



## **Cultural Retention and Adaptation among Nepali Immigrants in Canada**

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### **Abstract**

**Background:** Nepali immigrants in Canada, though a growing community, remain underrepresented in migration and acculturation research. As they navigate life in a multicultural society, they face the dual challenge of preserving cultural heritage while integrating into Canadian social structures.

**Objective:** This study examines how Nepali immigrants in Canada retain cultural traditions while adapting to Canadian society, focusing on identity negotiation, cultural continuity, and intergenerational transmission.

**Methods:** A qualitative approach employing thematic analysis was adopted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten purposively selected participants, including first- and second-generation immigrants and individuals actively involved in community institutions. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved.

**Results:** Major cultural and religious traditions (Dashain, Tihar, Losar, Teej, Buddha Jayanti) remain strongly preserved among first-generation immigrants, while minor rituals show gradual decline among younger generations, reflecting selective cultural retention. Nepali language maintenance faces challenges due to English dominance in schools and peer interactions. Community institutions—including language schools, temples, and cultural organizations—play a vital role in sustaining heritage and fostering ethnic belonging. Digital media contributes significantly to cultural continuity by connecting immigrants to Nepali festivals and practices across borders.

**Conclusion:** Cultural adaptation among Nepali immigrants is a dynamic process wherein first-generation immigrants actively preserve traditions while second-generation youth develop



hybrid cultural identities. The study contributes to acculturation theory by demonstrating how integration and retention coexist within multicultural contexts.

**Novelty:** This research addresses a significant gap in diaspora literature by focusing specifically on Nepali immigrants in Canada, examining intergenerational dynamics and the role of community institutions in cultural preservation.

**Keywords:** Acculturation, Canada, Cultural Identity, Diaspora, Nepali Immigrants

## **Introduction**

As the second largest country in the world by area (3.8 million square miles), Canada is a large landmass, much of which is largely uninhabited due to its severe climates, with a considerable population living in cities within 50 miles of its southern border with the USA. Due to its low fertility rate and aging population, Canada demographic and economic growth is tied closely to immigration (Boyd *et al.*, 2000). Canada has increased its immigration across all categories and has become a country of choice for immigrants from around the world during the past few decades as it has encouraged multiculturalism as part of its national identity. Canada inclusive policies allow cultural groups to maintain their distinctiveness and heritage, including the Nepali diaspora, while participating in the greater Canadian society.

The Nepali immigrant community is minority relative to other South Asian groups, but steadily increasing in both numbers and influence in Canada. Like all immigrant communities, Nepali migrants face the challenge of maintaining their culture and heritage while adapting the sociocultural practices of their host society. The study of cultural identity among Nepali immigrants in Canada becomes increasingly nuanced when viewed through the lens of time and migration experience. Those who have migrated from Nepal often strive to preserve cultural forms such as language, religion, festivals, and family values, which serve as vital connections to their homeland and personal identity. The younger generation of the community, who have been predominantly influenced by the Canadian society in which they live, often develop hybrid identities incorporating their ancestral traditions alongside their surrounding experiences and family values (Portes *et al.*, 2001). Despite the growing literature on migration and acculturation, there is limited research related to the experiences of Nepali diaspora in Canada.

This study aims to explore the intricate processes of cultural retention and adaptation among Nepali immigrants in Canada, by examining how they maintain, recreate, and negotiate their cultural identity through diverse migration and settlement experiences.

### **Statement of problem**

As Canada becomes more diverse, immigrant communities like the Nepali Diaspora grapple with the dual challenge of preserving cultural identity while integrating into the Canadian society. Although the Nepali community numbers over Twenty-one thousand in Canada, empirical research exploring how Nepali immigrants experience the social processes of retaining cultural identity is severely lacking. For the Nepali population, the desire to maintain traditional values, customs, and language may exist simultaneously with the pressures to adapt



to a new cultural environment. Negotiating these challenges may impact individual's identity formation, communication across families, and generational discourse challenges to cultural continuity. The role of community institutions as sources of support for cultural continuity and integrating into the broader Canadian society is largely unexamined.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions are the specific questions the research aims to answer. Hence, the following questions are designed to find out:

- In what ways do Nepali immigrants in Canada preserve their cultural practices, language, and customs while integrating into Canadian society?
- What Socio-cultural influences shape the ways in which Nepali immigrants retain and adapt cultural practices?
- What are the ways in which community institutions such as cultural organizations, temples, language schools support the cultural preservation and cultural adaptation process for Nepali immigrants?

### **Objectives of the study**

The primary goal of the study is to understand how Nepali immigrants in Canada are able to uphold their cultural tradition as they assimilate into Canadian society, focusing on the barriers they face and the role of community institutions. In order to fulfil the stated research goal, the following specific goals were established.

- To explore the ways in which Nepali immigrants maintain cultural practices, language, and traditions in the Canada.
- To identify and analyze the key factors that shape the strategies Nepali immigrants use to negotiate between preserving their culture and integrating into Canadian society.
- To examine the role of local community institutions in supporting the cultural identity and social inclusion of Nepali immigrants in Canada.

### **Significance of the study**

This study has both academic and practical significance, contributes to an understanding of the cultural processes of Nepali immigrants in Canada. From an academic perspective, this study contributes to an emergent area of research, for the reason that few research has been conducted regarding the Nepali diaspora in the contexts of migration and acculturation. By examining how culture is retained and adapted over time, this study provides insight into identity negotiation, cultural continuity and cultural change in immigrant communities. Furthermore, the research contributes to theoretical models of acculturation, John W. Berry, by highlighting how Nepali immigrants preserve their cultural identity while participating in a multicultural society.

The study also explores how individuals experience socialization, cultural identity and cultural expression, awareness of belongingness highlighting differences in identity and lived experiences. Accordingly, it contributes to literature that studies immigrant integration in Canada, and other multicultural societies. Practically, the findings of this study are relevant for



policy-makers, community leaders, social service practitioners, and educators newcomer immigrants.

### **Literature Review**

Nepali immigrants in Canada navigate complex processes of cultural retention and adaptation, shaped by psychological, sociocultural, and structural factors (Berry, 1997). Prior research indicates that family, community groups, religious organizations, language, media, and transnational ties all influence how immigrants maintain cultural practices while integrating into host societies (Vertovec, 2009). Even though a number of immigrant communities had to deal with challenges in various forms of discrimination, cultural shock, intergenerational conflict among others, the very same immigrant communities communicated that they displayed agency through hybrid identities and complicated cultural expressions (Brah, 2005).

### **Demographic Scope of Nepali Diasporic Community**

According to data from the 2021 Census on Ethno cultural and Religious Diversity, there were 21,975 Nepalese immigrants living in Canada, including 10,510 women and 11,215 men. Although these figures are already three years old, the number of Nepalese residents in Canada is expected to have grown substantially since then. This growth is driven by the increasing arrival of international students, temporary workers, and permanent residents over the past decade. Notably, these statistics do not account for members of the Bhutanese community of Nepali origin, suggesting that the actual population may be considerably higher.

Ontario remains the most preferred destination for Nepalese immigrants, with 11,585 residents recorded in the 2021 Census. The province's large Nepali community, along with its access to resources, employment opportunities, and support networks for newcomers, makes it a popular starting point for new arrivals. Many immigrants, however, later relocate to other provinces depending on job availability, family needs, and personal preferences.

Alberta ranks second with 5,140 Nepalese residents, followed by British Columbia with 2,305. Other provinces and territories such as Quebec, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Northwest Territories also host smaller segments of the Nepali diaspora. Nevertheless, these regions tend to attract fewer immigrants due to factors such as smaller community networks, language barriers, limited employment options, harsh weather conditions, and distance from major urban centers. As of the 2021 Census, there were no recorded Nepalese immigrants living in Yukon and Nunavut (Giri, 2025).

### **Theoretical Foundation of the Study**

Four interrelated theoretical perspectives are adopted in this study in order to investigate how Nepali immigrants in Canada balance their cultural identity and cultural expectations of the host society: Acculturation Theory, Transnationalism, Cultural Identity Theory and Social Remittances Theory. Each perspective provides unique yet complementary insight through which to examine the multifaceted and dynamic nature of migrant's experiences. Collectively, it provides insight into the cultural, psychological, social, and ideological factors underlying the process of cultural retention and adaptation across space, time, and generations.



### **Acculturation Theory**

Acculturation Theory, particularly the work of John W. Berry, provides a widely used framework in migration studies to understand the psychological and behavioral changes when individuals interact with a new culture. Berry (1997), describes acculturation as a bidirectional process, that involves both cultural maintenance (expressed as the desire to hold onto one's cultural heritage) and cultural adoption (expressed as engaging with the host culture). Berry identifies four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization. which are derived from cultural maintenance and cultural adoption measures. Integration is often considered the most adaptive strategy, while marginalization occurs when individuals become disconnected from both cultures.

Among Nepali immigrants in Canada, these strategies are evident in different ways. First-generation immigrants often face language barriers, strong attachment to Nepali culture, and challenges in integration, which can lead to cultural shock and psychological stress (Giri, 2025). In contrast, Second-generation Nepali immigrants are more immersed in Canadian society, adopting English and participating in cultural events like: Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Nepali community organizations, temples, and cultural associations play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage and transmitting traditions across generations (Arian, 2025).

### **Transnationalism Theory**

The concept of transnationalism gained prominence in the 1990s, through scholars who highlighted the limitations of traditional assimilation frameworks. Earlier migration studies largely focused on the "push-pull" factors and adaptation to host societies, often neglecting migrants enduring ties to their homelands (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1992). These scholars argued that migrants operate within transnational social fields, where activities, decisions, and identities are influenced simultaneously by multiple geographic and social contexts. Subsequent scholarship expanded the scope of transnationalism to include economic remittances, political engagement, and cultural exchanges. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) distinguished between transnational practices and transnational consciousness, emphasizing migrant's cross-border social, cultural, and economic ties.

This perspective is relevant to Nepali immigrants in Canada, particularly first-generation migrants who maintain strong connections to Nepal through remittances, travel, and communication, while adapting to Canadian society. Community organizations further reinforce cultural identity through language classes, festivals, and religious events, fostering intergenerational belonging (Arian, 2025). The orientation and bonding to homeland are key constituents of a diaspora as the homeland has a special place among diasporas communities (Brubaker, 2005). Similarly, Tololyan (2007) highlights the function of homeland ties and says, "they [diaspora] turn again and again towards the homeland through travel, remittances, cultural exchange, and political lobbying and by various contingent efforts to maintain other links with the homeland".



### **Cultural Identity Theory**

Cultural identity theory, explains how individuals form and maintain their cultural identity through interactions with social and cultural environments (Collier & Thomas, 1988). It emphasizes personal, collective, and intercultural dimensions, showing how identity is shaped by cultural values, group belonging, and cross-cultural experiences. The theory is widely used in migration and diaspora studies to understand how individuals preserve culture while adapting within multicultural social environments (Hall, 2015). For Nepali immigrants, cultural identity, is shaped by language, religion, family values, and social expectations. Festivals such as Dashain, Tihar, and Buddha Jayanti reinforce collective identity and cultural pride (Arian, 2025). However, immigrant's express concerns over the homogenization of Nepali identity within broader South Asian populations like Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi, and specifically Indian populations. Immigrants fear losing their identity due to overgeneralization based on culture, language, and heritage and feel discomfort due to race-based stereotypes (Giri, 2025).

Among Second-generation Nepalese Canadians, identity becomes more negotiated and hybrid. While they are socially integrated into Canadian society, they often balance Parental expectations of cultural continuity with dominant social norms. Community organizations support this process through Nepali language classes, cultural events that strengthen intergenerational belonging and sustain cultural identity (Arian, 2025).

### **Social Remittance Theory**

Social Remittance Theory, shifts attention with the ideas, practices and attitudes that migrants share with their home communities. Social remittances refer to ideational transfers, including ideas, practices, identities, and social capital that flow from host societies to communities in the country of origin (Levitt, 2004). Through migration, individuals may adopt new behaviors related to democracy, education, gender, civic responsibility or religious conduct in Canada, which they may subsequently transmit to their home communities as discussed Levitt.

For Nepali immigrants, social remittances can be structurally transformative for both diaspora and Nepalese communities. For example, Nepali immigrants in Canada who experience more egalitarian gender relations may encourage women's education or challenge patriarchal practices in their home communities which is supporting ideas by Levitt (2004). These modes of ideational remittance have the potential to reform cultural practices, destabilize fixed social hierarchies, and instigate new kinds of identity and social engagement.

### **Research Gap**

While a number of studies have explored migration experiences within South Asian communities in North America, there is little research that explicitly addresses the cultural retention and adaptation of Nepalese immigrants in Canada. Much of the existing literature focuses on larger diaspora communities, particularly Indian, Pakistani and other South Asian groups, whose cultural and diasporic experiences may not fully reflect the distinct experiences of Nepali immigrants. Moreover, few studies examine how Nepali individuals retain cultural practices, languages, values and identities within the host societies and how practices are adapted within Canada's multi-cultural environment. Research that captures the

intergenerational transmission of culture, including the role of transnational ties and digital technologies in sustaining Nepali cultural identity, remains scarce. Accordingly, this study seeks to address this significant gap by examining how Nepali immigrants in Canada retain and adapt their culture both individually and collectively, across generations.

**Conceptual Framework**

This study is framed by the interaction between cultural retention and cultural adaptation. Acculturation theory is used to explain adaptation strategies within Canadian society, Transnationalism highlights ongoing cross-border ties, cultural identity theory frame’s identity negotiation across generations, and social remittance theory explains the circulation of cultural practices and values. Together, these theoretical perspectives from the operational framework guiding data collection and analysis.

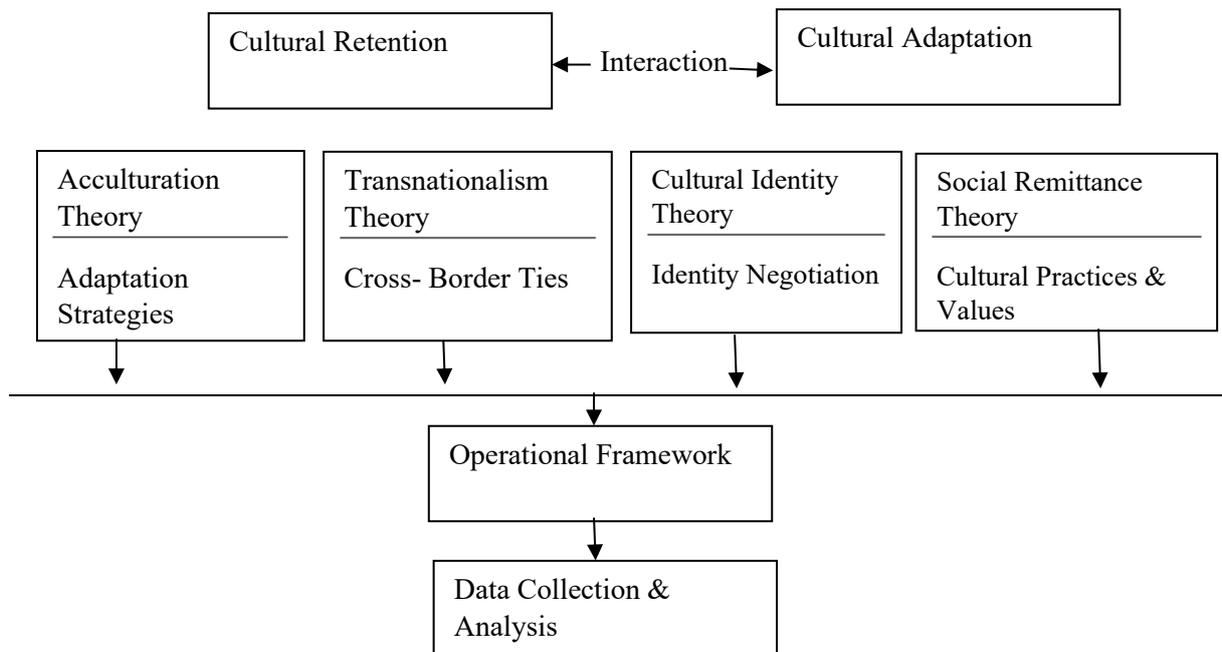


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework showing the interaction between cultural retention and cultural adaptation, and the theoretical perspectives guiding the study.

**Research Methodology**

A qualitative research approach, specifically thematic analysis with an inductive approach, was used. A total of 10 participants, were purposively sampled for this study including first-generation immigrants, second-generation youth, and individuals affiliated with Nepali community institutions. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached, with no new themes emerging after the ninth interview, and the final interview confirming theme stability. The age range of 18-50 was selected to ensure a broad representation of experiences related to cultural retention and adaptation, including those undergoing initial adjustment to the host society and those who have progressed toward more settled patterns of daily life. Participants were selected based on their length of stay in Canada 5 to 20 years, level of involvement in the Nepali community, and engagement in cultural practices within both the



Nepali community and the broader Canadian society. All participants were voluntarily participating in this study. The main data collection method was semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The interviews were 30-45 minutes long and it was completed within 2 months, from September to October 2025. Interviews were transcribed word-for-word and analyzed using an inductive thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initial code was manually generated from repeated readings of the transcripts and refined into broader themes, including cultural continuity, adaptation, community involvement, language used, and intergenerational cultural transmission. The study also upholds ethical research standards by providing informed consent to all participants, protecting confidentiality and anonymity, and ensuring participants can withdraw at any time without consequences.

**Demographic Profile of Participants**

The demographic characteristics of participants, including gender, profession, and age, are presented in the table to reflect their diverse backgrounds.

Table 1. Selective Information of Participants

Participant Number (PN)	Preferred Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Profession
1	S.A	Male	27	Student
2	A.S	Male	24	Student
3	B.A	Male	29	IT
4	R.A	Male	18	Student
5	S.K	Female	32	NRNA
6	A. T	Male	29	NRNA
7	A.C	Male	28	Member of C.I
8	D.P	Male	48	Writer
9	R.A	Female	43	Child Care
10	L.P	Male	20	Student

**Findings**

This section presents the findings of the study on cultural retention and adaptation among Nepali immigrants in Canada, drawing on interviews with first- and second-generation immigrants and perspectives from community institutions. The findings highlight several key themes that emerged from the data.

**Theme 1: Continuity of Cultural and Religious Practices**

**Preservation of Festivals and Rituals**

The study found that first-generation Nepali immigrants in Canada make conscious efforts to preserve their cultural and religious practices, particularly festivals and rituals. One participant said:

“As a first-generation immigrant, we continue our cultural traditions in Canada. Even after 10, 20, 30 years or more our culture does not fade. We celebrate Dashain, Tihar, and Losar just as we did in Nepal. Of course, we cannot wear Dhaka Topis and traditional attire all the time like in Nepal, but we have not forgotten our culture.” However, while major festivals continue to



be preserved, participants also noted the gradual loss of minor rituals. As participant highlighted, “For second- generation larger cultural traditions remain, but smaller ones like wearing Janai and celebrating Ekadashi are slowly disappearing.” (PN: 1, M, 27)

Similarly, another participant noted that, “Recently, during Tihar, we organized five days of deusi–bhailo to raise funds and also to pass our culture to the new generation.” (PN: 6, M, 29)

However, a participant from second-generation shared “I came to Canada when I was five years old, so I don’t remember everything. My family celebrates festivals like Dashain and Tihar, and I join in too, but I mostly think about the money aspect and enjoy it for fun rather than for cultural or religious reasons. I don’t really practice much religiously.” (PN: 4, M, 18)

### **Cultural Adaptation and Integration into Canadian Society**

The study revealed that first-generation Nepali immigrants not only retain their cultural and religious practices but also actively engage in processes of adaptation and integration within Canadian society.

One participant stated:

“Most families speak Nepali at their homes. They cook traditional food such as Dal, Bhat, Momo, and Sel roti during festivals. There are also different temples such as the Alberta Hindu Society and Buddhist monasteries that organize religious and cultural gatherings.” (PN: 2, M, 24)

While preserving their traditional practices, Nepali immigrants also participate in Canadian cultural events, reflecting a blend of adaptation and cultural continuity. The participant further added:

“Many Nepali families also join Canadian traditions such as Christmas Eve and Thanksgiving dinner. On Thanksgiving, Nepali people cook turkey at home to celebrate the festival, showing that they are trying to integrate and adapt with Canadian culture.” (PN: 2, M, 24)

### **Transmission of Cultural Values**

The study revealed that Nepali immigrants in Canada actively transmit moral, cultural, and linguistic values to the younger generation through both family teaching and community-based activities. Participants emphasized that value transmission goes beyond rituals it includes ethical principles, cultural responsibilities, and everyday practices learned from parents, grandparents, and community institutions.

One participant reflected on the ethical and moral principles passed on to the next generation: “What will be passed on to the next generation are the values that parents themselves learned back in Nepal like honesty, simplicity, not cheating, and not doing anything wrong.” (PN. 6, M, 29)

Another participant described how he learns values at home:

"My parents expect that when I have children in the future, I also have to teach them our culture and I do that.” (PN. 4, M, 18)

Community institutions play a significant role in reinforcing cultural values through structured programs, language classes, and cultural events:

“Even if people live far away, these institutions help maintain cultural connections. Nepalese schools provide platform for speaking and writing Nepali and involve children in cultural



activities, which helps pass cultural knowledge and values to the younger generation.” (PN. 3, M, 29)

## **Theme 2: Language Maintenance and Challenges**

### **Home Language Practices**

Participants consistently emphasized that the home is the primary site of Nepali language maintenance. Despite living in a predominantly English-speaking environment, parents intentionally use Nepali within the household to ensure that the language is passed on to the next generation. For many, speaking Nepali at home symbolizes cultural continuity and emotional connection to Nepal.

One first generation participant noted that Nepali language remains when we interact in Nepali with family member:

“To preserve language and culture, we speak Nepali, learn Nepali, and communicate in Nepali with our parents.” (PN. 3, M, 29)

However, he also shared that maintaining the Nepali language at home becomes increasingly difficult when children interact primarily in English with siblings and cousins. As he further explained:

“Children who grow up here mostly speak English with their siblings and cousins, which becomes a challenge for preserving language.”

Younger migrants who arrived in Canada during early childhood expressed mixed experiences with language retention. One participant who migrated at age 18 stated:

“I can speak Nepali, but I cannot read it well... Because I came to Canada at a young age, I don't remember many Nepali languages.” (PN. 4, M, 18)

At the same time, participant also explained home-based language practices such as parents reading Nepali texts and grandparents teaching writing helped reinforce cultural memory:

“When my parents read Nepali, I also slowly learn to write from them. My grandparents also teach me how to write Nepali.”

### **Community Language Support**

Beyond the household, participants highlighted the significant role of Nepali community organizations in supporting language learning and cultural transmission. Community organizations run Nepali schools, weekend classes, and cultural events emerged as central resources for both children and youth.

One participant described the contribution of these institutions:

“Both NECASE and WE and The World Centre run Gurukul schools. Every Sunday, they teach Nepali language to children where they learn to read, write, and also participate in dance and music.” (PN: 6, M, 29)

Another interviewee confirmed that his understanding of Nepali culture and language largely comes from these community spaces rather than formal schooling:

“Schools and universities in Canada don't give space to share Nepali culture. My sense of being Nepali comes largely from these community institutions.” (PN: 4, M, 18)

Participant widely agreed that such institutions not only teach language but also reinforce cultural identity among second-generation youth. He explained:



“These institutions not only run schools for children but help for all the Nepalese who are here so that everyone can take benefit from these institutions to maintain cultural connections.” (PN: 3, M, 29)

Community initiatives therefore play a compensatory role in providing structured support where families alone cannot preserve language.

### **Theme 3: Role of Community Institutions**

Community institutions played a decisive role in shaping how Nepali immigrants preserve, practice, and transmit their cultural identity in Canada. For many participants, these organizations functioned as cultural homes, support systems, and collective spaces where Nepalese gathered, connected, and rebuilt a sense of belonging away from their homeland.

#### **Community Institutions as Cultural Anchors and Identify Spaces**

Participants described community institution such as NRNA, regional associations, sports clubs, women’s groups, and heritage organizations as the backbone of cultural continuity. These institutions provide structured spaces where Nepali values, cultural meanings, and shared histories are collectively reproduced.

Participant expressed that these institutions are emotional and cultural lifelines:

“For Nepalese, these organizations become the Pillar in Canada. People naturally look for a home base when they come to a foreign land. “When Nepalese find familiar faces, similar food, and festivals, it helps them feel settled. These community institutions have created that home-like environment, and because of this, our culture can continue to survive here for thousands of years.”

He explained that these spaces reduce feelings of isolation, especially among first-generation immigrants:

“If there were no Himalaya-Rocky Sports club or Nepalese groups here, I think many people would feel lost. Culture is not kept individually; it is kept when we are together.” (PN: 6, M, 29)

Participant also stated:

“These organizations make you feel like you belong somewhere. When you are outside Nepal, belonging becomes more important than anything. Community becomes the only place where our identity feels complete.” (PN: 3, M, 29)

Participants further reflected that these institutions help counter cultural dilution by giving structured meaning to Nepali identity. She explained:

“Our children will not automatically know Nepali culture just because we tell them. They understand it only when they see it happening in the community. Community programs make our culture visible.” (PN: 9, F, 43)

For many, such institutions serve as spaces where identity is not only preserved but also renegotiated. Participant, who also works in community leadership, noted:

“In Canada, we don’t get to show our culture every day. But community programs give us that space sometimes through dance, sometimes through heritage classes, sometimes just through gathering. Those small moments help remind us who we are.” (PN: 5, F, 32)



Similarly, participants leading community organizations highlighted how visibility shape's identity pride. As one shared,

“Even the children born here tell us, ‘If you were not here, I wouldn’t know anything about Nepali culture.’” (PN: 7, M, 28)

“We created a sports club, even though it is a sports club, our goal is to connect Nepalis and preserve heritage.” (PN: 7, M, 28)

Participants also noted that community organizations help reduce practical burdens. He gave a clear example:

“Earlier, people had to fly to Toronto just to renew a passport but sometimes community organizations bring that government services in the community, thereby improving convenience for community members.” (PN: 1, M, 27)

“I am personally involved in community institutions however, with five friends, we created a sports club called Gurkha Warriors. We established it with the intention of supporting Nepalese. Even though it is a sports club, our goal is still to connect Nepali and preserve our heritage. Even the children born here tell us, ‘If you were not here, I wouldn’t know anything about Nepali culture.’ So, this community institution has become a beautiful platform for cultural preservation.” (PN: 7, M, 28)

#### **Theme 4: Socio-cultural Influences**

##### **Influence of Canadian Peer Groups and School Environments**

Participant added that Nepali language schools, bhajan–kirtan programs, and temple activities actively transmit culture to children:

“There are Nepali language schools so that children do not forget their culture. They also organize bhajan–kirtan programs to preserve traditions.” (PN: 9, F, 43)

Participant also shared how Canadian friends influenced language and daily practices:

“My surroundings are mostly Canadian so, they have influenced me a lot.”

He stated:

“I don’t have many Nepali friends maybe one or two. Even with them, I mostly speak English. My surroundings are mostly Canadian, so they influence me a lot. Nepali culture comes only sometimes, and mainly through family.” (PN: 10, M, 20)

Another participant explained:

“Teaching Nepali is easy, but children don’t give time. They adapt quickly to Canadian lifestyle such as food, dress, and habits. Their friends are from here, so obviously they copy from them.” (PN: 9, F, 43)

Similarly, one participant emphasized how outside environments weaken language:

“At home we speak Nepali, but with friends and at the workplace it becomes English. Children who grow up here speak English with siblings too. That becomes a challenge.” (PN: 3, M, 29)

Together, these statements show that peer culture, schooling, and intergenerational differences strongly shape how culture is practiced and passed on.

##### **Canadian Multiculturalism and Media Influence**

Participants noted that Canada multicultural environment and the influence of digital media significantly shaped how they experienced and expressed their cultural identity. They shared



that multicultural spaces encouraged them to maintain Nepali traditions while also engaging with Canadian practices, and social media played an important role in keeping them connected to festivals and news from Nepal.

One participant made clear the inclusive nature of Canada's cultural environment, pointed out, "Canada follows the mosaic model. Here, people don't just tolerate culture they celebrate it. We were taught from school that every culture has a place in society."

He further highlighted the role of digital platforms in maintaining cultural continuity:

"Social media plays a big role in preserving our culture. Without it, we would not even know when and which worship is happening in Nepal."

However, he also noted how recent policy changes affected media access, explaining,

"Because of Canada's news laws like Bill C-18, we no longer see many news and articles on social media. This has reduced our access to Nepali news, and now we only see what individual users post." (PN: 6, M, 29)

Similarly, another second-generation participant shared that Canadian environments significantly shape everyday practices:

"My surroundings are mostly Canadian, so their lifestyle and habits influence me a lot. Cultural conversations with Nepali friends happen only sometimes."

He also discussed how online platforms reinforce cultural memory: "social media helps me remember Nepali traditions. Many times, we celebrate festivals after seeing them online." (PN: 10, M, 20)

Another participant described multiculturalism as a facilitator for cultural expression, noted, "Canada's multicultural system makes integration easier. The government provides grants to Nepali organizations, which helps us organize cultural programs and Nepali schools."

He added that participation in Canadian festivals gradually increasing:

"We celebrate Canadian holidays like Halloween, Christmas, and Thanksgiving, and these practices slowly appear even at home." (PN: 3, M, 29)

Another participant highlighted the impact of digital trends on younger generations, mentioned, "For the second generation, social media has a strong influence they learn more about local trends and games than about Nepali culture." (PN: 9, F, 43)

Another participant asserted how multicultural spaces empower cultural expression:

"Canada multicultural environment encourages us to show our cultural identity. People from all cultures proudly celebrate their traditions, so we also feel confident to share ours."

She added that multicultural acceptance extends beyond Nepali communities:

"My Mexican and Spanish friends also wear a red sari during Teej. That's how they respect Nepali culture as well."

She also described the significance of online platforms, stated,

"Social media plays a big role in helping our children understand what happens in Nepal. It keeps us connected to our culture from far away." (PN: 5, F, 32)

If these platforms did not exist, we would be confused and disconnected. We wouldn't have access to information. We don't check calendars like Hamro Patro every day, but through



media we still learn what is happening in Nepal. Sometimes we forget small festivals, but once they appear online, we remember and celebrate them." (PN: 7, M, 28)

### **Theme 5: Identity Negotiation and Acculturation Experiences**

Some aspects of participant's integration experiences, such as celebration of festivals (Dashain, Tihar, Teej) and adaptation to Canadian social norms, are already discussed under previous themes. To avoid repetition, these experiences are not repeated here. Participant's narratives reveal that immigrants navigate complex processes of identity negotiation as they adjust to life in Canada while maintaining connections to their Nepali heritage. First-generation participants described initial cultural shock. One participant stated:

"In the beginning, first-generation immigrants experience cultural shock, accent makes it difficult." (PN: 8, M, 48)

However, another participant reported experiences of assimilation, often influenced by institutional or peer pressures. He shared:

"When I first came to Canada, I attended a Christian school where we had to pray to Jesus every day. For about two years, I only practiced praying to Jesus and did not follow Nepali religious practices during that time." He also explained:

"I don't remember many Nepali traditions I mostly speak English." (PN: 10, M, 20)

At the same time, first-generation immigrants reflecting a separation strategy and explained:

"My core identity is still Nepali; I react more to Nepal issues than Canada's."

"After coming here, I feel even more attached to Nepal."

"I actively participated in a candlelight vigil for Nepal during the September 8 protest, but I did not react the same way to a local Canadian disaster, showing my enduring attachment to Nepal." (PN: 6, M, 29)

One participant explained that second-generation often experienced marginalization, due to hybrid identities and limited connection to cultural practices:

"Children receive tika but don't know the meaning behind it." (PN: 8, M, 48)

"I can speak Nepali but I cannot read it. I don't remember many traditions. I feel marginalized." (PN: 4, M, 18)

"Second-generation individuals often feel marginalized because of their mixed identity." (PN: 8, M, 48)

Over time, participants developed strategies for identity negotiation, balancing adaptation to Canadian society with preservation of their Nepali cultural values one participant from second generation shared his views:

"When I used to attend a Christian school here, I had to pray to Jesus every day. For around two years, I practiced only that, but now it's not like that anymore." (PN: 10, M, 20)

Similarly, another participant also explained:

"Earlier, I used to say I'm from here, but now I proudly say that I am Nepali." (PN: 6, M, 29)

Participants also actively negotiate their cultural identity in Canadian context. As one participant explained, "We hold panche baja and other programs to maintain the cultural identity of Baglung" (PN: 8, M, 48)



## **Discussion**

Nepali immigrants in Canada actively retain their cultural heritage while simultaneously adapting to a new socio-cultural environment. The continued celebration of major festivals such as Dashain, Tihar, and Losar, alongside participation in Canadian holiday demonstrates Berry (1997) integration strategy, where individuals maintain elements of their heritage culture while engaging with the host society. However, the gradual decline of minor rituals and everyday religious practices among younger generations suggest that cultural retention is selective rather than absolute. This indicates that integration does not imply full cultural continuity instead, certain symbolic traditions are prioritized while other diminish over time. Language emerged as both a central marker of identity and a major challenge. Although Nepali is intentionally spoken at home, English dominance in schools, peer groups, and daily interactions leads to reduced proficiency among second-generation. This Pattern reflects partial assimilation pressures operating within everyday institutional contexts. At the same time, the deliberate efforts of parents and community schools to preserve Nepali language demonstrate resistance to complete linguistic assimilation, reinforcing integrative tendencies. These findings highlight that acculturation operates across multiple domains and may vary between public and private spaces.

Community institutions, including Nepali schools, temples, and cultural organizations, function not merely as cultural support systems but as active sites of identity negotiation. From a transnational perspective (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004), these institutions enable the circulation of cultural practices, values, and meaning across national boundaries. Through organized festivals, language classes, and collective gatherings, they create structured environments where Nepali identity is reproduced, reinforced, and reinterpreted within the Canadian multicultural framework. The findings also align with Cultural identity theory, demonstrating that immigrants continuously negotiate their sense of self between heritage and host culture. Biculturalism enhances self-esteem, academic performance, family relationships, and social networks (LaFromboise *et al.*, 2013), while Peer influence, school environments, and digital media shape everyday practices, particularly for younger participants, who navigate hybrid cultural identities. Digital platforms, in particular, exemplify social remittance processes (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014), enabling the virtual transmissions of cultural knowledge and practices across borders. Across generations, these processes reveal that cultural retention and adaptation among Nepali immigrants in Canada is a dynamic and balanced process. First-generation immigrants actively transmit values and cultural practices, while Second-generation youth selectively engage in cultural participation, producing evolving forms of Nepali identity that are shaped by both home culture and Canadian society.

Nepali culture transforms through family practices, community support, and multicultural opportunities. Festivals, moral values, and community networks remain key pillars of identity, while language preservation faces ongoing challenges. These findings demonstrate that cultural adaptation does not replace cultural heritage instead, integration and retention coexist, producing hybrid cultural identities that are both resilient and adaptive.



## **Conclusion**

Nepali immigrants in Canada actively maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to Canadian society. First-generation immigrants preserve major festivals and transmit cultural values to younger generation, while second-generation youth engage selectively, resulting in evolving hybrid identities. Language remains a key marker of identity, with community institutions playing a crucial role in sustaining linguistic and cultural practices. Cultural adaptation does not replace cultural heritage instead, both coexist and transform each other, contributing to dynamic bicultural identities. These findings highlight the importance of family, community support, and multi-cultural policies in promoting cultural continuity and integration. Although thematic saturation was achieved, the small sample size represents a limitation and may restrict the transferability of the findings to other contexts. Future research may examine adolescent experience, broader populations, and longitudinal research to better understand how cultural retention and adaptation evolve over time, particularly across generations.

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