GLOBALIZATION, MIGRATION AND MISSION IN THE NEPALI CONTEXT

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"We are living in an unprecedented age of mobility and migration."[1]

INTRODUCTION

Globalization[2], concerns the relatively recent acceleration (since the 1970s) in cross-border (usually trans-national) flows of money, commodities, weapons, information, ideologies (political, cultural, religious), pollutants – and people. The resulting world-wide interconnectedness of "communities, states, international institutions, non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations" (Held and McGrew 2000:27) reflects in real-life what is already enmeshed in real-time on the world-wide web. This "postcolonial world is a place of mixture" (Young 2003:129).

Friedman (Guthrie 2000:158) identifies the driving force behind globalization[3] as neo-liberal capitalism (economic flows), hence globalization is increasingly seen negatively by Christians because its underlying ethos is selfish consumerism. Conversely, Guthrie (2000:167) notes that "Christianity is often equated with the modern [globalized] world and thus blamed for its ills…" while Duchrow probably over-states the issue by comparing globalization with fascism and regarding it as a confessional issue (Heslem 2004:85). More realistically, Stackhouse insists that the religious dimension is so important it needs to be an integral part of globalization studies (2000:11). In the Nepali context of this paper, this primarily means Hinduism and Christianity.

The church, as Forward (2001:67), Guthrie (2000:160) and Escobar (2003:53) suggest, must accept that much of globalization is a *fait accompli*; so must learn to live within its socio-cultural structure, utilise its positive features, counteract negative ones, understand how it will affect mission, and plan innovatively, while remaining aware that "simply rid[ing]… the crest of the globalization wave… might end by changing the very nature of the gospel" (Escobar 2003:57).

Migration (flows of peoples), is sometimes merely regarded as part of cultural globalization, but I feel with Dahal (2005:4-5) that it is vitally important because it involves people, as opposed to money, systems and things. Held and McGrew (2000:281) also see it as the most ubiquitous. Heide and Hoffmann (2001:225) say that "conceiving of migration as an isolated event violates the holistic character of human life and society." Recently, I moved house: it was an unsettling, disruptive and expensive exercise but also a wonderful chance to have a clearout and new start. This epitomises migration.

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[1] Jung *Connections* 2005 Vol 4 No 3
[2] Not found in my 1988 Indian-Nepali COD!
[3] Steger 2003:7-9, 94 distinguishes between globalism (the ideology) globalization (the process) and globality (the condition).

This paper seeks to describe this migratory aspect of globalization in the current context of Nepal and relate it to opportunities for Christian mission.

GLOBALIZATION IN NEPAL

"The beginning of globalization is the end of geography" (Thompson - Dahal 2005:6), but globalization always has both geographical and social dimensions (Held and McGrew 2000:283). Nepal joined the 'global village' in 1951, after the overthrow of the Rana Regime. Dahal (2005:87) cites a predictable list of globalizing factors (including missionaries) but also unfairly (and I think, without understanding) accuses globalization for forcing people to follow Christianity. Nevertheless Escobar cautions that "foreign missions must always be aware that they may be the carrier of the material tools or the intellectual vehicles of the globalization process" (2003:60).

1. Economic and Financial Factors

Nepal is the 12th poorest country in the world[4], heavily dependent on overseas aid[5], but with an admittedly corrupt administration. There are few natural resources save the scenery. Much assistance is diverted into private pockets and the civil service serves itself, not the nation. Jobs depend on the *'aphno manche'* system[6]. Supermarkets for the wealthy are stocked with TNC-produced consumables and 'Coke' despite 52% of the population not having access to clean water. Child labour remains common, but if children do not work, families starve and all end up on the streets. Increasingly, students complete basic education, but many cannot find employment. Often the only way out of this poverty trap is to "go to the Gulf and South-East Asian countries [or India] to do manual jobs in very exploitative conditions" (Dahal 2005:92).

2. Socio-Political Factors

Nepali society is fatalistic. Consequently, offices are frequently unattended, roads un-mended and hospital patients untended. Nepal hosts the SAARC office but its own governance has dwindled throughout the second period of so-called democracy: since 1990 there have been as many governments as years, but none lasting more than 6 months. Many ethnic groups clamouring for independence are further fragmenting the state. Security forces cannot control the rebels and the country hurtles towards outright civil war, with innocent citizens fleeing their homes to escape forced enrolment by the Maoists or 'being disappeared' by the Security Forces.

3. Ideological and Cultural Factors

Nepal is proud of being the only Hindu kingdom in the world, but Hinduism is characterised by its caste system, which, although outlawed in 1963, still affects education and job opportunities, location of one's house and social activities. Despite Hindu 'tolerance', Christians have been persecuted and some still are – in family and community. The poor and low caste are pushed around and pushed out – of homes or villages. Hinduism is a 'geo-piety'[7] and 'bio-piety'[8] which significantly affects how it interacts with globalization. It has

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[4] The per capita GNP is $200 (Dahal 2005:10).
[5] "About 60 percent of its developmental budget comes from foreign aid and grants." (Ibid 55)
[6] Family 'source-force'.
[7] "Defined by its geography rather than by a founder, a book, a set of doctrines or creed, or a paradigmatic event" (Thomas – Stackhouse 2002:216).

become a world faith – with a growing diaspora – but remains rooted in the Indian sub-continent. Global types of dress, fast-food and music are readily accepted, but Christianity blamed for introducing westernization.

4. Violence and Environmental Factors

Nepal is the birthplace of Buddha and King Birendra established it as a Zone of Peace, but today Kalashnikovs are more common than *kukhris* and pressure cookers used for making bombs and not just for cooking. Nepali Maoists are patterned on the Peruvian Shining Path. Despite its incredible Himalayan heritage, mountains of urban waste often go uncollected, and streams of dust swirl around the capital, deterring even hardy tourists and their hard currency. Kathmandu's rivers are also its sewers. Until recently no one bothered – or dared – to complain. Now riots are regular and destructive, but tyre burning simply increases the already lethal levels of pollution and indirectly causes the economy to plummet still further.

All these globalizing factors combine to give a milieu in which more and more people are moving within and outside the country (Heide and Hoffmann 2001:74).

MIGRATORY FLOWS IN THE NEPALI CONTEXT

"Nepal is a nation of immigrants. People who crossed the high Himalayan passes… [and]… People from the south… India" (Burbank p29). "Nepal has always had a share in two different worlds" Furer-Haimendorf in Perry 1997:2). "Nepali, like "Indian civilization, [was]… transformed by the military migrations of Aryans… and Islamic Moghuls" (Held and McGrew 2000:287) but movements of Nepalis today far exceed these historical flows and are rapidly increasing.[9] They occur for reasons common across the globe… "population pressure… voluntary emigration… internal strife… trade-links… 'brain drain'" (Chandran *EMQ* 2004:451).

"For around 200 years, men (and to a lesser extent women) from Nepal have been leaving their homes in Nepal to seek their living abroad…." (Seddon 2001:xx) Today, "…Nepal is considered to be a human exporting country" (Upreti 2002:73). Although many migratory flows are 'internal' – from the mountains/hills to the Terai or from villages to towns, increasingly Nepalis are leaving their homeland – mainly for economic reasons. The result is a huge 'international' **Nepali Diaspora**[10], estimated at more than 50% the size of the population in Nepal. Hornby, however, emphasises that such people are true migrants[11] (1980:83): some are short-term or cyclical movers. Migration (movement) may therefore be temporary, semi-permanent or permanent (Ibid); short or long-distance, voluntary or involuntary (Upreti 2002:2), although these categories overlap. In the current Nepali conflict, Lutz's (1996:339) statement that migration is only partly voluntary is undoubtedly correct.

The Nepali Diaspora includes all these possibilities. Many have settled outside Nepal for several generations. In NE and NW India most were well-assimilated: in Myanmar, they have often been resented, and some have even lost their Nepali language while retaining some other cultural allegiances. Today's migrant labourers in 'Arab' and SE Asia go

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[8] "Determined by biology [birth]" (Ibid 219).

[9] In 1991, 105,872 Nepalis went abroad: in 2004 the figure was 268,000 (Pantee and Adhikari, Himalayan Times, 3 June 2004)

[10] Lit. 'a scattering through' of people through dispersion or migration.

[11] Those who move their residence permanently/long-term (>1yr) from one administrative unit to another.

knowing they can only stay for a limited period and will never be offered citizenship – they "have never had a real chance to be really integrated into the society of their host countries" (Pantoja et al 2004:10).

This gives differing experiences of 'diaspora or migrant identity'(Young 2003:207). Permanent migrants often exhibit features of hybridity: temporary ones often face an 'identity crisis' on returning to Nepal. As with Filipinos, "the primary problem is joblessness back home…" (Pantoja et al 2004:21): and additionally today's returnees may be unable to visit their villages because of the conflict. However, "to live as a migrant may well evoke the pain of loss and of not being firmly rooted in a secure place; but it is also to live in a world of immense possibility…" (Young 2003:215). This challenge, is beginning to dawn on the Nepali (Christian) Diaspora.

Several writers discuss the 'push-pull'[12] factors of migration. 'Pushes' include population growth, poverty (low wages/unemployment), political/religious/racial oppression, natural disasters (famine/drought) and social loneliness, while 'pulls' may be employment offers/opportunities, better medical-social provision, and political-religious tolerance (Hornby 1980:86, Lutz 1996:345ff). Upreti (2000:7) sees both as significant for Nepal but having different dimensions – "push factors are related to marginal migrants…pull factors [to]… professional or skilled migrants." Economic factors are stronger than humanitarian ones (Lutz 1980:352).

There are at least 9 overlapping migratory flows in the Nepali context…

1. Urban Drift

Rapid urbanization is one of the crucial issues in 21st century mission (Sunderaraj, *EMQ* 1999:42). By 2010 most of the world will be town-dwellers, but "the sheer scale and speed of rural-urban migration [is]…daunting" (Cohen 2000:201-2). Nepal's population is increasing by 2.5% pa (Dahal 2005:104) and Kathmandu is growing disproportionately fast (Gugler 1988:10). Upreti (2002:5) blames push factors, and Seddon (2001:141) and Gugler (1988:54) the pull of improved living, although usually only those with education/training, male gender and patronage (Gugler 1988:54) obtain employment. In reality, there is little choice, especially for those affected by disasters like armed conflict (Kilbourn 1997:24,26). Urban migrants suffer from poor housing, inadequate health care and malnutrition (Gugler 1988:126). In this context…

Hornby (1980:90ff) and Cohen (2000:202) note the step-wise movement from villages to towns to outside the country.

Internal trade migration has long been practised by Newars and Thakalis (Heide and Hoffmann 2001:87; Perry 1997:17). "Foreign labour migration [also] has a long history in Nepal… start[ing] even before the first Nepali men travelled to Lahore [hence 'Lahures'] in the early 19th century to join the army of…Ranjit Singh (Seddon 2001:xx). Out of a total population of 23m, 10% of Nepali men are currently absent – most (77%) in India, 14.5% in Gulf States, 4.9% in Asian countries and 3.3% elsewhere (Thieme et al *Mountain Research and Development* May 2005:109). Many are migrant labourers. Most are 'middle class' as

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[12] This states that "for any individual the decision to migrate results from the interplay of two forces: pressures at his permanent place of residence (pushes) and inducements from a number of potential destinations (pulls)" (Hornby 1980:86).

the extreme poor cannot afford the initial capital resources (Seddon 2001:139, Bahadur 2002:8). In 1996/97 Seddon estimated that "as many as 1.15 million Nepalis were working abroad" – 10 times more than the official figure (Seddon 2002:xii).

2. 'Brawn Drain'[13]

"International labor migration is an increasingly important livelihood strategy in Nepal" (Thieme et al *Mountain Research and Development* May 2005:109), but Held and McGrew rightly stress it is the people who move and who therefore need to be considered (2000:284).

The 1991 census recorded 600,000 Nepali workers in **India** but actual figures are probably 2-5 times higher, due to large numbers of unregistered migrants crossing an open border (Seddon 2001:43; Thieme et al *Mountain Research and Development* May 2005:109,112). Most are from the food-deficit western half of the country – where the Maoist insurgency is strongest. Emigration to India is now their first strategy for survival (Seddon 2001:113) and the easiest and cheapest route because of the open border (Upreti 2002:i). Almost 90% are seasonal migrants (Upreti 2002:101), returning home to cultivate their own fields in the monsoon (Seddon 2001:5). Upreti quotes Harka Gurung as saying that nearly 25% per cent of the hill population regularly migrate (2002:77). Economic benefits are not high (maybe 25% of total household income from 6 months' work). Most research, including that by INF, has identified the disadvantages as low-paid, unskilled work, primitive living conditions, inadequate health care, unreliable means of remittance transfer, and separation from their families. They have to bribe border officials to bring back their earnings, and Seddon (2001:xvii) quotes a recent study indicating up to 10% may be HIV positive.

To date "most of the international migration of Nepal has been directed towards India" (Upreti 2002:74). Some "seasonal migration… (from) Karnali [to rural NW India] has been practised as long as the people can remember"(Bahadur 2002:4) – probably linked with the short Gurkha rule over Kumaun-Garhwal in the early 1800s. Nepalis in the Indian armed forces later settled in cantonment areas in the NE (Upreti 2002:47) and after 1950, they started moving to cities like New Delhi (now maybe 200,000 Nepalis).

In the 1980-90s, opportunities opened for Nepalis in **'Arab'**[14] (Lutz 1996:321,2) "which is at the moment the most rapidly growing region for Nepali labour migrants overseas… [and] also relatively formalised, [with recruitment through]… registered manpower agencies" (Seddon 2001:69). However, most charge at least 50,000 Rs[15] and some defraud applicants. A friend recently paid 400,000 Rs for Israel. Seddon estimates that there are now 150,000 migrant workers in the Gulf – a 4-fold increase in the last decade (2001:xiii).

More recently, Nepalis have begun to travel to other Asian countries, like Japan, Thailand and Korea, but many went illegally and some were deported. Since 2001, "**Malaysia** has… emerged as a popular destination…" (Seddon 2001:xv) where it is reckoned that 12,000 Nepalis went in the first 6 months of opportunity.

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[13] My term.
[14] Nepali term for all Gulf countries. "The main labour-importing states in the region have been Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, as well as Iran and Iraq…" (Held and McGrew 2000:300).
[15] Approx. 130 Rs = £1.

"Most of the jobs…fall into the general category... of the 'three Ds' (difficult, dirty and dangerous)" (Seddon 2001:57).

3. Internally Displaced Peoples

In the 1970s there was a movement of hill peoples to the southern Terai where these 'Sukumbasis' (squatters) were eventually allocated free government land. The 'Kamaiyas' (bonded labourers), who always lived on the Terai but had been 'enslaved' by high-castes, were recently 'freed' by government but this meant the landowners ejected them from work and home. These were forerunners of today's **IDPs**. By the end of 2004, 38,191 Nepalis had been displaced due to the Maoist conflict (*Nepal Human Rights Handbook*, 2005), but other estimates (Norwegian Refugee Council) put the total displacement from villages to towns as nearer 200,000. "Rural villages are being depopulated. Many leave Nepal and cross into India. Those who stay in Nepal tend to end up in shanty areas in and around Nepal's towns, most of which are growing at an unprecedented rate" (Seaman – *Today in Nepal* October 2005:4).

4. Street Children

The increase in number of street children worldwide, "is due to rapid urbanization and massive population displacement" (Kilbourn 1997:20), accelerated in Nepal by the Maoist insurgency. There are 25m street children in Asia (Kilbourn 1997:13). Kilbourn (1997:11-12) distinguishes between street children who live with their families but work on the streets, and those (often orphans) who have no home and actually live on the streets. She identifies precipitating factors as exploitation, slavery, bonded labour (to pay off debts) and forced prostitution (Kilbourn 1997:15) and notes that in any devastating crisis... "people converge *en masse* to the cities to seek food and refuge… [resulting] in extreme poverty for millions, increasing family disintegration and… an unprecedented rise in the number of street children" (Kilbourn 1997:12). "Amnesty International estimates that, of the 12,000 people [now 13,000] killed… during Nepal's nine-year Maoist 'People's War', approximately 400 have been children, [and says]…that as many as 15,000 children may be displaced from their home areas this year alone" (*Today in Nepal* October 2005:7).

5. Gurkhas

After the Anglo-Nepali war of 1815-16, the British Army, so "impressed by the fighting capacity of the Gurkhas" started to recruit them. "Thus a stream of Nepalese migration to India and other regions began" (Upreti 2002:44).

"Employment in [**British** and **Indian**] armed forces is still an attraction [especially] for the Nepalese [hill tribes]" (Upreti 2002:46). There are still >100,000 Nepalis in the Indian Army (Heide and Hoffmann 2001:173). There is "continuity in [army] recruitment, leading to a concentration of such migrants in certain regions, certain villages and even certain families" (Seddon 2001:67). Interestingly, labour migration is most significant from the same hill regions (Seddon 2001:61) from which the Gurkhas are recruited.

6. 'Brain Drain'

The professionals are a smaller, but significant group, who migrate to the west – initially for post-graduate study – but then often remain. Ahmad (*BMJ* 2 July 2005:43) recognizes that the benefits [remittances] to the origin country are outweighed by the losses [depletion of skilled health manpower]. Other students spend 1-3 years abroad and then return. Some

desert their studies, taking menial employment, because it pays relatively well, despite being incommensurate with their skills.

7. 'Flesh Trade'

"Cross-border trafficking and kidnapping of children from rural villages to sell in major cities are common occurrences [worldwide]… Many of these children are deceived, kidnapped or sold by their parents or relatives…" (Kilbourn 1997:26-7). In the early 1990s this was recognized as a problem in Nepal, and freed Kamaiya children are at particular risk (Mathema – *Kathmandu Post* 3 Jan 2006). Seddon reckons "5,000 to 7,000 young Nepalese women are… trafficked into India each year" (2001:114-115) and there are 40,000 Nepali CSWs in each of Mumbai and Calcutta (Ibid 38).

8. Refugees and Asylum Seekers

"Today worldwide there are 20 million refugees[16], [increasing numbers of asylum seekers[17] and], 30 million 'displaced' persons[18]" (Prencipe in Fisher 2003:255), all of whom "share the experience of profound displacement" (Pohl *Missiology* 2005:4). This does not include the migrant workers (150m), illegal entrants and 'overstayers'.

In the Nepali context, there have been two major groups of **refugees**: in the 1950s, **Tibetans** fled the Chinese; and in the 1990s, **Bhutanese Nepalis** were thrust out of their homes due to ethnic cleansing in Bhutan. Rich Tibetans integrated into Nepal's business life: poor ones settled in camps and remained as separate religio-cultural communities. The closure of the northern border simultaneously curtailed traditional trade (Heide and Hoffmann 2001:52). Since 1988, >134,000 Bhutanese Nepalis, deprived of their citizenship rights, have been living, mostly in 7 camps on the eastern border of Nepal.

Prior to the Maoist People's War, few sought asylum outside Nepal, although up to 1990, significant numbers of Christians were imprisoned for their faith and a few were exiled and went to India or the west. Now, a steady stream of **asylum seekers** flows to India and western countries.

9. Expatriates

"Nepal opened the doors to international visitors only towards the end of 1950" (Satyal 2000:20).

Cohen (2002:212-214) notes the significant contribution of **international tourists**[19] to globalization with the "boundaries… between hosts and guests… becoming increasingly blurred." After 1960, tourism flourished rapidly,[20] becoming the major source of hard currency, and facilitating economic development, but, because it "thrives on peace" (Satyal 2004:19), since 1999, numbers are drastically down and the economy adversely affected by the Maoist conflict. Nepal tourism includes mountaineering expeditions, leisure activities, and business, with "Kathmandu… fast growing as venue for international meets…" (Satyal 2000:135). Cohen describes tourists as 'modern pilgrims': a particularly apt term for the

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[16] Those fleeing from a real threat of persecution in their country of origin.

[17] Those whose claims for refugee status have not yet been recognised.

[18] Those who have been pushed from their normal place of residence by war, civil conflict or an ecological disaster such as a fire, flood, hurricane of volcano.

[19] Those who remain in a country for at least 24 hours.

[20] 6,000 in 1962 to 396,000 in 1997 (Satyal 2000:22-3).

early 'hippies' and other Eastern spirituality seekers. Sadly, associated drug use has precipitated a serious problem for Nepal.

Similarly, from 1951/2 **missions** (e.g. International Nepal Fellowship, United Mission to Nepal) and **INGOs** have been allowed to work in Nepal and most major countries have opened **embassies**. As a 'late developer' Nepal was prioritized and this has resulted in a disproportionately large number of foreigners resident mostly in the Kathmandu Valley.

MISSION CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Cho envisioned these people flows as "a new highway for missions…" (Guthrie 2000:134) and already some are exploring appropriate linkages (Escobar 2003:66,164). INF is beginning to identify needs and opportunities within Nepal, sending countries and the remaining diaspora.

Chandran identifies the South Asian Diaspora (including Nepalis) distributed among 64 nations, as a major challenge for cross-cultural mission (*EMQ* 2004:450). It is well known that diaspora people are usually "more open to the gospel than their compatriots back at home" (Jung *Connections* 2005 Vol 4 No 3), but also "migrants from poor countries who travel in search of economic survival (may) carry the Christian message… with them" (Escobar 2003:66). Wan (*Missiology* Jan 2003:35) links these two as something the Filipino church has taken seriously – and so helped establish a Nepali church in Qatar (Pantoja et al 2004:163). Filipino theologians have Biblically concluded that "God use[s] suffering, persecution, and dispersion as the context for expanding his kingdom…" (Santos in Pantjoja 2004:51,62). The definitive work on the Nepali Diaspora, in the Christian context, is Perry's 1997 *Nepali Around the World*, historically valuable, despite outdated population estimates. Modern Nepali mission began in the diaspora (mainly India), with the only flow, that of prayer from the Nepal Border Fellowship (Perry 1997:317). From 1951, a steady flow of missionaries have entered the country, so that from zero in 1952, there are now 700,000 Christians in >3,500 churches. Recently, the flows are reversing, with Nepali Christian organisations targeting the diaspora.

1. Nepal
Traditionally missions have concentrated on rural areas where government workers were lacking, but increasingly **urban** Integral Mission is needed. INF has such a programme in Nepalgunj.

Many pastors take in (semi-)orphaned children referred to them, but few have concentrated on the **street children** who have no advocates. CARNet links all agencies working with children at risk.

Several NGOs (Christian and secular) have been established to help (HIV positive) **returning CSWs**, but the bigger need – and more difficult task – is to rescue girls from the brothels of India and bring trafficking to an end.

Overall, little has been done officially to help **IDPs** although "INF has been highlighting the problem since 2002" (Galpin 2005:5). INF started its own Displaced People's Initiative in

the Mid-West in 2003 – providing vital resources, training, funding and advocacy to local organisations, including some run by churches (Seaman – *Today in Nepal* October 2005:6).

In the 1980s, INF ran a Community Health training programme in the 4 Tibetan Camps around Pokhara. Latterly, others have organised health camps, evangelistic outreach and training courses in the Bhutanese refugee camps on the eastern border.

After being recipients of the gospel for 50 years, Nepalis are now moving out in (cross-cultural) **mission.** The Nepal Gospel Outreach Centre is extending its correspondence courses and church-planting activities to Nepali communities in India, Malaysia and Thailand. The Nepal Missions Training Centre and YWAM now run training courses, preparing pastor/evangelists for outreach extending beyond Nepal's borders. One large Kathmandu church has links in Myanmar. Other churches, Parachurch organisations and individuals are slowly evangelising in and networking with the diaspora. At a Missions Conference (Oct 2005) in Shillong young people committed themselves to cross-cultural mission in NE India. Nepalis are gradually incorporating the concept of 'tent-making' which the Filipino diaspora has been using profitably for some time.

Tourists are befriended in Kathmandu, Pokhara or on trek – or when they visit hospital. INFers once distributed Christian books in second-hand bookshops and for many years arranged Christmas carol singing in Pokhara. The current Pastor of the International Church (English medium) in Kathmandu, who is also Padre for the British Gurkhas, finds many areas for **expatriate** ministry

2. India
There are 10m Nepalis in India. Nicanor Tamang[21] opined "there is no Nepali work among the migrants [in NW India][22] because of the quick adjustment to Indian culture when **settled 5-10 years**. Many don't speak Nepali and don't celebrate Nepali festivals." (Bahadur 2002:31). While this may be true for some, not all Nepalis feel accepted…

Many are **temporary labourers** who would return immediately if Nepal's political situation were resolved (Bahadur 2002:8). Meanwhile they feel "only god (sic) can help them survive" (Ibid 13). In this context, Pohl's question, "How is the gospel 'good news' to these [dispersed, displaced] people?" is pertinent and related to a motif of mutual friendship and hospitality (*Missiology* Jan 2003:4-5). Galpin and Bahadur discovered strong social networks and lack of caste difference among the migrants – factors that facilitate mission, but contact is sometimes difficult as labourers have little recreational time.

INF is developing a tripartite programme involving partnership, holistic mission and advocacy – to reduce migrant vulnerability and increase support – by linking their home areas in Karnali with border crossings and destination areas in India (Galpin 2005:8-11). As no organisations – or churches – are actively reaching out to these seasonal migrants (Bahadur 2002) INF plans to promote action[23] and raise HIV/AIDS awareness.

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[21] Interestingly, himself exiled from Nepal > 25 years ago.
[22] Perry (1997:358) notes a big difference between NW and NE India in this respect.
[23] Attention to the four patterns of expansion identified by Perry (1997:363-5) may prove valuable in this new phase of outreach.

Thieme et al (*Mountain Research and Development* May 2005:112) mention two secular programmes: 'Pauraki' (entrepreneur) which broadcasts 15 mins. weekly information on issues of importance to migrants; and South Asia Study Centre that has helped migrants to get banking facilities. Christians learn from and add to these.

Satish Chhetri[24] has discovered at least 5,000 Nepalis in each of 17 major **Indian cities**: 800,000 in Mumbai alone. Apart from the NE where many states have a majority Nepali population, there are 2.8 million Nepalis in India. The first (Nepali) church was established in Delhi in 1987, and now there are 33 plus 150 house fellowships. Training and church planting are their biggest needs.

3. SE Asia and 'Arab'

"Historically, Nepali Christian fellowships overseas have been Gurkha-related" Perry 1997:348): the phenomenon of migrant workers is recent. Most are non-skilled labourers: a few are students. They remain overseas only long enough (2-10 years) to pay off their debts and return home with some capital funds. In all countries, there are exciting accounts of churches springing up among the Nepali populations. Long hours of work, restrictions on friendships etc. make outreach difficult but not impossible.

Nepali settlement in Burma came through the Gurkhas. Christian work began in the 1990s and now recently 'Friends of **Myanmar'** has been established.

There are >160,000 (registered) Nepali migrant workers in **Malaysia**. 2-3,000 believers in >45 Nepali fellowships are scattered throughout Malaysia, and Migrant Ministry Klang[25] has been conducting regular medical camps, evangelistic programmes and leadership training camps[26]. In November 2005, Malaysian church leaders visited Kathmandu to build links with Nepali Christian leaders and so strengthen their outreach and discipleship work amongst the migrants. Subsequently, MMK in association with O_2F[27] has begun to sponsor a drop-in centre in Kathmandu to help overcome returnees' problems. This involvement of local Christians is unique and challenging.

The first Nepali church was established in the **Gulf** in Bahrain in 1993. Since then fellowships have sprung up in Kuwait, Qatar[28] and 5 of the 7 UAEs.

4. The 'West'

Many 'western countries host significant Nepali populations. There is a vibrant Nepali fellowship (>50) in **Sydney**. In the UK there may be 30,000 Nepalis, of which "there could be 1,000 in **Reading**" (Bradley 2005:1). A recent BBC 'Born Abroad' survey highlighted several groups close to British Army bases and in particular 844 in the **Folkestone** area. An ex-INF MK and her ex-Gurkha husband are involved with that community.

Bradley (2005:2) has been researching the locations of (ex-)Gurkhas, professionals, students, workers (some illegal) and asylum seekers and has discovered the network is so effective a

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[24] Information from the Nepali Diaspora networking meeting, Kathmandu, 9/11/05.
[25] A network of 11 churches based near KL.
[26] I had the privilege of teaching at one such camp in Jan 06 and am currently arranging for a similar programme in Doha.
[27] Outreach to Foreigners
[28] See 26

visit to a Nepali restaurant rapidly puts one in touch with the local community. He has met with Christian Nepali students (on INF scholarships) in the UK and visitors from India and Nepal and now suggests that as well as taking up outreach opportunities, INF offers teaching, literature, contact with student organisations and missions, and makes links with Nepal for the believers. In particular, pastoral care and Biblical teaching are needed, which could currently be provided by expatriates with good Nepali language skills rather than importing a Nepali pastor. This fits with Lottis' challenge for missionaries on furlough – and ex-missionaries – to move out of their home church-supporters circles and respond to the opportunities all around them (*EMQ* 1989:258).[29]

In many countries, there are secular **Nepal-friendship organisations** linking NRNs with those back home and sometimes also giving financial support. Low-key involvement by Christians has so far been welcomed.

The **Gurkhas** are a special case – scattered throughout the Diaspora. Contact was previously difficult because of restrictions against proselytism (Perry 1997:319-20) – and yet – friendships were fruitfully made and led to the founding of many churches back in Nepal. Now that ex-Gurkhas can apply for British citizenship, this community is likely to expand considerably.

The Home Office appreciates interpretation assistance for interviewing **asylum seekers** but this virtually rules out the chance to make friendships.

CONCLUSION

"Migration is not just one of the dominant features of our globe; it is one of the most significant opportunities for mission today" (*Missiology* Jan 2003). Pohl, confirms that people are more open to the gospel when uprooted from their traditional culture/context (*Missiology* Jan 2003:4,36) and especially when in transition or undergoing trauma (Wan in Pantoja et al:117). Diaspora people are "open to discussing God, religion and prayer… [although] a syncretistic mindset often prevents th[em]… accepting the gospel…" (Chandran *EMQ* 2004:453-4). As Ingleby says (*Encounter Mission Ezine* August 2004:4) "People in mixed situations [are]… needy and…receptive." Because of their hybridity, migrants may themselves become change-agents (Young 2003:219). Although Nepali society is itself pluralistic, increasing exposure to global Christianity offers new challenges for inter-faith dialogue and evangelism, but "in general the churches' response to the challenge of diaspora in host nations has been poor" (Chandran EMQ: 2004:453) – although MMK is an extraordinary exception.

Pantoja et al conclude that "the phenomenon of diaspora provides both the opportunity and challenge of preserving demonstrative Christian unity in the context of diversity" (2004:106). It demands "a [new] theology of Christians missions in terms of multi-culturalism and ethnicity, inter-racial relationship and Christian hospitality" (Ibid 107) and "a new missiological paradigm to cope with the opportunities" (Ibid 110). "If Christianity is to continue to expand throughout the Nepali diaspora, the vision [and prayer] of the mid-20th century missionaries… for reaching the whole Nepali world needs to be revived… th[is]

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[29] I am currently corresponding with John Bradley about teaching a seminar in Reading this summer.

challenge is chiefly to Nepali Christian churches and organisations themselves, both within and without Nepal" (Perry 1997:376-7).

"Christianity is a migratory religion..."[30]
"Diaspora... [is] God's strategic tool to achieve His Mission."[31]

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[30] Hanciles in Pantoja et al 2004:117
[31] Jung – *Connections* 2005 Vol. 4 No. 3.

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