This study is about Indian ‘diaspora’ in Nepal. The study of diaspora communities and identities has emerged as a challenging field during the past couple of decades. Diaspora is today a global phenomenon, and South Asian region is no exception. Many South Asians form diaspora communities in different parts of the world, and also within the region as well. However, the concept of ‘diaspora’ in the context of South Asia poses several constraints because of three factors. Firstly, a large number of the people share similar physical attributes, culture, religion, etc. that cut across national borders. Secondly, the notions of ‘foreigner’, ‘citizen’, and ‘national identities’ often overlap and are vaguely understood. Besides, the question of ‘we’ and ‘other’ are often understood in the ethnic and cultural context and national identities are coloured by such perceptions. Thirdly, because the region is ‘India-centric’, and because the India factor plays a dominant role in all the countries’ domestic politics, the question of Indian diaspora in the neighbouring countries is more complicated.

Because of these complexities, the diasporic communities in the region suffer from a particular problem that may not be the case of the South Asian diasporas in other parts of the world. The diasporas are often identified with their *ethnicity* or *place of origin* rather than by their ‘nationality’ or ‘political status’. To a large extent, diaspora problems are directly related to this (mis)perception in the context of South Asia. The existence of this perception, on occasions, serves as a
useful tool for vested interests, to be exploited. However, such misperceptions are but obvious because of the similarities of the people of the region. One such case is the ‘Indo-Nepalese’ of Nepal Tarai who had settled in Nepal for many years. The diasporas and the ‘border people’ have been adversely affected due to the politics of identity. They are often identified with their ‘brethren’ on the other side of the border than with the fellow citizens. While in general, when Indians refer to their diasporas in Nepal, they unwittingly treat the ‘border people’ as ‘Indians’ because of the shared culture with them on their side of the border.

The study of Indian diaspora in the context of South Asia is, therefore, complex not only because of the sensitivity of the issue but also because of the perception and misperception of people about identities. Hence, capturing the entire problematics also puts several limitations on researchers. It is in this perspective the present study attempts to explore the various facets of the Indian diaspora in Nepal.

**Problem of the Study**

‘Indian diaspora’ is spread over more than hundred countries, all over the world. In most cases, the process of their immigration and subsequent settlement in their host countries has been complex. Indian diaspora in South Asia have also gone through various difficulties, much as those in other parts of the world. The study focuses on the Indian diaspora in Nepal and attempts to answer certain pertinent questions concerning it such as: What is the relation between the diaspora and the State? What is their role in the socio-economic and political changes of Nepal?
What are the implications of India's relation with these people on the India-Nepal Relations and vice-versa?

In the recent times, there has been a serious debate in Nepal on the question of who is a 'Person of Indian Origin'? The debate has become sensitive and sometimes assumed controversial dimensions in the context of the Madhesis, more so in the context of the identity politics that has dominated Nepal's domestic political discourse since the 1990 political change. The question of who is the person of an 'Indian Origin' in the context of Nepal is complex and has no easy answers as the term 'Indian' is understood differently from person to person depending on the place of origin. The term also seems to have acquired a meaning that has been equated to a threat, both politically and culturally. Perhaps, this dimension has been cultivated during the Panchayat period when Nepal and India relations had been marked by mistrust and political acrimony and the domestic political ideology was based on 'anti-Indianism'. It is in this context that the present study is conceptualized to explore the changes that have been taking place in the context of the 'Indian' diaspora and the emerging trends of the diaspora community in Nepal.

An understanding of Nepal's nation-building process is relevant to give an idea as to how Nepal as a 'nation' has been evolving and to throw some light on the approach of the Nepal rulers towards the country's social diversity. Nepal's nation-building seems to be recent, despite the fact that the country had emerged during the mid-18th century. The rulers of the newly established State had been
credited of building a state by increasing its military and political structures. However, even after 200 years of its existence, Nepal’s nation-building process had remained limited. While the state machinery and military force has succeeded in keeping the country together, efforts towards nation-building have been very recent. This reality prevailed even after 1950 when democracy was experimented. However, the 1950s was important as it can be considered the most crucial phase of democratic experience, as it gave, for the first time, some space for the long suppressed voices to be raised. It was during this period that the process of nation-building began, though in a very narrow'y defined form. Because of its inherent limitations and changes in the political process, the nation-building efforts had to give way to other political developments, further delaying the process of national integration. However, when the country confronted the second wave of democracy, that was taking all over the world in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Nepal also joined the political wave thus, establishing a democratic system in 1990. It was only then that the country has begun a policy of national integration providing respectful place for various communities of the country in its political order.

A number of categories that has been used to refer to the Indian diaspora in Nepal in census reports and existing literature created difficulties in the study of the Indian diaspora. Terms such as ‘Nepali-origin’; ‘India-born’; ‘Indian nationals’; ‘Nepali Indian’; ‘Indian origin’; etc. have been used to refer to a certain community, but these terms are vaguely defined. For instance, the term ‘India-born’ population used in the census reports are meant to refer to those whoever
were born in India but for various reasons have been living in Nepal since the beginning of the census process. However, this definition could be problematic because this would also include any one who is born in India but is a Nepali national. Besides, the term 'Nepali-origin' is narrowly defined to mean people who speak Nepali language. Such a definition would exclude many Nepali nationals whose mother tongue is not Nepali or any of the Hill languages. There is also the problem of nationality, because the definition seems to include Indian citizens whose mother tongue is Nepali like those from Sikkim and Darjeeling in West Bengal, the two states of India. There is also the problem of defining those Nepali-speaking people who had lived in India and have returned to Nepal. Can they be referred to as persons of 'Indian origin' or of 'Nepali origin'? In the absence of any definitive conclusion of the categories of population and because of the difficulty in identifying the different categories, the present study explores these categories in relation to their respective identities.

The term 'Nepalese of Indian origin' on the title of the study would give an impression that the study is fundamentally misleading. However, this has been inserted to show the traditional perception of people in Nepal that seems to persist even today. As one would find, in the course of the study, this has been reconsidered. Because of the difficulties in distinguishing the Indian diasporas and the 'border people' (Tarai inhabitants) as they are treated to be one in many literature, this study has used the term 'Indo-Nepalese' to refer to both the
categories i.e. the Indian diaspora and the Madhesis or the Tarai inhabitants. However, wherever possible, the study distinguishes the two groups.

Object of the Study
The main objective of this study is to understand the various aspects of the Indian diaspora in Nepal. In doing so, the study aims to explore the socio-economic and political dynamics of the Indian diaspora in relation with the Nepali state. The second objective is to examine their relation with India and Indians. The third objective of this study is to explore the socio-economic dynamics within the Indo-Nepalese and its impact on Nepal.

The present study also aims to use an alternative approach to examine the socio-political dimensions of the Indo-Nepalese. Hence, in this attempt, the study has employed disporic discourse to understand the Indo-Nepalese of Nepal.

Methodology
Historical and analytical methods have been employed to examine the data collected. Primary sources include a field study, government documents and reports; secondary sources were also used to collect data through books, articles and web sources. The field study was carried out in Kathmandu, Birjung and Janakpur in May/June 2005. The total number of persons interviewed was 150 with 70 in Kathmandu and 40 each from Birjung and Janakpur. The respondents consist of mostly educated section of the society. In terms of profession, they
include political leaders, academicians, media persons, businessmen, and students. The interviews were carried out in a random and unstructured manner.

**Limitations of this Study**

This study has been rendered inadequate by so many factors. Most important of them has been the lack of knowledge of the local languages. Most of the pamphlets and documents of political parties, social organisations, and student unions could not be utilized for the study because they were written in local languages. Also, many other primary sources could not be used because of the language barrier. The second limitation of the study was that the fieldwork was limited to only a few places and a small section of the society.

The benefit of interacting with a cross section of the society during the field study could not be materialized mainly because of the political situations in Nepal after the king’s takeover of February 2005.

**Framework of the Study**

This study has six chapters. The first chapter focuses on the definition of concepts and terms relevant for the study. The concept of ‘diaspora’ is analysed to understand it in the context of the study. Besides, the term ‘Indian diaspora’, ‘Indian’, and ‘Madhesi’ have been examined. The chapter also provides a brief review of migration of ‘People of Indian Origin’ to other South Asian countries.

The second chapter examines the nature and pattern of migration from India to Nepal from a historical perspective. This chapter discusses the migration under
three periods. Migration from contemporary India to present Nepal before the
unification' of modern Nepal state; the period during the rule of the Shahs and the
Ranas in Nepal; and migration after 1950. This chapter also analyses the push and
pull factors of migration.

The third chapter focuses on the dynamics of socio-economic changes
brought about by the Indo-Nepalese population in Nepal. This chapter examines
the implications of the Indo-Nepalese on the various sectors in Nepal and provides
the emerging socio-economic trends in the Tarai.

The fourth chapter deals with the position of the Indo-Nepalese in Nepal’s
politics. In the first section of the chapter, the areas of constitutional
‘discriminations’ against the Indo-Nepalese have been identified. The second
section explores the causes and factors of discriminations. The third section
analyses some of the major issues and challenges of the Indo-Nepalese.

The fifth chapter deals with the India’s relations with the Indo-Nepalese in
Nepal. This chapter explores the changes of India’s policy towards the Indo-
Nepalese since the 1950s through the current period.

The sixth chapter provides a summary of the arguments of this study.