

# Integration Feeling in a Former Bhutanese Refugee Community: A Study of an Interview Survey Conducted in Adelaide

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—A pilot study—

## Abstract

The author has actively examined issues concerning Bhutanese refugees since 1990 and subsequently published his findings (Ringhofer, 2002, 2005, 2010). These articles have focused on the shift of emphasis from the possible return of refugees to Bhutan to resettlement in a third host nation.

This article analyzes the Bhutanese community in Adelaide, which represents about half of the Bhutanese population residing in Australia. The community has existed there since 2008. Another reason for choosing the Adelaide community was because its members come from a diversity of religious, ethnic and caste backgrounds.

A survey was conducted in August 2018. One hundred (100) community members were interviewed to understand their sentiments towards integration. Data relating to arrival date, age, profession, housing condition, English proficiency, evaluation of Australia's immigration and integration policy, contribution to community, cultural identity, caste discrimination were collected and analyzed with particular attention to the interdependency of these markers.

After UNHCR closed the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal at the end of 2020, a

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return to the Bhutan homeland has become very difficult. For this reason, Bhutanese refugees will continue to seek entrance and integration into Australian society.

*Keywords:* Refugees, immigration, integration, profession, gender, generation, language proficiency, mother language, cultural identity, community, caste discrimination.

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### **Background of the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees**

Concerning the history of the refugees from Bhutan also the following publications are helpful. (Rustomji, 1978; Ahura Bhutan, 2000; Hutt, 2003; Rizal, 2004; Kodama, 2004; Nemoto, 2012; Ranabath, 2012; Giri, 2014)

After loosing hope to let the refugees return to Bhutan, UNHCR decided in 2007 to resettle together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) more than 100.000 refugees, living already more than 15 years in 7 camps in Nepal to 3<sup>rd</sup> countries.

On Nov. 2015, the 100.000 refugee was resettled from Nepal. On this occasion, the chairpersons of UNHCR and IOM expressed their gratitude towards many stakeholders which had cooperated to create one of the most outstanding success for resettlement in history.

Australia has been one of 8 countries, willing to accept Bhutanese refugees.

During the 1970s Australia has started with the idea of establishing a multicultural society and is now a kind of model for other countries. (Ozdowsky, 2016).

Since 2008 the Government of Australia welcomed Bhutanese refugees. Australia's last Census (2016) of people born in Bhutan shows 5,950 people of which 97.6% arriving between 2007 and 2016 (Australian Government, 2018). Most of these 97.6% are therefore Bhutanese refugees.

About half of them are living in Adelaide. The author had since 2013 each year contacts with former Bhutanese refugees in Sidney, Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide. The later city has been chosen for this research not only because of the high number of Bhutanese residents, but also of representing different religious and ethnic belongings, the multitude of castes included.

Most of the Bhutanese in Adelaide lived more than 15 years in refugee camps in Nepal. Despite negotiations between Nepal and Bhutan concerning the repatriation of the refugees, and also pressure by many countries and organizations (UNHCR included) towards the Government of Bhutan, all efforts failed.

Therefore UNHCR decided in 2007 to resettle them in 3<sup>rd</sup> countries. The Bhutanese hesitated first to leave the camps in Nepal under conditions which in the beginning had not been clearly explained from UNHCR's side (statement from one UNCHR's officer to the author in August 2008).

When the author interviewed two IOM officers in Damak city on that occasion, he has been surprised at the lack of information concerning the fate of the refugees.

On behalf of one Bhutanese the author contacted the Australian medical team, which stated, that Australia would not resettle people with special needs, meaning the whole family, could not be accepted.

But, as we know this did not happen, Australia has accepted a lot of people with special needs, who are cared by different institutions.

### **Research methods:**

The interviews had been conducted in 2018, between August 12 and 23. Most of the interviews (69) have been done in Salisbury, at random, among customers of a supermarket near the Salisbury station, run by a former refugee. Salisbury has been chosen, because there is the biggest community of Bhutanese in Adelaide. The

Bhutanese customers have been asked, if they are interested to cooperate. All 69 persons have been asked independently and assured to keep their privacy, like in the case of 31 persons detailed below.

1 person had been interviewed at Salisbury station.

12 friends and former acquaintances, which introduced 10 more people. Nearly all of these 22 are living in other parts of Adelaide city, like some of 8 volunteers at the Nepali Language school having been interviewed on August 18.

### **Research purpose:**

Based on his previous research about assimilation policy, education of immigrant and refugee children in Asia, Europe and Australia, (Ringhofer, 1995, 1996), the author decided to use for the analyze some markers related to the subjective feeling of integration, depending on arrival date, age, profession, English proficiency, housing condition, contribution to society, cultural identity, evaluation of integration policy, community connection, caste discrimination and also the interdependency of these markers.

These above mentioned markers are important for the evaluation of the social integration into the multicultural society of Australia, which is not assimilative like the society of Bhutan, which most of these refugees have experienced. AHURI, (2014, pp.26-28).

### **A. Basic data of the 100 interviewees:**

The 2016 Survey of the Bhutanese population in Australia, listed around 50.0% for males and females.

With 72 male and 28 female this ideal balance could not be achieved. Not only the gender of the author has been one factor, but also the fact, that interviews had often been declined by elderly women, because of their poor English proficiency. Also 7 of 8 volunteers interviewed at the Nepali Language school had been men, which further contributed to the gender unbalance.

## 1. Birth place

**Table 1.a. 75 people born in Bhutan**

Birth place in Bhutan	Male	Female	Total
Samchi	14	8	22
Dagana	14	6	20
Sarbhong	11	3	14
Chirang	14	2	16
Samdrup Jongkar	1	1	2
n.a.	1	0	1
Subtotal	55	20	75

**Table 1.b. 25 people born in Nepal**

Birth place in refugee camps	Male	Female	Total
Beldangi 1	5	4	9
Beldangi 2	5	1	6
Beldangi 3	3	2	5
Sanischare	2	0	2
Timai	1	0	1
Khudunabari	0	1	1
Maidhar	1	0	1
Total	17	8	25

75% had been born in all the southern areas of Bhutan and 25% in nearly all refugee camps.

After expelling most of the refugees in the first half of the 1990s, the Bhutanese government intensified the assimilation policy towards the Nepali Bhutanese (also called Lotshampas) in the later half, by introducing the change of local geographic sites into the Zhongka language of the king's ethnic group, called Ngalong. Therefore Samchi was renamed Samtse, Sarbhan to Sarpang and Chirang to Tsirang.

## 2. Age at arrival in Australia

**Table 2** Age at arrival in Australia

Age	M	F	Total
~10	2	1	3
11~15	8	4	12
16~20	13	2	15
21~25	12	2	14
26~30	7	3	10
31~35	5	1	6
36~40	7	5	12
41~45	4	4	8
46~50	4	3	7
51~55	6	1	7
56~60	3	0	3
61~65	0	1	1
76~80	1	0	1
n.a.	0	1	1
Total	72	28	100

## 3. Degree of integration feeling

**Table 3** Degree of integration feeling

%	M	F	Total
100%	31	13	44
95%	5	2	7
90%	7	4	11
85%	2	0	2
80%	10	2	12
75%	6	0	6
70%	3	2	5
65%	1	0	1
60%	2	2	4
55%	1	0	1
50%	3	1	4
40%	0	1	1
n.a.	1	1	2
Total	72	28	100

Nearly half of the 28, (49%) of women are feeling 100% integrated, 6 more than 90%, which is combined 68% from all 28. The respective figures for males are 44% and 60% for 72. Independent from age, job and other facts a slightly higher number of female than male are feeling highly integrated. See also Table 7.3.

### 3.1. Biannual integration feeling 2008~2013 and 2014~2017

**Table 3.1. Biannual integration feeling 2008~2013 and 2014~2017**

Arrival Years	Integration feeling	
	80%~100%	under 80%
2008~2009	59%	41%
2010~2011	79%	21%
2012~2013	86%	14%
2014~2017 (1F: difficult to say)	100%	0%

This result shows a change in higher integration feeling for refugees coming in later years. The difficulties experienced by the “first refugee generation” during their acculturation could have been one decisive factor.

The last group consisted of only 13 persons, having all over 80% integration feelings. 6 among them are older than 40 years. Reasons coming so late to Australia could have been a family reunion, and/or loosing the hope to return to Bhutan. They are now “enjoying life” in Australia despite even living mostly in rental houses.

## 4. Satisfaction with housing conditions

**Table 4 Satisfaction with housing conditions**

(more/less=more or less) (diff.t.s.=difficult to say) (not sat.=not satisfied)  
(n.a.=no answer)

	Very	more/less	diff.t.s.	not sat.	not at all	n.a.	Total
Own house	54	6	1	0	0	0	61
Rental house	17	14	0	4	0	1	36
Apartment	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	73	20	1	4	0	1	99

The high rate of families living in own house can be credited to the housing policy of the Government of South Australia, which enables many refugees to acquire own houses



(AHURI, 2014, pp.26-28). We can also see the high level of satisfaction among house owners and also nearly half of rental houses owners are very satisfied.

## B. Integration feeling in relation to other markers

### B.1. Arrival in Adelaide (Australia) 2008~2017 and integration feeling in connection with type of housing

**Table 5** Arrival in Adelaide (Australia) 2008~2017 and integration feeling in connection with type of housing

Year	Integration feeling	Age (o=own house / r=rental) (M, F)
2008 10p, 9M, 1F	100% 4M	23 (o) 27 (o) 28 (r) 30 (o)
	90% 1M	39 (o)
	75% 1M	67 (o)
	70% 1M	65 (o)
	50% 2M, 1F	59 (o) 60 (o), 25 (o)
2009 17p, 10M, 7F	100% 4M, 3F	26 (o) 26 (r) 30 (o) 64 (o), 32 (o) 48 (r) 52 (o)
	90% 1M, 1F	54 (r), 52 (r)
	80% 1M, 1F	28 (o), 54 (o)
	70% 2M, 1F	40 (o) 28 (o), 22 (r)
	60% 1M, 1F	40 (o), 60 (o)
	50% 1M	57 (o)
2010 15p, 14M, 1F	100% 8M	21 (o) 25(o) 29(o) 31(o) 33(o) 35(o) 46 (o) 48 (o)
	95% 2M	28 (o) 28 (o)
	80% 1M	62 (o)
	75% 1M	34 (o)
	65% 1M	46 (o)
	60% 1M, 1F	31 (o), 38 (o)
2011 11p, 9M, 2F	100% 3M, 1F	18 (o) 24 (r) 41 (r), 47 (r)
	95% 1M	31 (o)
	80% 3M, 1F	30 (o) 31 (o) 33 (o), 54 (o)
	75% 2M	59 (o) 20 (r)

2012 13p, 8M, 5F	100% 2M, 2F	30 (o) 51 (o), 28 (o) 35 (r)
	95% 1M	32 (r)
	90% 2M, 2F	58 (r) 84 (o), 17 (r) 71 (o)
	80% 1M	50 (r)
	75% 1M	31 (r)
	70% 1F	36 (o)
	55% 1M	35 (r)
2013 20p, 11M, 9F	100% 4M, 5F	21 (r) 22 (o) 25 (o) 46 (o), 18 (o) 20 (o) 37 (r) 40 (o) 54 (r)
	95% 1M, 2F	26 (r), 18 (r) 25 (o)
	90% 2M, 1F	42 (o) 44 (r), 19 (r)
	85% 2M	13 (r) 49 (r)
	80% 1M	58 (o)
	75% 1M	29 (r)
	40% 1F	21 (o)
2014 3p, 3M	100% 1M	23 (r)
	90% 1M	48 (r)
	80% 1M	35 (o)
2015 6p, 4M, 2F	100% 2M, 2F	18 (r) 21 (r), 37 (r) 52 (o)
	95% 1M	29 (r)
	80% 1M	54 (o)
2016 4p, 3M, 1F	100% 3M	21 (r) 40 (r) 58 (r)
	1F (difficult to say, sick )	
2017 1p, 1M	80% 1M	36 (r)

The feeling of integration is relative low for quite a lot of interviewees coming early, especially for people over 50 years old. Because of their age, their strong ethnic identity and the feeling of not able contributing to the Australian society like they have done in Bhutan as civil servants.

Looking at the big group, citing 100%, we find it quite heterogeneous, many young people, many women, but not many elderly people. Interesting is this 100% feeling by one man with special needs (54) and one sick woman (47), both having now a better life than in the refugee camps, or in Bhutan.

3 young people stated in the interviews their feelings for Bhutan or for life in Nepal's refugee camps. One young man (18), arrived 2015, stated his integration feelings for Australia as 100%, adding that it is 85% for Bhutan. Even born in a refugee camp he has a strong identity as a Bhutanese.

One 25 year old woman stated “Nepal is my home country” after living 10 years in Australia (integration feeling 50%) and one woman (17, integration feeling 90%) said, she is missing life in the refugee camp so much, even living for 6 years in Australia.

The above data shows also a high rate of integration feeling of younger Bhutanese, especially under 30 ones. This is independent of the housing condition. Quite a lot of these young people have a high degree of integration feeling, despite living in rented houses, working in many cases under hard conditions and often part time. This trend started already in 2008 and got stronger from 2011 on. The background has to be further investigated, but there could be the change from refugee huts, where they saw no future at all, to modern city life with more chances. The author also experienced the expression of frustration by many young people when visiting the camps.

AHURA JAPAN’s member have received letters from young refugees, who thought about suicide.

Further reason for the high rate of 100% integration feelings could be the traditional family bounds, resulting in living together with parents and very often also grandparents, even when sons are over 40 and single.

But interestingly some of this young people knew the amendment for the pension system, which led them to state a lower percentage than 100, despite having a personally feeling of 100%.

The rate of 80% or more stated by 21 from among all 28 female over 40 years old is also an interesting result. Despite living in rented houses or apartment, having no job, or being sick, from these 21 women, 14 said 100%, 2 of them 95%. This phenomenon has to be studied in the future, but could have been influenced by the overall better living standard compared to a camp life and/or because of a lesser gender gap.

But we can also find women and men with low integration feelings, which could have been partly caused by a variety of negative experiences during the integration process. Some of the interviewees have given explanations, which cannot be published because of privacy issues. Further future life history research should be necessary for general evaluation.

## B.2. Connection between integration feeling and job situation

### 2.1. Bhutanese with permanent jobs

**Table 6 Bhutanese with permanent jobs**  
34 with permanent jobs are showing quite different feelings of integration

Feeling	Age	M	F	TOTAL
100%	20s	6	1	16p, 13M, 3F
	30s	5	1	
	40s	1	0	
	50s	1	1	
80%~95%	20s	2	1	9p, 7M, 2F
	30s	2	0	
	40s	1	0	
	50s	2	1	
50%~75%	20s	1	1	9p, 6M, 3F
	30s	4	0	
	40s	1	1	
	60s	0	1	

Among the 34 respondents with permanent jobs some 16 stated 100% integration feeling: 13M and 3F.

The group with 80%~95% consisted of 7M and 2F.

In the group between 50%~75% are 6M and 3F.

Most comments of the 100% group are positive. But, one man is complaining the difficulties getting citizenship, but is happy with the hospitality he is experiencing. Also one woman with special needs and one sick one are feeling integrated, because of better conditions than in the refugee camps. Also it looks like many young Bhutanese in the 20s and 30s have good integration feelings, even when still having job training.

The group with permanent jobs, but not feeling highly integrated, are complaining not only about language problem, but also the different culture rules and the problem confronting the multicultural society.

The necessity to have good connections with white Australians has been mentioned. One man in his 30s cited harassment, bullying and racism at his workplace.

The young woman who said "Nepal is my home country" is also one with a permanent job, but feeling only 50% integrated.

## **2.2. Bhutanese without permanent jobs**

- \* 6 are carers (caring for family members), stating a quite high integration feeling between 75% and 95% and are between 29 and 50 old. This could have been influenced by the better medical and caring system in Australia.
- \* casual 15: 12 stated between 80 and 100% (especially by many in their 20s), 1M (70%, 40s) complained having no chance to communicate, 1M (60%, 40s) said, there are some cultural parts he would never agree and 1F (55%, 30s).
- \* 3 part timer feeling 50% (M57) ~100% (M48).
- \* 14 have no job, but 12 mentioned a high integration feeling between 80% ~100%, 1F (40%, 20s), 1F (40s: difficult to say).
- \* Besides school age/students 5 (50% ~80%), 4 recent arrived refugees are learning English 4 (80%~100% age 36~48), and 5, aged 17~24, have job training, having also high integration feelings with 90% (1) and 100% (4).
- \* 4 interviewees gave no answers about their job, but have a quite high integration feeling.
- \* Most of 10 retired persons have also high feelings: 7 with 80% ~100%, and 3 with 75%, 70% and 50%, mentioning the difficulty to get a job when older than 50 years (1M).
- \* 1M (70%, 30s), is saying more or less, because not friendly people at Centrelink and work place. (Centrelink is a Governmental institution providing jobs and medicare)
- \* Some sharply criticized their experiences during the integration process into Australia's society.

## **B.3. Satisfaction with job, compared with integration feeling and job status**

If we compare the people with permanent jobs and those without permanent jobs, the ratio among manual workers is 50% to 50% with an equal ratio of response of 100% job satisfaction. Also the integration feeling has a very similar and high rate.

People in social work fields have a 100% job satisfaction, but there work only 3 part timers. In contradiction to the manual laborers only 3 have a 100% integration feeling.

People in white collar jobs have with 2 exceptions all permanent jobs and also a 100% integration feeling, also with only 2 exceptions.

The number of interpreters and carers are too small to reach relevant conclusions.

## B.4. English proficiency

Table 7 English proficiency:

Very good 1	Quite good 2	No problem In daily life 3	Not so good 4	Bad 5	n.a.
15	52	19	8	5	1

### 4.1. Analyzing the very good English speaking group

Table 7.1.

Gender	Age	Arrival year	Integration Feeling %	Job type	Evaluation of Integration policy
M	28	2008	100	Full	1
M	30	2008	100	Full	2
F	22	2009	70	Student	2
F	32	2009	100	Full	1
M	40	2009	60	Part	2
F	52	2009	100	Full	1
M	57	2009	50	Full	1
F	60	2009	60	Part	2
M	33	2010	100	Full	1
M	34	2010	75	Full	1
M	46	2010	100	Full	1
M	51	2011	75	Full	1
M	13	2013	85	Student	n.a.
M	18	2013	100	Student	2
M	18	2013	95	Student	2

11M represents 15.3% of the whole 72M, and 4F a similar 14.3% of 28F.

Their English proficiency had helped them to find a full time job.

If we compare it with the quite good 52 (students included) speakers, (see Table 7.2. below) only 23 are being fully employed, in the group with very good proficiency have 9 from 15 a full job. If we exclude the students, the difference is much higher. Quite more of the very good speakers have a full job. We can conclude that the higher English proficiency had influenced their job chances.

Part Timers have a lower integration feeling than those with full time jobs.

Interesting is the very positive rating of governments integration policy, but this is in contrast to a low feeling of integration. The group over age 50 had quite good jobs in Bhutanese government sections, but have (or had, because of their age or retiring) no permanent jobs in Australia, which could be the main reason why they have the feeling not fully been accepted and integrated because their knowledge and language proficiency are not (or have not been) asked for. Of course their educational background is also one reason for their critical viewpoint.

The 3 males under 20 have all been born in the camps, having a strong feeling of being integrated, despite having job training or being to young (1 arrived in 2013 at 8 years old).

#### 4.2. Analyzing the quite good speaking group

**Table 7.2. quite good: 52: 45M, 7F. (Unemp.=unemployed; Training=job Training; Carer= caring for family member)**  
**Integration policy: 1=very good/ 2=good/ 3=difficult to say/ 4=not so good/ 5 = not good at all**

Gender	Age	Arrival Year	Integration Feeling %	Job type	Evaluation of Integration policy
M	23	2008	100	Casual	1
M	27	2008	100	Full	3
M	39	2008	90	Full	2
F	25	2008	50	Full	2
M	59	2008	50	Unemp.	2
M	26	2009	100	Casual	2
M	28	2009	80	Unemp.	4
M	54	2009	90	Full	2
M	64	2009	100	Casual	2
M	30	2009	100	Full	1
M	28	2009	70	Full	2
M	31	2010	60	Full	2
M	35	2010	100	Full	1
M	28	2010	95	Full	1
M	31	2010	100	Full	2
F	38	2010	60	Full	3
M	62	2010	80	Full	2
M	48	2010	100	Part	2

M	28	2010	95	Full	1
M	21	2010	100	Unempl.	1
M	29	2010	100	Full	1
M	25	2010	100	Casual	3
M	46	2010	65	Full	2
M	20	2010	75	Full	2
M	31	2011	80	Full	2
M	33	2011	80	Part	2
M	18	2011	100	Training	3
M	24	2011	100	Training	2
M	42	2012	90	n.a.	n.a.
M	36	2012	More or less	n.a.	2
M	32	2012	95	Carer	2
M	50	2012	80	Full	2
M	17	2012	90	Training	1
M	30	2012	100	Full	1
M	28	2012	100	Full	2
F	35	2012	55	Casual	2
M	25	2013	95	Casual	2
M	21	2013	100	Full	2
F	21	2013	40	Unempl.	2
M	25	2013	100	Casual	3
F	19	2013	90	Student	2
M	26	2013	100	Casual	3
M	44	2013	90	Carer	2
F	17	2013	100	Training	3
F	20	2013	100	n.a.	3
M	23	2014	100	Training	3
M	48	2014	90	Student	2
M	35	2014	80	Student	3
M	20	2015	100	Full	3
M	54	2015	80	Full	1
M	30	2016	80	Casual	3
M	40	2016	100	Student	2

An integration grade between 90 and 100% has been mentioned by 26 (21M and 5F), which is just half of the respondents. But only 10 are rating the integration policy as very good.

Concerning the evaluation of the Integration policy, 13 (25%) are rating it with



“difficult to say”, which means are not content with it. Even 1 answered “not so good”. In contrast, 9 of them have a 100% integration feeling, all between age 17 to 27, independent of their job situation and arrival year.

2 of them are working full, 3 casual, and all 4 at job training and arrived between 2008 and 2015. There are 3 others with 80% and 1 with 60% integration feeling, all older, between 28 and 38.

### 4.3. Analyzing the low level speaking groups

Among 72M and 28F are 5M and 8F at the 2 lowest English levels 4 and 5. This big discrepancy is also a proof of the gender gap in educational environment. If these women had received English training in Bhutan or in the camps in the same way the boys had received, this would not be the outcome. Despite the better educational conditions in the refugee camps, compared with many areas in Bhutan, this gender gap is a hindrance for their integration and life chances in Australia. But we have to remember that life in the camps were still dominated by traditional roles of women, which means doing a lot of domestic work, getting married at an early age, which can also be seen in the dramatic fall of girls percentage after class 8. (Ringhofer 2002, pp.66-69)

**Table 7.3. Level 4:**

Gender	Age	Arrival year	Integration Feeling %	Job type	Evaluation of integration policy
M	60	2008	50	Unempl.	3
F	48	2009	100	Unempl.	1
F	54	2009	80	Carer	1
F	47	2011	100	Unempl.	2
F	54	2011	80	Unempl.	2
M	51	2012	100	Unempl.	2
F	37	2013	100	Unempl.	n.a.
M	58	2013	80	Unempl.	n.a.

**Table 7.4. Level 5:**

Gender	Age	Arrival year	Integration Feeling %	Job type	Evaluation of integration policy
F	71	2012	90	Unempl.	n.a.
M	84	2012	90	Unempl.	1
F	40	2016	n.a.	Unempl.	3
F	54	2013	100	Unempl.	2
M	58	2016	100	Unempl.	n.a.

1 sick F have rated the policy as 3 and is not content with medical system, but in contrast 1 other sick lady and 1 with special needs have rated it good and both have a 100% integration feeling.

1M also rated the policy with a 3, because he has still problems with language and acculturation and in addition had recently moved from another part of Australia.

But despite their poor English level, 4 respondents of Level 4 (3F, 1M) passed the citizen ship test between 2014 and 2017, but none of level 5.

### **B.5. Australian immigration and integration policy in relation to Health and Pension care**

**Table 8. Evaluation of Integration policy (Q15), Health system (Q34), Pension system (Q35)**

Evaluation	Integration policy	Health system	Pension system
Very good	24	51	17
Good	54	43	41
Difficult to say	14	2	32
Not so good	1	3	7
Not good at all	0	1	2
n.a.	7	1	2
Other	0	0	1

78% rated the Integration policy in general very good or good. The health system got an even better acknowledgment with 94%. The combined rate for the pension system has been 58%, but here is the percentage of very good quite low with 17%. Even among the group who valued the system as good, had been some, who mentioned the future change of the pension law, which plans to rise the retirement age to 70 till 2022. Also the “difficult to answer” can be interpreted as not happy with the new law, but only a

few mentioned it directly.

Interestingly only 6 (4M, 2F) evaluated very good for all 3 questions, which an average integration feeling of 90%. Besides this 6, the number of respondents answering good or very good for all questions is 42, (33M, 9F) with 19 having 100% integration feeling, but 11 had a feeling under 80%.

Among those expressed critical points, especially the amendments of the pension system had been mentioned.

### **B.6. Trust in social service**

66 answered very good or good, which means there is trust among most of the respondents. The group who stated very good, had been quite diverse, because among the 13, had been 2 who said only in the beginning helpful, and one stated in the camps their activities had been very good.

For 53 it was good, for 7 to difficult to say, and 8 mentioned not good, 9 gave no answers.

Considered very good had been the help from BAASA (Bhutanese Australian Association of South Australia and ARA (Australian Refugee Association), and the work of the Bhutanese ethnic school.

Among the difficult to say group, the difficulty of access and filling out of forms, lack of information, you have all to do yourself, a problem you have, if your English is not so good. The aftercare is too short, 2 years are not enough, but otherwise somebody complained, the 520 hours for English course are too long, if your English is already very good.

Despite some positive opinions about Centrelink, there have been also some negative comments, like, “they are not listening to your feelings”, “ you are forced to look for a job or learn English”, “confusing methods”.

These comments are stated by some of the 15 respondents who ranked the social work between difficult to say or not so good.

More than half had been content with the social service, but the negative experience by some led to critical voices. The author himself had heard some negative stories about Centrelink. One has been quite shocking: a deaf woman, only 2 years in Australia, had been strongly forced to look for a job.

### **B.7. Citizenship**

Nearly everybody got the citizenship within 6 years after arrival, or will get it during 2018, having already passed or applied.

Only 3 male did not apply after living more than 6 years in Australia.

Their age was 25 to 31 years and their integration feelings 90%~100%.

One elderly man, living since 2011 seems not interested with integration feeling at 50%.

Also as mentioned above, in the 2 groups with low language proficiency only 4 have so far passed the citizenship test, because it seems to be quite difficult for people with special needs or sickness to prepare for it.

In general, most of the refugees are inclined to become Australian citizens.

### **B.8. Acquiring mother language and attending public schools**

There are about 76 households among the 100 people interviewed. 35 children are under 30 years old, living with their parents without having kids. Under 30 only 1M (28) is already a father. Many of adults over 30, some in their 40s are still not married, but are living with their parents or in 3 generation households. The background are the long years of refugee situation and their problems after arriving in Australia related to acculturation and establishing an economical secure life which leads to postponing the founding of an own family.

It is a tradition in Bhutanese families, that the eldest son has to stay with his parents and care for them.

We can also see here the importance of strong family bonds among the Bhutanese families and community.

Only 1 young man (28) is living alone, all other 99 are living with family and are also speaking Nepali at home.

Another 21 households have no kids at school, neither already adults or not yet married.

As already mentioned above, in all 79 households Nepali is spoken, but of 19 households having actually kids learning in Australian schools, only 12 of them are attending a Nepali language class at an ethnic school. 10 of them the Saturday ethnic school founded 2010 by BAASA with classes from preschool to high school and is well known in the Bhutanese community. Visiting the school the author has been impressed

by the dedicated efforts of teachers and many volunteers.

1 kid is learning in a Nepali Language class at the language school founded by SA government. ([www.schooloflanguages.sa.edu.au](http://www.schooloflanguages.sa.edu.au)) . Visiting this school in 2017, the author has been very impressed by the number of languages taught and especially about the existence of a Nepali class, special for former Bhutanese refugees, but this class seems to be not so well known among the Bhutanese community.

In addition, the youngest interviewed person was a boy (13) who told me that he has a Nepali language class at one public school in Salisbury.

There are in addition 4 households with 4 kids under 4 and 1 preschool kid. One father of 2 boys mentioned, he will let his 2 sons attend the Ethnic Nepali School when they are 7 or 8 years old.

Grandparents in their late 50s and 60s have in most cases no problem to communicate with their kids and grandchildren (Q31). Only 2 of them mentioned some problem.

The importance of learning the mother language is important for the education of immigrant and refugee children which the author has emphasized in 2 research papers about English and Mother language education in Australia. (Ringhofer, 1995, 1996).

Also in the message I have written for the publication of commemoration the 10 years Bhutanese stay in Adelaide. Adhikari (2018, p.17).

The author emphasized there, like in many speeches to middle age and elder Bhutanese from 2013 to 2019, the importance of tell their kids and/or grandchildren about their life in Bhutan and struggles till arriving in Australia. This is something very important for the identity preserving of the elder generation and generating a positive Nepali-Bhutanese identity for the younger ones. Of course it contributes towards a better intergenerational understanding.

Since 2017 the author heard about the phenomenon that young kids are not respecting elderly people because of their weak English speaking knowledge, therefore the above mentioned approach should be an urgent issue for all generations.

Coming back to Q16: 11 People who had/have kids in Australian schools said in general "very good", but there have been 2 grandfathers and one 19 year old young man who answered "not at all", but without explaining it. These negative experiences should be verified in a future research.

Concerning the learning and integration of adult Bhutanese refugees the following

research is recommended. Koirala, (2017).

## **B.9. Bhutanese community in Adelaide**

If we look at the amount of contacts with the Bhutanese community (Q26), the religious belief (Q19), volunteer activities (Q32) and festival participation (Q33), we can see the strength of the cohesion within the community and of the desire to preserve their culture.

### **9.1. Contacts within the community**

First, the “very often” contacts with the Bhutanese community is at 69% very high and together with 5 who mentioned “often”, we can say that their relations are very strong. Cast and other discrimination issues are discussed later.

But if we compare the different religious background of the respondents (Hindu 69/ Buddhist 21/ Kirant 5/ Christian 3/ else 3) than we find that of the 21 with Buddhist belief 16 answered very often (76%) and adding the 2 who stated often it raises to 85%.

In contrast 47 of 69 Hindu believers said “very often”, representing only 68% with raises to 71% if we added the 2 who replied “often”.

All 5 Kirant believers have very often contact with the community, but only 3 are going to non Kirant festivals.

There are 3 respondents without a specific religion. One father and son replied “humanity”, and one stated to have no special religious belief.

### **9.2. How many are volunteering?**

Concerning the volunteer situation, of 45 who are not volunteering 4 have no time, because of work or have to take rest at weekend. 2 of them, one wheelchair bound F and her father are looking for more volunteers.

The 48 volunteers who quoted the content of their quite diverse activities, which are mainly in Bhutanese NGO's like BAASA, Bhutanese Ethnic School, Punya Foundation, Association of Himalayan Buddhist of South Australia (AHIMBSA), Bhutan Martyrs Memorial and Torture Survival Society (BHUMMATSS), Adelaide Dragon Soccer Club, Radio Pahichan, Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS), Didi Group, NGO's, cloth and recycle shops and quite often at

community events and different cultural or festival programs.

But also some are involved in city council activities one for government.

Community development.

The contribution of the Bhutanese community in Salisbury for the transformation of this suburb to a “model of domestic humanitarianism” is highly valued by Neikirk (2015, p.123) who admits also that the Bhutanese had shown an acculturation different than other refugee groups. This kind of acknowledging this special “new type” of settled refugees, could the author of this article hear from all persons interviewed at Immigration and Border Control Offices and also from the many NGO’s he had contacted since 2013. This image had only been damaged by incidents of cast discrimination.

The above mentioned volunteers are active in one group (place).

Those with activities in only one place (group) are 24, from age 18 to 84, those how are involved in 2 or more activities are also 24, from age 18 to 67. Interestingly is the average age, which is just 38 for the former and just 40 years for the later. That means also younger Bhutanese are in the same way involved in voluntary groups like the elder generations, despite having in many cases a quite demanding workload.

The average age for the 4 persons who said “only sometimes” is just 41%, which means no significant difference. 3 gave no answers.

10 of the Buddhists group are not volunteering, but the younger Buddhists (5) are involved in soccer management and some are also active players. These soccer activities are mainly financed from BAASA.

Concerning the 5 Christians nobody is actually volunteering, one had done before and one is waiting for a chance to do so.

3 of the 5 Kirats are also involved in different activities (NGO).

### **9.3. Importance of festivals and cultural events**

Many of the interviewees are participating in festivals and other events.

Only 2 mentioned being too busy, 8 gave no answers, among them 4 from 58 to 84 yrs. Some stated sometimes 6 (Hindu /Buddhist).

In all religions there are families observing festivals related only to their own religion, and only in their families and not attending big festival sites.

9 are going to all festivals, 3 stated both, meaning Hindu and Buddhist festivals.

The reasons for the more than 80 who attend festivals have been contacts with the community, preserve culture, tradition, maintaining rituals, ceremonies, language, educating the younger generations learn other religions, dance, celebrate, having fun.

## **B.10. Caste discrimination**

Nearly all answers relating to discrimination had been about caste issues.

### **10.1. Do you feel discriminated from other Bhutanese?**

15 respondents, belonging to all beliefs, had experienced discrimination:

- \* in a hidden way (4), at gatherings/events (4: nobody talks with them), felt from Hindu priests (2), by many high cast people (1), sometimes language (1), in Australia stronger than in camps (1), no concrete reason (2).
- \* Heard about it (2), difficult to say (1), else (1).

All together only 19 spoke about this phenomenon, which means most interviewees are avoiding this taboo question.

### **10.2. How do you think can the discrimination between the castes corrected or abolished?**

Following answers had been presented by a minority of 9 respondents.

General education (1), teaching elderly people (1), awareness program for both sides (1), cast system is a social poison (1), installment of laws (1), do not identify too much with your cast, just be a human being (1), it will take time (3).

Most of the interviewed wanted not to speak about this “delicate” issue.

This could be the reason, why Paola Tine, who published an article about cultural interaction and integration, told the author, August 2017, at the University of Adelaide, when I asked her personally, that she could not find any form of caste discrimination during her 6 months long research in 2016.

The result of this present research questions about the caste issue, namely the existence of this taboo can be a clue, why she could not see “any differences” among the Bhutanese. In her paper she is calling the Bhutanese community even “an ethnic group” (?) and does not mention the caste issue at all. Tine, (2017, p.31).



### **10.3. Discrimination in the refugee camps**

Felt by 8 people: feeling it everywhere; not invited (1), felt, but not openly discriminated (1), sometimes (2), not specified (4).

Other answers: heard or seen (2).

The statement related to Q20, that the cast discrimination within the Bhutanese community is in Australia stronger than in the camps can also be seen at the low number of answers to Q22.

### **10.4. Cast issue as a serious problem for the Bhutanese community and also for the Australian society as a whole.**

The first time the author heard about caste discrimination had been 2013, when receiving information from one SA Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection officer about the incident at a ceremony for Bhutanese. He was shocked, when at an official gathering, a high caste man did not want to shake hands with somebody of a low caste.

It seems this tendency had already started at an earlier stage, but in such a hidden way, not detected or neglected by the society.

According to Avishek Gazmere who has compiled caste discrimination among immigrants from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan living in Australia, it seems to have started already 2010 in Adelaide, 2 years after the first Bhutanese resettled there (Avishek Gazmere, Caste Discrimination in Australia, Cohesion Matters, July 2015, pp.23-28).

Avishek Gazmere is convinced that only legal action from Government can solve this human rights violation. His position is strengthened by Bhanu Adhikari, a Brahmin, who is discriminated by other Brahmins, because he is not discriminating lower castes, treating all castes equally. He is following the original Hindu Sanatana Dharma, which is not discriminating.

Mr. Adhikari has lodged Australia's first legal complaint of discrimination on the basis of caste, in the Equal Opportunity Commission of South Australia (<https://www.sbs.co.au/topics/voices/feature/caste-acts>, Caste acts, Malcolm Knox, p.5).

The author of this article asked 2017 in Adelaide, 7 young leaders of Hindu faith, in their 30s and 40s, about their opinion concerning the caste discrimination. They are not discriminating, time will solve this problem, but they have no intention to get active

in fighting against this discrimination, because they told me, as long as the Australian Government does not include the Aborigines in the Constitution, they would not start becoming active.

The declining of performing the final rites of deceased persons of lower castes is one often cited form of discrimination and the author had 2017 the chance to ask independently two Hindu priests in Melbourne if they would perform the rites. Both explained in similar words their situation: If they would do it, they need to have the consent of 10 elite members of their community to allow it. But after the rites, they would face discrimination within their “community”.

This caste discrimination is against the democratic ideals of a multicultural society, therefore should be abolished in near future, of course a very difficult task to accomplish.

The author had on two visits (2015, 2018) to the Immigration and Border Control Office the occasion to speak with two ethnic relation officers, and got the impression that there seems to exist no special effort to tackle this delicate issue.

Beginning with the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, The Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986, and amendments from Australian Human Rights Commission like “Equal opportunity and diversity” and “Workplace discrimination, harassment and bullying” are arguing against discrimination of “social origin (caste included), but nowhere discrimination between casts in Australia is mentioned, which is therefore not covered by law.

In present, this inter-caste discrimination is a phenomenon with extreme human rights violations for Australians of low caste social origin, coming from countries mentioned page 30 (top). All 3 information are from February 2021:

<https://dsnuk.org/2021/02/11/caste-discrimination-continues-its-journey-now-within-the-australian-diaspora/>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-2-11/caste-system-of-india-and-south-asia-in-australia-dalit-rights/13135622>

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/earshot/australia/13085900>

The caste discrimination among Bhutanese refugees in the camps and in Australia are extensively detailed in Neikirk (2015), where in Chapter 8, titled “Being Bhutanese, Becoming Australian”, she focus on the situation in Adelaide.

### B.11. Return to Bhutan?

Visit as Tourist	No interest	Planning to live if Bhutan changes	n.a.
91	5	2	2
	no relatives (3M)	2M, both end of 50s and former civil servants:	
	“Nepal is my home” (1M, 17)	“ if Bhutan changes to democracy and human rights, living again with family and investing, helping Bhutan”	
	“not interested” (1M, 28)		

The author of this article met the resettled Bhutanese (former refugees) in Australia from 2013 to 2019. He had a lot of meetings with elderly people in small and big groups, asking them “would you like to live again in Bhutan?”

In the first years till about 2016, this question had been answered positively. But, year by year decreasing and from 2017 on nobody planned to live there.

They have only interest in visiting their relatives and the place they have lived before.

People born in Bhutan are not given a tourist visa by Bhutanese authorities, despite knowing it as a violation of international law, because the Australian passport, which most of the Bhutanese have already acquired, is entitling them to visit most countries worldwide, Bhutan included. In this passport the country of origin is included, which is for the Government of Bhutan the reason to exclude them. But, their children, born in refugee camps in Nepal can legally visit Bhutan, having never been there before.

The possibility of a return of Bhutanese for living again in Bhutan seems to be very slim. The plan by 2 men for living there shows the still deep concern for their mother country, but would not be realized in the near future.

### Conclusion

In general, the conditions for resettlement are in South Australia the best in whole Australia. Fujibayashi (2017).

The author of the present article has been impressed by the scale of organizations and activities from the state, city councils and NGO's in Adelaide assisting and cooperating with the resettled refugees.

These better living conditions contributes to a pull effect for Bhutanese in other parts of Australia to move to Adelaide, like an elderly man among the interviewees recently arrived.

Concerning the status of integration of Bhutanese in Adelaide, the average integration feeling is quite high, but a discrepancy between elderly people and those born in the camps can be seen. Despite coming late and having difficulties finding permanent jobs or less hard jobs, the rate of integration is in general higher than those of people elder than 35. Most of them only knew life in refugee camps, a kind of “prison”. Therefore they are embracing their new life and concerning integration are more flexible than some of the elder generation, who came earlier, but because of various reasons are feeling not as integrated as the younger generation (see p.16).

The biannual table 5 (p.9) showing this phenomenon very clear. In this context, a relative big number of young people have a high job satisfaction.

The 100% rate of integration feeling by many women, even without job or no permanent job is higher than the men’s rate. This astonishing phenomenon can be interpreted as an effect of better gender relations in Australia, but needs further research.

English proficiency is still a problem, especially for some elderly people.

Therefore English classes for them are available in each community.

The community bonds within the Bhutanese and also with the local community institutions are looking quite strong.

There are at present two acute problems needing a solution: drug addicted young Bhutanese (not analyzed in this article) and especially the caste discrimination.

The later is more or less visible at gatherings of the Bhutanese community and had been witnessed by the author in some occasion.

Therefore a deeper understanding of a multicultural society is a necessary effort by all stakeholders, which should be a must to ensure a harmonious society where everybody has enough insight and empathy feelings to people not yet treated equally. Ponterotto & Pedersen, (1993, pp. 39-42).

Finally, the author has to admit the fact, that the research methods could only partially achieve the purpose of verifying the interdependency of the markers collected during the interviews. The low number of interviewees also contributed to this outcome.

Therefore the data of this pilot study remain a basis for further investigative research.

## Questionnaire

### Integration of former Bhutanese refugees into Australian society

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Gender M F neither
3. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Birthplace: Bhutan ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) Nepal ( \_\_\_\_\_ )
5. Arrival in Australia: \_\_\_\_\_ year \_\_\_\_\_ month
6. Occupation: in Bhutan: farmer \_\_\_\_\_ housewife \_\_\_\_\_ else \_\_\_\_\_  
in Australia (present): \_\_\_\_\_
7. Living: 1. with family 2. family members in Adelaide 3. alone 4. elsewhere
8. Living in 1. own house 2. rented house 3. apartment 4. etc.
9. Are you satisfied with the housing conditions?  
Very more or less difficult to say not so satisfied not at all
10. Do you feel being integrates in Australian society?  
Yes more or less difficult to say not good integrated not at all  
Please explain your answer: \_\_\_\_\_
11. If you think about the degree of your integration what percentage you would say? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Do you have a permanent job? yes no  
If yes: what kind? \_\_\_\_\_  
If no: still job training too young feeling discriminated else

13. Are you satisfied with your job?

yes    more or less    difficult to say    not so satisfied    not at all

Can you please explain your answer?

14. If you compare it with your job (work) in Bhutan what kind of feeling do you have?

15. How do you rate the integration policy of Australian Immigration and Border Control Department towards Bhutanese (former refugees)?

Very good    good    difficult to say    not so good    not good at all

15.1. Which policy (treatment) do (did) you like?

15.2. Which policy you have not been or are not satisfied?

16. Do you have kids in kindergarten or in school?    1. Yes    2. No

If yes: How is treatment from teachers and other students?

Very good    good    difficult to say    not so good    not good at all

If there are problems please explain:

17. Do your kids learning their mother language?    1. Yes    2. No

If yes: at home    at school    (multiple answers possible)

At home: how many hours a day?

At school: how many hours a week?

If no: explain the reason:

18. How do you rate the work of NGO's working for Bhutanese refugees?

Are there NGO's you trust (ed) very much?    1. Yes    2. No

If yes: which NGO's?

If there had been NGO's you have not been satisfied please state it:

19. Religion: 1. Hindu    2. Buddhist    3. Christian    4. Kirat    5. else:

20. Do you feel discriminated from other Bhutanese?      Yes      No  
If yes: when, which occasion?
21. How do you think can the discrimination between the castes corrected or abolished?
22. When living in the refugee camps did you experience discrimination concerning your caste or religion?      1. Yes      2. No  
If yes, please explain it:
23. If you have the chance to return to Bhutan would you go as  
1. Tourist      2. Preparing for a possible return      3. For living continuously  
4. else  
If possible please explain the reason for your answer:
24. Under which conditions would you live (again) in Bhutan?
25. Place of origin is written in your Passport. Do you have an idea how you could get a visa for Bhutan from Bhutan's Embassy in Sydney?
26. Do you have contacts with members of the Bhutanese community in Adelaide?  
Very often      often      2-3 times a month      once a month      lesser      no
27. What kind of contacts do you have often? (multiple answers possible)  
business      same birthplace      classmates      same cast  
somebody of your work place      else
28. Do you have Australian citizenship?      1. Yes      2. No  
If yes: when did you become Australian?      Year      month
29. Did you have problems getting the citizenship?      1. Yes      2. No  
If yes: explain it please



30. How good is your English speaking level?

very good    quite good    no problem in daily life    not so good    bad

31. Do you have problems communicating with your (grand) children?

Yes: quite often    sometimes    very rare    not at all

No: can you say why?

32. Are you active as a volunteer for your community?

1. Yes    2. No

If yes: what kind?

If no: why not?

33. Do you observe the festivals and important cultural days in your religion and community?    1. Yes    2. No

If yes: please explain the reason:

If no: please explain the reason:

34. How do you rate the health system and medical care?

Very good    good    difficult to say    not so good    not good at all

35. How do you rate the retirement and pension system?

Very good    good    difficult to say    not so good    not good at all

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

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