.

Similarly, the Brahma Kumaris, also known as Om Shanti, have their main center in Mount Abu, Rajasthan, with branches spread throughout Nepal. According to Ramsingh

Bhaiji, there are around 550 Om Shanti service centers across Nepal.

The center of Patanjali Yog Peeth is in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, Bharat. Its headquarters in Nepal is located in Mandikatar, Kathmandu. It conducts yoga practice sessions and yoga camps in various parts of the country. In addition to its service activities, it also runs a business dealing in Ayurvedic medicines and food products. The Art of Living's main center is in Bangalore, Bharat. In Nepal, it has a meditation center in Koteshwor, Kathmandu and organises meditation camps in different parts of the country.

Annexe 2: Points Discussed at the Interactive Sessions

- Nepal-Bharat relations are unique, and they ask for more ardent understanding of the underlying reasons.
- To term Nepal-Bharat ties as 'unique' is not a mere ritual-it is justified by the geography and cultural heritage both nations share.
- However, their uniqueness is not just about physical proximity, for geographic proximity alone does not explain the bond between these two ancient nations.
- Bharat shares much longer borders with Bangladesh and China than with Nepal, yet the depth of relationship is not the same. Along with geographic proximity, Nepal's cultural and civilisational linkage with Bharat stands incomparable.
- Nepal and Bharat's connectedness is not based on ritual or diplomacy, but on shared heritage and values deep down in the DNA.

- The social, linguistic, and cultural proximity between the Bharatiya and Nepali provinces (e.g., Uttarakhand-Sudurpaschim, Mithila-Madhesh, Sikkim/Darjeeling-Koshi) further reinforces this unique bond.
- This closeness is not just economic-it is civilisational, spiritual, and emotional.Common pilgrimage sites (e.g. Pashupatinath-Kedarnath, Badrinath, Mukti, Janakpur-Ayodhya) and shared institutions keep this sense of concord alive.
- Such connections blur national boundaries at the emotional and cultural level.Shared institutions foster this emotional linkage. Their efforts deserve deeper study.
- Spiritual and cultural institutions like ISKCON, Patanjali, Brahmakumari, and others contribute to shared consciousness.
- Pilgrims from Bharat do not feel they are in a foreign land in Nepal, and Nepalis too, do not feel like they are in an alien land while in Bharat. However, care should be taken that any disrespectful behaviour should be discouraged.Public perception and emotional belonging to each other's sacred sites must be respected and promoted through mutual sincerity.
- Institutions like ISKCON connect Nepal and Bharat through bhakti (devotion), while Osho's centres connect through meditation and philosophical discourse.

- Patanjali is involved in yoga, Ayurveda, and agricultural activities across Nepal, promoting holistic well-being. Beyond traditional pilgrimage, new spiritual destinations are emerging, and they should be protected and promoted.
- The dialogue aimed to map these efforts and evaluate their impact on Nepal-Bharat social and cultural ties.

Overview of Some Organisational Activities

Patanjali Yogpeeth, Kathmandu-Actively engages with the general public through yoga and Ayurvedic medicines.

Krishnabhawanamrit, Budhanilkantha-Encourages devotion through bhajans, kirtans, spiritual talks, care and protection for cows and distribution of religious literature.

BrahmaKumari University, Butwal-Delivers positive messages in society through spiritual discourses, meditation techniques and women-led leadership.

Prem Rawat Foundation (Aatmagyan), Tasarpu, Dhading-Works among the underprivileged focusing on education, health, drinking water, skills training, and also encourages local production by providing both technical and market support.

Krishna Pranami, Kathmandu-Focuses on devotion (bhajan, kirtan, discourses), promoting community life and also provides care and protection to the elderly people.

Organisations Creating Awareness Across Diverse Social Sphere

- Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh Nepal
- Janjati Kalyan Ashram, Nepal
- Patanjali Yogpeeth, Nepal
- Sewa International, Nepal
- Pragyik Vidyarthi Parishad, Nepal
- Prem Rawat Foundation

Jain, Buddhist and Sikh Organisations Active in Both Countries

- Some of these organisations are associated with Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.
- Religious sites in Arunachal, Sikkim, Himachal, Ladakh (Bharat) and Nepal play an important role.
- Kirat organisations operate in both Bharat and Nepal, especially active in Sikkim, Darjeeling and the northeastern states of Bharat.
- Bodos and Kirats
- The Khasis of Meghalaya and the Nagas spread across Arunachal, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and even into Myanmar are believed to be Kirats as well.

Annexure Note

A more intensive study of Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh organisations active on both sides of the Nepal-Bharat border is essential to foster a deeper sense of cultural solidarity, particularly with the larger Hindu populations that predominate in both countries.

Buddhist organisations, in particular, are often closely associated with the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, and play a vital role in connecting communities across national boundaries. Many of their significant religious sites are located in regions such as Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, and Ladakh in Bharat, as well as throughout Nepal. These sites not only serve as spiritual landmarks but also as nodes of civilisational continuity.

Similarly, Kirat organisations-prominent in both Nepal and Bharat, especially in Sikkim, Darjeeling, and the Northeast-demonstrate a vibrant cross-border presence that deserves closer academic and institutional attention. The cultural affinities between the Bodo and Kirat communities further accentuate this connection.

Additionally, the Khasi people of Meghalaya and the Naga populations across Arunachal, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, and even into Burma are widely believed to be belonging to Kirat origin, adding further crusts of affinity. These linkages underline the importance of viewing civilisational and cultural ties as accommodative and overlapping, rather than confined by modern political boundaries.

