

Linking Nepal & Oregon

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The number of Nepalese-Americans is not as high as other hyphenated Americans in Oregon. However, the historical fact indicates that contribution of Nepalese people in building up their own community is very interesting to know. On the other hand, the Oregonians' contribution on development of Nepal is also highly praiseworthy. This short article aims to explore some of the facts that how the Nepalese community was established in the State of Oregon.

Historically, Nepal became successful in establishing the democratic form of government and became free from 104 years of family based Rana autocratic regime on Feb 22nd, 1950. After that Nepal was known to the world in various ways. The very first step of making the country known to the world was its membership to the United Nations Organization (UNO) in 1953. In the same year, Sir Edmund Hillary and his Nepali assistant Tenzing Norgay Sherpa conquered the Mount Everest. During this period the diplomatic tie between Nepal and United States of America was also established. Since then the US paid special attention in development of the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal. The then University of Oregon Professor of Education Dr. Hugh Wood was appointed as the advisor to the newly formed Ministry of Education in Nepal. Under his guidance various educational projects were introduced. One of the most important events that took place in between Nepal and Oregon is visit of eight Nepali Students, Mr. Trailokya Natha. Uprety, Mr. Krishan Raj Aryal, Mr. Narendra Bahadur Basnet, Mr. Shyam Raj Dhoj, Mr. Bhuvan Lal Joshi, Mr. Dirgha Man Shreshta, Mr. Ram Sunar Shreshta, Mr. Rama Prashad Tandukar, to Eugene for teacher training education at the University of Oregon in June 1955. In addition, the royal visit of late King Mahendra and Queen Mother Ratna at the University and decoration with award of "Distinguished Service citation" on May 6th 1960, were remarkable events in the history of Nepal and Oregon relationship.

Dr. Wood lived in Nepal for several years and guided extensively to build a college of Education and to establish the Tribhuvan University in 1959. The building of the site was planned and designed by the Oregon Architect Mr. James Tuley. Since the first batch of Nepali students was returned to homeland with the Masters degree from the U of O and with high quality of experience and knowledge of teacher training, the Nepalese Education System took a different approach in providing a qualitative education to Nepali people. After returning to Eugene, Dr. Wood established the American-Nepal Education Foundation, (ANEF) that consists of educators Chales D Byrne, Federick Hunter Paul Ackerman, Wallace McCrea and Mrs.H.B.Ferrin, as directors, to help Nepali people by providing opportunity to study in the American institutions. The foundation was run by Dr. Wood until he took his last breathe in 1997. Since then a flow of Nepali students were continuously took place in various educational institutions in the state of Oregon including University of Oregon, Oregon State University, Portland State University, Willamette University, Concordia University, Western Oregon University, Oregon Institute of Technology, Linfield College, Lane Community College, Portland Community College, Reed College and so on. In lieu of the dedication to Nepalese Educational development Dr. Hugh Wood was honored with the high ranking "Birendra Prajnaalankar" award by the late King Birendra in 1993. This is certainly an extraordinary contribution from the Oregonians in the educational development of Nepal. Until Today several research works have been already completed through Oregon institutions on various topics of Nepal. Currently, the geography department at the Portland State University (PSU) publishes the Himalayan Research Bulletin (HRB) that focuses research on Nepal and Himalayan region under the Association for Study of Nepal and Himalayas (ASNH). In addition, the International Nepal Bhasha Seva Samiti (INBSS) publishes 'Newah Vijnana' the Journal of Newar Studies since 1997. The teaching of Nepalese languages to Oregonians was started in 1992 through various institutions in Eugene and Portland.

Turning the subject to different area, the Oregonians have contributed not only in educational development but also in other fields of volunteer activities. In 1975, the then mayor of Eugene Mr. Anderson took an official visit to Kathmandu and in return he proposed to establish a sister city relation with the people of Kathmandu. It was the second sister city to Eugene. The first one was established with Chinju, South Korea in 1970. Currently there are four sister cities linked with Eugene including Kakegawa, Japan and Irkutsh, Russia. Since the beginning of Sister City relationship Eugene people created lots of projects for Nepal. One of the successful projects was scholarship to less privileged 22 girls of Siddhi Pokhari High school in Pokhari Village of Eastern Nepal. The project was started in 1990 and gave scholarships to pay their tuition and supplies for 5 years until they finish their high school education. It was terminated in 1996 due to recognition of free public education to girls until high school. In 1992, the first Sister city delegation of 10 volunteers was led by the then chairperson of Eugene city council Dr. Shawn Boles and the committee president Mr. Daya Shakya. In return, sister city committee invited three people's delegation including Deputy Mayor of Kathmandu Mr. Nabindra Raj Joshi, Kathmandu chapter President Bhikkhu Maitri and an environmentalist Dr. Shree Shaha in 1993. The result of this delegation exchange brought a concept of launching the Safa Tempo Project (STP) which helps to keep control of air quality of Kathmandu City from excessive exhaust of carbon mono-oxide from three wheel vehicles. Currently there are hundreds of electrical vehicles running in the streets of Kathmandu and the Government banned on importing non electrified three wheels. This project was successfully completed under the supervision of Global Resources Institute (GRI) established by Dr. Peter Moulton and Marylyn Cohen in Eugene. In addition the solar electrification project of Gompas Monasteries located in remote villages of Nepal was initiated by Dennis Ramsey in Eugene and partially funded through the sister city committee. The second delegation was taken place in memory of 25th anniversary relationship between Kathmandu and Eugene in 2000. A symbol of friendship between two cities is depicted by installation of the Nepali style Dhara 'water fountain' in vicinity of Metery Bagaicha 'Friendship Garden' in the premises of city office of Eugene.

Due to large number of flow of Nepali people in the state of Oregon they have realized to form a formal organization to foster Nepali Cultural heritage and social bondage to help each other. Currently over two hundreds of Nepali people have been living in Portland, Salem, Eugene, Corvallis, Bend, and Ashland. The Nepali Association of Oregon (NAO) was formed with nine executive members under the leadership of Mr. Raju Mali as the first President on April 13, 2001. Since its formation NAO successfully organized the public shows and participated in Asian heritage activities in Eugene and Portland. It also publishes the 'Namaste' newsletter twice a year and establishes a web site www.nepaloregon.org to update the association's activities in regular basis. The NAO organizes community gathering three times a year for New Year celebration, summer picnic and Dashain festival. The Asian Reporter local newspaper has recognized NAO members as the exemplary volunteers among the other Asian communities. Beside all these, a link with Nepal can not be completed without examining the business entrepreneurs that focus on promotion of hand made beautiful Nepalese crafts. The Nepalese artists are well received around the world and they produce high quality of fine art pieces in metal, wood, papers products and paintings. Gifts from Afar, Kathmandu to you, Himalayan Gifts, Shakti Blues in Portland, Potala House, Greater Goods in Eugene, Kathmandu Gift Shop in Salem, promote Nepalese arts and crafts in Oregon.

Another area of linking Nepal and Oregon can be viewed under Nepali people's contribution in building up the Taekwondo Martial art in the state of Oregon. The Founder of Nepal Taekwondo field Grandmaster Mr. JK Shin was moved to Oregon and established the US West Coast Taekwondo Association in 1988 and invited few players from Nepal and resume Taekwondo Training Schools in Portland. The current trend of International Championship was first initiated in 2000 by Master Diwakar Maharjan in Kathmandu, Nepal as a result of success and popularity gained through the training center located at the Hollywood district. The contribution made by this school is highly credible. It has been realized by Portlanders that the Taekwondo is not only a game but also a part of life that fits for all ages. Its seven moral characters are the guiding principles for the success of life. The participants and players certainly appreciate your understanding of true meaning of Taekwondo and its technique of keeping

healthy, moral and peaceful society. Apart from the Taekwondo, Nepalese people also have formed the Nepal Sports Club of Oregon (NESCO) to promote sports activities in the community.