

**THE WAY OF THE GURKHA: AN INVESTIGATION INTO
THE GURKHAS' POSITION IN THE BRITISH ARMY**

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Doctor of Philosophy

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CONTENTS

The thesis contains:

Documentary: *The Way of the Gurkha*

Script/Director/Presenter/Editor/Cinematographer: Mulibir Rai

Cast: Mulibir Rai, Karan Rai, Sarbada Rai, Deshu Rai, Shanta Maya Limbu, Kesharbahadur Rai, Yamkumar Rai, Dipendra Rai, Rastrakumar Rai, Bambahadur Thapa, Tiloksing Rai, Lt Col JNB Birch, Maj R Anderson, Gajendra K.C, Sophy Rai, Chandra Subba Gurung, Lt Col (retired) J. P. Cross, Major (retired) Tikendradal Dewan, Gyanraj Rai, Padam Gurung, D.B. Rai, Recruit intake 2012.

Genre: Documentary

Run time: 1:33:26

Medium: High definition

Synopsis – The documentary is divided into two parts. In the first part, the researcher, in 2012 returned to his village of Chautara in Eastern Nepal where he was born, raised and educated for the first time in 13 years. He found many changes in the village - mainly in transport and information technology, but no improvement in the standard of English teaching which nowadays, unlike in the past, is one of the necessities required for joining the British Army. Hence, the hillboys pay a significant amount of money to the training academies in the cities to improve their English. In the end, only a few out of thousands of candidates achieve success. They fly to the UK and receive nine months training at Catterick Garrison Training Centre before joining their respective regiments as fully-fledged Gurkha soldiers.

The second part primarily deals with the “campaign for justice for the Gurkhas” and the implications of a new immigration policy for Gurkhas¹ that allows the Gurkhas to stay in the UK after four years of service in the British Army. The documentary concludes with singing and dancing by the Gurkha veterans. The song tells the story of how Gurkhas fought the Germans in Monte Cassino in World War Two.



Still from The Way of the Gurkha - The researcher (right) on the way back to his village

¹ New immigration policy is laid down in Appendix of Immigration rules for Armed Forces. Available online: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-armed-forces>

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to:

My parents Nangchhi Rai and Maya Lachchhi Rai

and

My principal supervisor, the late Mick Kennedy

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My gratitude goes to my brothers Chakramani, Keshar and sisters-in-law who always inspired me to achieve the highest possible level of education. I am profoundly obliged to my wife Tika and daughter Smreeti, I could not imagine that this thesis would have been completed without their constant backing.

Abstract

This thesis attempts to contribute to the growing literature on the Gurkhas' service in the British Army for over two centuries, considering the fundamental changes in the Gurkhas' Terms and Condition of Service (GTCOS) which came about as a result of the Gurkha Justice Campaign. As a Gurkha filmmaker, my practice-based research project offers a detailed insight into Gurkhas' historical and contemporary situation and shows the life of a Gurkha from a position of embodied empirical knowledge. It uses my trajectory from recruitment as a hillboy through active service towards retirement, as a narrative line through *The Way of the Gurkha* feature documentary.

The Gurkhas who were historically subjected to the Orientalist gaze of colonial humanist anthropology, continue to remain the subject of discourse. From such a standpoint, the academic discourse on the problem of the Gurkhas' position, emerging from without appears skewed and stifled by the disciplinary contours of traditional methods of social enquiry. Therefore, this thesis provides an alternative way to theorise the whole process of how and why the Nepalese hillmen join the British Army and what their hierarchical position within it is.

The PhD builds on the context of Gramsci's concepts of *subaltern* (dominated by an elite group both in power and knowledge), Said's *Orientalism* "other-opposite to the West" (1978: 47) and Foucault's examination of power relations in *Discipline and Punish*, to address the enquiry about the Gurkhas' position which has long been debated without any scholarly conclusion.

The outcome of the study is that the Gurkhas' service in the British Army has highlighted a shift in their socio-economic condition and, whereas this has helped maintain relations between Nepal and the United Kingdom, economic benefits have come at a price - of not only physical sacrifice, but emotional suffering, and cultural and social separation. Above all, the study finds that the Gurkhas' position has always been subaltern in the British Army despite the historical record of glorious military service and unparalleled loyalty.

Introduction

In 1993, when I was selected for the British Army after a gruelling three-week selection process, I felt I was the luckiest person on the planet. As I boarded the Boeing 767 at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu for Hong Kong, I felt as if I was embarking on a journey to the moon. The excitement that I showed my fellow recruits when seeing the skyscrapers through the window just before landing at Kai Tak Airport in Hong Kong was rather dramatic for those who were born in Hong Kong when their fathers served in the British Army and had travelled on aeroplanes. When my first day of training began in full uniform at the training depot, I felt my dream had come true, and it was not only for me but for all of us.

Since the Gurkhas' first enlistment into the British Army in 1815, they have been serving the British crown with unswerving loyalty and courage. However, in recent times, the "Justice for Gurkhas" campaign has drawn the attention of global observers, thereby bringing the Gurkhas' issues into both political and academic discourse. With this, an obvious question has arisen: despite being citizens of a sovereign nation why do they sacrifice their lives for their erstwhile enemy²? Is it a political obligation? Or are there cultural, historic or religious factors - perhaps the need to support family - which underlie the Gurkhas' unswerving service to the British Crown? And, more importantly - how does the British MoD (Ministry of Defence) recognise the Gurkhas for their continuous loyalty to the service? These questions do not and will not have ready-made answers nor can they be addressed by someone who is not in the right position to set up an academic inquiry for it is a research project with clear objectives, supported by sufficiently strong theoretical and practical frameworks, to make it a challenging and achievable target. Having completed a masters in filmmaking at Kingston University on a part-time basis (2007-9), I have had the experience of two years' controlled growth as a film maker

² The Anglo-Nepalese war 1814-1816

supported by a team of tutors. With these credentials, I was prepared to develop this into a doctoral project with the support of members of staff.

As a filmmaker and serving Gurkha soldier in the British Army, the best way of undertaking the project was through the methodology of filmmaking practice. In the course of collecting footage, I travelled with a lightweight tripod and a digital high definition camera provided by Kingston University from village to village, east to west filming the landscape, people at work, in training, or on business, operating the camera by myself and sometimes seeking assistance from bystanders. I visited different locations in the UK including the British Museum in London, the Gurkha Museum in Winchester as well as Monte Cassino and Sicily in Italy where Gurkhas fought in WW2. Hence, I have completed the documentary *The Way of the Gurkha* over a five-year period whilst also conducting research on the theoretical aspects of both documentary making and the Gurkhas' service in the British Army before spending the rest of the time writing up the thesis.

During the research I found most of the academic research focused on the history of the Gurkhas and their recruitment into the colonial army while other research spread across the culture, ethnicity, labour market, loyalty and immigration. For example, *Marketing the Gurkhas Security* (Chisholm, 2014), *Cultural History of the Gurkhas* (Des Chene, 1991), *Nepalese Gurkhas and their battle for equal rights* (Kochhar-George, 2010), *Martialing the Raj: The Indian Army and Colonial Governmentality* (Rand, 2004), *British Gurkha Recruitment: A Historical Perspective* (Rathaur, 2001), *The Gurkha connection: A History of the Gurkha Recruitment in the British Indian Army* (Onta, 1997), *Rethinking Gurkha Identity: Outside the Imperium of Discourse, Hegemony and History* (Golay, 2006), *Ethnic Soldier: State Security in Divided Societies* (Enloe, 1980), *Brown Warrior of the Raj, Recruitment and the Mechanics of the Command in the Sepoy Army 1859 – 1913* (Roy, 2008), *Race and Recruitment in the Indian Army* (Roy, 2013) and *"Martial Races": Ethnicity and Security in Colonial India, 1858–1939* (Omissi, 1991). None of the scholars seem to have examined the Gurkhas' historic and contemporary position in the British Army from the Gurkhas' perspective at least. Among these scholars Caplan appears to have investigated the Gurkhas from the oriental perspective which will be discussed in detail in the literature review. To that end, I am in the providential position to

investigate the Gurkhas' "true virtue", their position within the institution of the British Ministry of Defence drawing on a historical and autobiographical approach which seeks to answer the following research questions, which have been divided into two categories:

Central research question

1. What is the hierarchical position and historic role occupied by the Gurkha regiment within the British Army? How has periodic military reform acted to rebalance the relationship with the Gurkha regiment and how is the contemporary relationship viewed by the British Ministry of Defence?

Specific research questions

2. Is there a disjuncture between the values that underpin British military training and the cultural values of Gurkha families whose members submit to the disciplines of the army?
3. Can an informed programme of documentary film making reveal the complexities of the relationship between Gurkhas and the British people?
4. Can a satisfactory synthesis be found between folk memory and emotional account, academic analysis and technology in order to provide a meaningful archival document of the Gurkha experience?

Chapter breakdown

Chapter 1 – What is a Gurkha (background and history): The primary aim of this chapter is to introduce the historical and geographical background of the Gurkhas and highlight the inception of the Gurkha regiments following the Anglo-Nepalese war from 1814-16. It will also underline the history of recruiting and service covering the period from 1815 to the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 and its significance. This introductory analysis clarifies why the erstwhile enemy became trustworthy soldiers of the British Empire. In the meantime, this chapter offers a detailed analysis of hillboy virtue, loyalty and courage in particular, through my personal experience as well as the theoretical framework which Bourdieu's habitus provides. And finally, Gurkha families' cultural values will be discussed, thereby answering the specific research question 2 whether there is a disjuncture between the two values – 1) The value that underpins the British military training and 2) Gurkha families' value.

Chapter 2 – Literature review. In this chapter I review the key concepts that have been discussed in the studies of the Gurkhas, especially *Warrior Gentlemen* by Lionel Caplan which is the only known academic work in English and *The Legend of the Gurkhas* by G.L. Rai Zimmdar, (an Indian officer of Nepali origin) based on research on the Gurkhas. Academic writing in the Nepali language, chiefly *Gorkha Bharti, Katha Byatha ra Andolan* (which literally translates as 'recruitment, stories and campaign') by Dr Surendra KC and other individual biographies such as *Gurkha* by David Bolt and *Gurkhas at War* by J. P. Cross have also been considered in order to investigate The Way of the Gurkha.

This chapter also focuses on the theoretical aspects of the literature which provide the framework for my main argument on the Gurkhas' position in the British Army. Thus, Edward Said's Orientalism and Antonio Gramsci's concept of subaltern as well as other theories and literature related to martial race, such as *Brown Warrior of the Raj* (Roy, 2008), *Martial Races and Imperial Subjects: Violence and Governance in Colonial India, 1857 -1914* (Rand, 2006), *Sepoy and the Rank and Martial Races: Ethnicity and Security in Colonial India* (Omissi, 1998 and 1991) and *The making of Gurkhas as 'martial Race' in colonial India* (Gurung, 2014) have also been thoroughly examined. This chapter also conducts an academic analysis of why

Gurkhas choose to join a foreign military, and the "push-pull" strategy has been extensively discussed.

Since the thesis is coupled with a feature-length documentary as part of the research, I have also reviewed some previous documentaries, particularly *Who Wants to be a Gurkha?* (2012) by Kesang Tseten.

Chapter 3 – Methodology: The methodology “documentary filmmaking” is a completely new approach, particularly for research on the Gurkhas. Therefore, this chapter clarifies why this methodology is chosen and how it works for the research. In this chapter, I argue that audiovisual form is the universal language understood by those from all walks of life, hence it is one of the most appropriate methodologies to convey the message across socially, culturally, ethnographically, linguistically diverse societies.

This chapter also elucidates how Bill Nichols’ six documentary modes have been applied in the making of *The Way of the Gurkha* and how Michael de Certeau's tactics in *the practice of everyday life* provide theoretical foundations to overcome the challenge of conducting research while serving in the army. This chapter combines both textual and methodological analysis on both the subject of the research (the Gurkhas) and the methodology (documentary) ultimately answering the Specific Research question 3.

Chapter 4 – Analysis of documentary - *The Way of the Gurkha*: This chapter not only represents the “data analysis” as in conventional PhD research, but also provides concrete evidence to demonstrate that the researcher, as a Gurkha filmmaker and an academic, has presented academic archived material as a resource for potential scholars of the (the Gurkhas) subject in the future.

A large section of this chapter comprises a study of both the historical and contemporary relationships between the British and Gurkhas, and the British administrative and professional perspective towards the Gurkhas, before determining the Gurkha’s hierarchical position in the British Army which is the main question of the research. Michael Foucault’s “correct training of discipline” has been applied to examine how the Gurkhas’ service in the British Army continued for over two centuries. This chapter also deals with Specific Research Question 4 in which

apocryphal statements regarding Gurkhas have been investigated thoroughly, employing largely the work of Campbell (1993) as well as other writing on mythology, such as Macculloch's (1949) and Lanford's (1980). The chapter elucidates the folk memories and emotional side of the Gurkhas, which also make a significant contribution to their continuation of service in the British Army.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions: In this chapter I summarise and discuss the outcomes of my research and make recommendations for future researchers considering that this research has some limitations.

Chapter 1: WHAT IS A GURKHA?

1.1 Introduction

The word 'Gurkha' generally refers to a Nepali man serving in or retired from the British Army; typically referred to as a 'serving Gurkha' or a 'retired Gurkha'. It is the corrupted version of the word 'Gorkhali'³. During the Anglo-Nepal War (1814-1816), the British officers were so impressed by the warrior instinct of their adversaries, the Nepalese soldiers who effectively resisted the empire's army that "consisted of 42,000 (30,000 regular troops and 12,000 Indian auxiliaries) men with all latest weapons, honed by modern system of training and above all, commanded by veteran generals as opposed to merely 16,000 Nepalese armed forces with far inferior and crude weapons, outdated and primitive system of training, comprising women and minors" (Tiwary 2009: 802; KC 2005: 20-21). Only on the third attempt, with a huge loss of men from both sides, the British campaign was finally successful in 1816. A peace deal, famously called the *Sugauli Treaty* signed between Nepal and the East Indian Company ended the conflict but also provided the right to the British Empire to recruit soldiers from Nepal including those who were already in captivity of the colonial army. The fighting qualities of the Gurkhas which for many decades contributed to the success of the many British expansionary campaigns worldwide and furthered its politico-diplomatic and military objectives are now recorded in the annals of British military history. Over the last two centuries, Gurkhas fought more battles for the British than they did for themselves, both on the Indian sub-continent and in the world at large, subsequently earning 13 Victoria Crosses, the highest award for acts of bravery in the British honour system during World War I and II.

Gurkhas are principally recruited from the hill people of Nepal, so-called 'hillboys', predominately from four ethnic groups, the Gurungs and Magars from the mid-west Nepal and the Rais and Limbus from the east, whom the recruiting handbook described as "the beau ideal" of what a Gurkha should be (Cowan 2012: 1).

³ See detailed discussion under 'etymology' topic

However, in order to keep pace with modern technology and subsequent changes in military strategy and tactics, more educated candidates are required in the British army. Therefore, uneducated or poorly educated hillboys in the British Army are gradually decreasing in recent years.

Unlike the Commonwealth soldiers and other colonial armies who can join any corps or regiments in the British Army after basic infantry training, Gurkhas have their own brigade, the Brigade of Gurkhas which operates as an integral part of the Army serving in a variety of roles, both as infantryman in the infantry regiment and tradesman specialists such as engineers, logisticians and signals in the corps units.

Gurkhas served a minimum of 15 years in the British Army until the terms and conditions were reviewed in 2005. The new Gurkhas' Terms and Conditions of Service (GTACOS) offered Gurkhas a full 22 years of service like their British counterparts, and the practice of compulsory discharge in Nepal was also discontinued. Hence, Gurkhas could apply for an Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK straight after their retirement from service should they choose to do so.

Back in the Gurkhas' homeland, they are famous as 'Lahure' which is an adjective of "Lahor". The term came to exist in the early nineteenth century as the Nepalese would go to Lahor, a city of current-day Pakistan as fighting soldiers of Ranjit Sing or for other reasons. The tradition of going to Lahor was established after the Gorkhali suffered a defeat with Ranjit Sing's army in the Kashmir conflict in 1809, long before the English raised their first Gurkha Battalion in 1815. The term 'Gurkha/Goorkhas' would never have come to being had the British not employed the Nepalese hillmen in their imperial service. Therefore, the term 'Gurkha' has been a prerogative to the British whilst 'Gorkhalis' in the Indian Army were still spelt 'Gorkhas' or 'Goorkhas'. However, in all cases the general image of the 'Gurkha/Goorkha' would be a man with an olive complexion, almond eyes, high cheekbones, thick-set and stocky build, in military uniform adorned with a Khukuri⁴ of whom "the Victorians identified as a 'martial race'" (the term 'martial race' will be scholarly analysed in the Literature

⁴ A Nepalese knife with inwardly curved blade. Traditionally it was used both as a weapon and as a tool for day-to-day use.

Review), perceiving in them particularly masculine qualities of toughness” (BBC News, 2010; Tucci 1985: 7). Kaushik Roy similarly describes further a “genuine Goorkha” as:

...high cheek bones, broad Tartar features, small elongated eyes, and the absence of whisker or moustache, with the exception of a few straggling hairs on the upper lip. As a race, they are considerably below the average height of the natives of Hindustan, broad-chested bull-necked, with muscle of the thigh and leg so greatly developed as in some instances to appear unnatural (Shakespear 1912: 29 cited in Roy 2013: 1317).

The changes in the Gurkhas’ recruiting policy, terms and conditions of service and the immigration rules mean that the conventional way of recognizing the Gurkhas could soon be irrelevant. However, the name ‘Gurkha’ remains for it has widely been used as a brand for various businesses and products such as ‘Gurkha beer’ and ‘Gurkha cigarettes’. Particularly in the UK, businesses such as restaurants and grocery shops owned by all sections of the Nepalese community have commonly been named as “Gurkha restaurants” and “Gurkha Cash and Carry” as is the fashion. Therefore, the word ‘Gurkha’ has become a common identification among Nepalese nationals, particularly those living abroad.



Figure 1.1. One of the restaurants in Colchester, UK named Gurkha Restaurant

1.2 Etymology of the word 'Gurkha'

The etymology of the word "Gurkha" dates back as far as the 8th century when a warrior, Saint Guru Baba Gorakhanath⁵, bestowed a *Khukuri* upon to one of his disciples, Prince Bappa Rawal (713AD- 753AD) of Rajasthan to fight off the Muslims who were invading Afghanistan (which at that time was a Hindu/Buddhist nation). "The Guru told Bappa that he and his people would henceforward be known as Gorkhas, the disciples of the Guru, and their bravery would become world renowned" (Rai 2009: 8). Bappa Rawal then liberated Afghanistan - originally named Gandhara, from which the present-day Kandahar derives its name. Over time, Bappa Rawal's descendants' settlement expanded further east. Wherever they settled they ruled the territory, be that through conquest or subterfuge.

Most writers, non-Nepalese ones in particular, including Professor Lionel Caplan, state that 'Gurkha' originated in a small territory called 'Gorkha' situated in the hills west of the Kathmandu valley. However, according to KC, its story begins from another small state called Ligligkot which was ruled by the Ghales (a sub-caste of Magar). They would conduct a race every year to select their king. In 1616, the race was won by Drabya Shaha and he became the King of Ligligkot. The king later conquered Gorkha in 1616 and declared himself as the King of Gorkha. He then subjugated Siranchok and Ajayagad and became the founder of the Shah dynasty which ruled the country for a further 400 years (KC 2005: 11). The regnant established a temple in honour of their patron Saint Guru Gorakhnath near the palace, where hundreds of people worship every day.

Although the origin of the word 'Gurkha' dates back to the 8th century its established name derives from the Gorkha hill king, Prithvi Narayan Shah whose army were called Gorkhali and fought the British in the Anglo-Nepalese war from 1814-1816. After enlisting the Gorkhalis in the company's army, the British began to spell Gorkhali as 'Goorkha'. Further modification of the word to 'Gurkha' took place after

⁵ Gorakhnath is a combination of two Sanskrit words. Gorakh + nath=cow protector + god. Gorakhanath was believed to be the cow protector in the 8th century who was later deified as a symbol of power.

the partition in 1947. Hence, the evidence suggests that “the term ‘Gurkha’, used to refer to soldiers from Nepal, was more a British construction than a reflection of clear ethnic division within Nepal.” (Street 2004: 175). Robert Mathew also notes that the ‘Gurkha’ identity originated as a product of the ethnographic accounts and memoirs of the British officers who led them, rather than as a self-created label (Caplan 1995: 10-11; Streets 2004: 9, 78-80, cf. Vansittart 1915, Roy 2013 cited in Mathew 2015: 63-4). Jon Pemble however, argues that “the model soldiers whom the British called Gurkhas were neither a British invention nor a British discovery. The British merely gave them the name by which they became best known” (Pemble 2009: 374). I agree that the Gurkhas were not an imperial creation for one’s quality cannot be created nor can it be modified, however, the concept of “Gurkha” that lives in military history is certainly an imperial creation.

1.3 History of Nepal as a Developing Country

Nepal is a land-locked country located between two super powers and large, emerging economies - India and China - who have a per capita income of \$9,259 and \$2,103 respectively (IMF 2015)⁶. According to the recent economic survey of the government of Nepal (2016), Nepal’s total population is 10 million with a per capita income of \$752. 23.8 percent of the population live below the poverty line. Agriculture is the major driver of the economy, contributing 32.3 percent of GDP and employing 53.2 percent of the workforce. In 1996, the per capita income of the mid-western and far-western districts was more than 75 per cent lower than that in Kathmandu. In the late 1990s, landlessness was estimated to include one million out of six million agricultural labourers (Bray et al. 2003: 117 cited in Wennmann 2011: 45). With the ending of the people’s war (1996 – 2006), its economy has grown steadily every year reaching a per capita income of U.S.\$876.935 in 2017 from U.S. \$609.535 in 2010⁷, however this is still nowhere near enough to be self-dependent.

⁶ Source (International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook, April 2015) quoted in statisticstimes.com, accessed on 11 February 2018)

⁷ <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/nepal/gdp-per-capita>

Therefore, a large number of Nepalis have migrated to other countries in search of economic opportunities and remittances constituted 31.3 percent of GDP⁸.

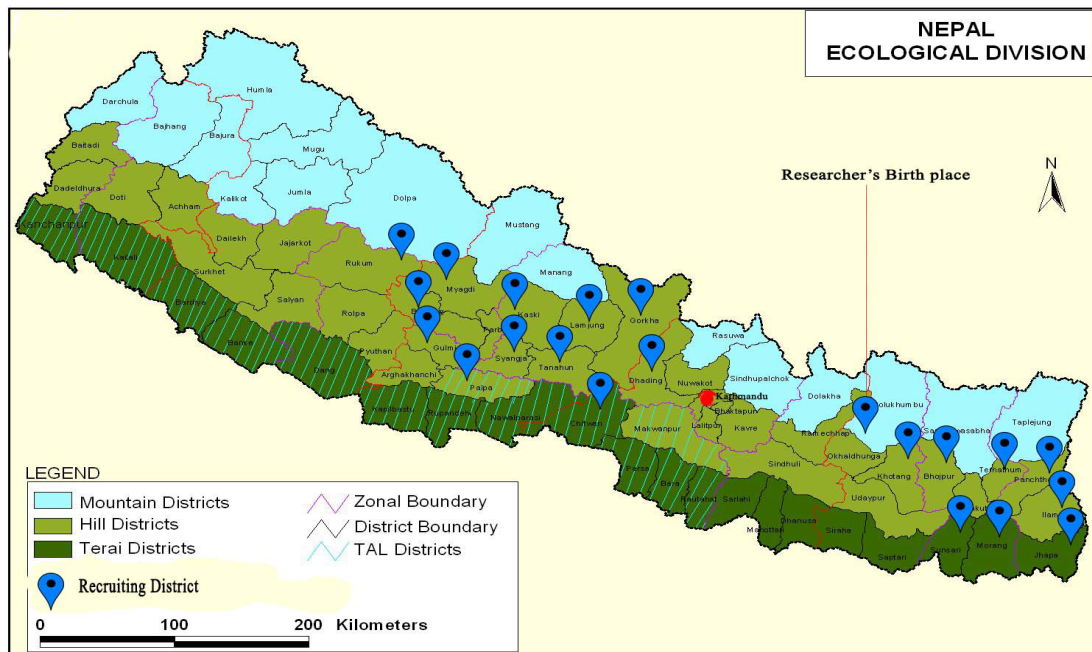


Figure 1.2. *Recruits are drawn mainly from the hill districts*

Nepal, a trapezoidal shaped region with an area of 147,181km², has been divided into three physiographic areas: Mountain, Hill and Terai (Plain). The mountain region connects to Tibet and the terai links to India, and subsequently those areas have significant cultural and economic influence from their bordering countries. However, the hill area in the middle is separated from the mountain and terai by having its own history of predominantly martial discipline which was one of the main sources of the colonial army following the Anglo Nepal War from 1814 – 1816.

1.4 History of Recruiting and Service (1815 – 1857)

The memoir of Ensign John Shipp, the British Army officer of the Bengal Army who recorded his impressions of the Gorkhali Army at the battle of Makwanpur during the Anglo Nepal war in 1815 is one of the most repeatedly mentioned war memoirs:

⁸ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/29/remittances-from-abroad-are-major-economic-assets-for-some-developing-countries/>

The enemy maintained their ground, and fought manfully. I hate a runaway foe; you have not credit for beating them. Those we were now dealing with were no flinchers; but on the contrary, I never saw more steadiness or bravery exhibited by any set of men in my life. Run they would not, and of death they seemed to have no fear, though their comrades were falling thick around them, for we were so near that every shot told (Ship 1829/2: 102 cited in Caplan 1995:174).

These were exactly the sort of men that the British were looking for. The performance of the Gorkhali Army demonstrates that the Anglo Nepal war (1814-16) left a formidable impression on the British officers that the Gorkhali armies were “exceptional in courage and devotion, resplendent in cheerfulness” (Cross 2002: 14). Smart as the British were, they instantly figured out that their adversaries could easily be persuaded over to the British side, for they had already studied the discipline of those who were in captivity. John Parker also agrees that “the Gurkhas were infinitely more trustworthy, loyal and – above all – obedient than Sepoys, the native troops”, further suggesting that:

It was not entirely due to British admiration of the Gurkhas’ military prowess that prompted their recruitment by the East India Company either. The battalions of good indigenous soldiers experienced in hill warfare saved British soldiers from bloody and vicious battles – and they were much cheaper (Parker 1999: 42).

As far as the initial formation of the Gurkha regiment is concerned, there are different statements from different writers in regards to the first Gurkha battalion. According to Lepcha (2007: 28), Lieutenant (later General) Frederick Young who was captured by the Gurkha during the Anglo-Nepal war and released afterwards, asked permission to enlist the Gurkhas prisoners of war into the Company’s army which was subsequently granted. He then “raised the famous ‘Sirmoor Battalion’ on 24 April 1815 and led his Goorkhas for the next 28 years” (KC 2005: 60), whereas, Sir Briyant (1971: 2) and Gould (1999: 285) suggest, after having been impressed by the fighting and other qualities of the Gurkhas, they immediately raised four⁹ battalions in the service of “John Company”.

⁹ Subedi (2012: 40) argues three

Gyan Mani suggests that both General Ochterlony and Lieutenant Young were staunch supporters of raising the Gurkha battalion in the Indian Army. Young had commanded the first Gurkha battalion on approval from the General. However, most writers including Bolt (1967: 59), suggest that General Ochterlony who had admitted following the Anglo-Nepal war that “the Company’s Sepoy could not be brought to match the Gurkhas” proposed to raise a separate Gurkha Battalion with the then-Governor General of Bangal, Lord Moira. Following the approval from Lord Moira, General Ochterlony formed the first and second Nasiri Battalion and Sirmoor Battalion on 24 Apr 1815. KC (2005: 59) suggests that following the permission granted by the ‘Chief of the Director’¹⁰ to raise the Gurkha Battalion *Kaji*¹¹, Amarsing Thapa signed a joint agreement letter with the British General. The fifth column of the letter clearly states that:

Except for the personnel employed for the protection of *Kaji* Amarsing Thapa and *Kaji* Ranajor Sing Thapa all soldiers can join the English Army if they wish to do so. Those who do not wish to join the English Army will still continue receiving the allowance from the Company until a proper treaty is signed by two nation states (ibid: 60).

Even after the departure of Bhim Sen Thapa, the British do not seem to have taken the hillmen as much as they needed for two reasons: firstly, Nepal did not want its men to join the East India Company Army for it needed the army more than ever for its defence from the potential threat from Tibet as well as the East India Company itself. Secondly, there was no definite arrangement made for continuation of the Gurkha recruitment from the outset until Jung Bahadur Rana seized power in 1846. Therefore, “British military authorities had to adopt indirect means, sometime smuggling of Gurkha recruits” (Rathaur 2001: 19, Street 2004: 77). British officers were not as confident of the Gurkhas’ loyalty, as of their warrior instinct until the Gurkhas were tested. Brian Houghton Hodgson who was a resident in Nepal acting as a British diplomat from 1829-1843, suggested if there was another Anglo-Nepalese war, Gurkhas could take the side of their own country (Levi 1975: 19; KC

¹⁰ He has not mention who the chief of the director was

¹¹ General equivalent

2005: 62) as “they were foreign troops after all” (BBC documentary, 1961 cited in *The Way of the Gurkha*). According to Vijay Tiwary, the Gurkhas were not used in active service along with the British Indian troops till 1825-26 when the British were engaged in the siege of Bhurtpore (Bharatpur, now in Rajasthan). Their duties were for local security rather than regular war (Tiwary 2009: 803). Hence, the Gurkhas’ loyalty remained unproven until the time arose.

1.5 The Sepoy Mutiny (1857): The Loyalty Test to The Gurkhas

Time soon came for the Gurkhas when the “nemesis overtook the Raj in 1857” (James 1997: 233) to testify their loyalty to the British officers. A “longstanding climate of dissatisfaction with colonial rule” (Rand and Wagner 2012: 240) expressed by the Indian Sepoys and general public alike in economic, religious, political, tangible and intangible terms culminated in mutiny. But its flashpoint was the issuing of new Enfield rifles to the Indian troops. These rifles required greased cartridges that had to be bitten to open prior to being used. A rumour soon circulated that the grease in question was either cow or pig, infuriating the Hindus and the Muslims respectively. The Sepoy refused to use the new rifles and within a short time the mutiny had gone from disobedience to a full revolt against British rule.

According to Heather Street, when the Bengal Army lay in pieces and the British desperately sought loyalty wherever they could find it, they found it in the Gurkha regiments, which remained entirely loyal to the British (Street 2004: 77-78). When the mutineers called on them as fellow Asians to join the mutiny against the British, they pretended to be in favour, but only so that they could gain access to rebel strongholds, then they shot the mutineers dead. Frank Jacob also notes that “the Gurkhas seemed to be the most loyal soldiers because there were almost no desertions and even when the rebellious forces pleaded for assistance, they remained loyal to their British officers” (Jacob 2015: 3).

During the siege of Delhi, the Gurkha soldiers of the Sirmoor Rifles won no fewer than 25 Indian Order of Merits (IOM) for their bravery. As a recognition of the bravery the Gurkhas displayed during the mutiny, the Goorkha battalion was awarded with the exceptional honour of a third colour in recognition of their outstanding service. Not only the Gurkha battalion under the East India Company took part in

suppressing the revolt but Jang Bahadur Rana, the Nepalese Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief personally reached Laknau with 9,000 troops to help the British.

The 1857 mutiny proved to be a watershed moment in what Gyan Mani Nepal terms a “loyalty-test-event” (Nepal, 2011) that not only changed the political landscape of India, transferring power from India to London, but also made a complete overhaul of the internal defence strategy including a review in the recruiting policy in India following which a careful selection of “loyal, masculine and dependable” soldiers became the first priority for the colonial administration. Until then, the recruiting policy, as Kausik Roy puts it, “accommodated and accentuated a sophisticated balancing structure by inducting various heterogeneous groups from a wide area” (Roy 2008: 36). The mutiny broke the traditional policy of “balancing structure” and quickly identified brave and loyal soldiers who took risks to save the Raj as a “martial race” and this will be drawn on in an approach to scholarly analysis in the next chapter (Literature Review).

The post-1857 political scenario changed when the British government assumed direct control over Indian affairs. The relations with Nepalese Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana did not go as well with the London administration as it used to. Rana made it difficult for British authorities to recruit the Nepalese hillmen by prohibiting them from leaving the country without permission of the government and by preventing those who had already left to return. According to Surnedra KC., Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana ordered the local village authorities to take punitive measure against the British agents who illegally entered Nepal to collect hillmen (KC 2005: 71). The British were thus left with no option but to conduct clandestine recruiting, as Tiwary (2009: 804) terms, “recruiting operation sub-rosa”. As a result, the expansion of the Gurkha regiments severely slowed down. Only three Gurkha regiments were added over the period from 1815 to 1877.

After the demise of Jung Bahadur Rana in 1877, his successor Ranodip eased some restrictions against the hillmen however not to the scale that the British wanted. Hence, ‘sub-rosa’ recruiting continued. The recruiting increased only after a so-called “policy of mutual concession” between Nepal and the British Government involving the British supply of arms to the Nepalese for its defence from the Tibetan threat,

and the Nepalese supply of men to the British who desperately needed Gurkhas to fight Russia. General Lord Frederick Roberts substantially expanded the Gurkha units adding second battalions to each of the five regiments thereafter.

Bir Shamsher who was reported to have said “the late Maharajas, Sir Jung Bahadur and Sir Ranodip Singh did not have the courage to supply recruits to the British Government” (Hussain, 1894 cited in Tiwary 2009: 806) rose to power, assassinating Ranodip Singh. This opened the flood gate to British recruiting. During 1886-92 a total number of 7662 recruits were supplied by Nepal to the British Army, mostly Magars, “one of the most prized tribes”.

Table 1.1. An upsurge of recruitment during the Rana period

Year	Prime Minister	Recruiting	Recruits per Battalion	Total Battalion
1815-1837	Bhimsen Thapa	-	-	3
1838 – 1846	8 different Prime Ministers ¹²	-	-	3
1847 – 1877	Janga Bahadur Rana	-	825	5
1878 – 1885	Ranodip Singh	166	825	5
1885 – 1892	Bir Shamsher	7,662	912	15

¹² Ranganath Paudyal (1837-38), Chautariya Pushkar Shah (1838-39), Rana Jang Pande (1839-40), Ranga Natha Paudyal (1840 -40, 2nd time), Fateh Jung Shah (1840-43), Mathabar Sing Thapa (1843-43), Fateh Jung Shah (1845-46, 2nd time)

Source: (KC 2005: 80)

Recruiting depots were also established in Darjeeling, Piliphit and Bahraich in order to facilitate the recruitment efforts. Lord Robert's visit to Kathmandu in 1892 brought the Anglo-Nepal relationship closer than ever before and it remained unhindered throughout the Rana dynasty. Particularly during the Premiership of Chandra Shamsheer Rana in the early twentieth century, the relationship reached its closest point from which, C. U. Aitchison wrote, there was "no looking back" (cited in Tiwary 2009: 808). Altogether seven recruiting centres were set up for collection, selection and ultimate dispatch of the Gurkhas to the Indian borders. Subsequently, the Gurkha Battalion swelled to 16. By 1908, The British Indian army had on its cadre ten regiments and 20 battalions.

During the First World War in 1914-1918, the number of the Gurkhas reached 55,000 out of 150,000 men in the Indian Army. In all, it is estimated that over 200,000 Nepalese fought the war. According to Rishikesh Shaha, the total strength of the Gurkhas Corps in the British Indian Army at the end of the war consisted of the 33 regiments with 42,500 men. Out of this only 18,542 men constituting 20 regiments were retained and the rest disbanded (Shaha 1990: 66 cited in Tiwary 2009: 809).

Gurkha recruitment slowed down after the First World War only to pick up pace in less than twenty years as the Second World War loomed in Europe by 1938. Prime Minister Juddha Shamsheer Rana did not delay in granting permission to the British government to use Gurkhas for overseas service. During the recruiting season of 1940, 1,500 Gurkhas were recruited, thereby raising ten more Gurkha regiments. During these years, the recruitment had been so heavy that almost all the able-bodied young men had left the country and the Nepalese Prime Minister, delighted by the magnitude of his success in supplying the recruits, wrote to the Indian Commander-in-Chief, A. P. Pavel:

Bent on putting up what help we can offer to our great friend and ally in time of need my sole endeavor has remained directed to see the demand of recruits to the Indian army in full. It is a matter of gratification that the endeavor has proved successful. For

a small hill country like ours, the supply of 65,000 recruits in the course of last three years is certainly a notable achievement¹³ (Rathaur 2001: 20).

By the middle of the Second World War, the Gurkhas serving with the British Indian army were equivalent to some 55 battalions comprising 44 infantry and parachute battalions, 6 training battalions and one garrison battalion (Mansergh and Moon 1979: 885 cited in Kansakar 2012: 97). The death toll of Gurkhas alone was estimated to be more than 10,000 men (Chant 1985: 101).

For the British, Ranas proved to be a “boon” in terms of manpower for the imperial war efforts. In return, Ranas received praise, honour and decorations from the British, and above all, the Ranas obtained a guarantee of Nepalese sovereignty from Britain. Prime Minister Chandra Shamsheer was probably the most decorated Prime Minister and received many British titles including GCB¹⁴, GCSI¹⁵, GCVO¹⁶, Honorary General (British Army) and Honorary Colonel (4th Gurkhas) in addition to the Doctor of Civil Laws, (DCL, *honoris causa*) awarded by the prestigious Oxford University (Lewis 2008: 26). But for Nepal, the entire Rana era from 1846-1951 is considered as the “age of darkness” in the nation’s history. They have been depicted as “notorious and despot ruler[s]” in the Nepalese school syllabuses, who kept the nation in the dark for 104 years keeping the Nepalese people from basic education as the Ranas considered education the “greatest threat” to their power. Their ulterior motive to send their own men for the British disposal was not only to please the British for personal and political gain but it was a pre-emptive measure against the potential development of anti-Rana sentiment in the country. The less capable men in the country the better for the Ranas.

Along with the ending of the European War, the Raj was also coming closer to its end in India. Hence, all the Gurkha battalions raised for war were disbanded. According to John Parker, most Gurkhas were made redundant without any pension

¹³ Letters from Maharaja Juddha to General A. P. Wavell, Commander-in-Chief of India, 25 February, 1943, Foreign Ministry of Nepal, File No. 17.

¹⁴ Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath

¹⁵ Grand Commander of the Order of the Star of India

¹⁶ Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order

and compensation. However, 10,400 Gurkhas were still in service. They had one more loyalty test to pass. Gurkhas had found themselves at a cross road as to whether to stay in India, next to their home country or follow the British who they wanted to be with but who were far off in Malaysia. Some Gurkhas even used this opportunity to express their vengeance on their officers which John Parker observes as the “darker aspects of their make-up”. Parker recalls:

...men who opted to serve in India sailed on *SS Ethiopia* and were in ugly mood. They carried Indian Congress banners and spat in the Colonel’s face when he went to see them off. They shouted pro-Indian and anti-British slogans and taunted those left behind. I recalled the colonel’s words of wisdom: a good Gurkha cannot be bettered but there is none worse than a bad one (Parker 1999: 175).

Keeping a few exceptions aside, the British did not want to abandon the good ones who served the empire with loyalty and courage. British officers skillfully mobilised the loyalty of the Gurkhas to lobby for their transfer and continued recruitment in the British Army (Rand 2011: 13). The Indian Army also wanted to keep the Gurkhas. The tension reached the limit, so much so that the British threatened to occupy Andaman and Nicobar if the Gurkhas were not released (KC 2005: 123). As a result, a tripartite agreement was signed between the British, the Indian and the Nepalese government in August 1947. This agreement confirmed that four of the Gurkha regiments would go to the British army and that the other six would remain part of the Indian army. It was also agreed that the Gurkha regiments should not be used against Nepal, other Gurkhas and Hindus or unarmed mobs. The eight battalions of the 2nd, 6th, 7th and 10th Gurkha Rifles under the British army, formed the new brigade of Gurkhas who left India for their new destination in Malaya at the beginning of 1948.

In summary, the aftermath of 1857 firmly established the Gurkhas as one of the most trustworthy soldiers in the colonial army in India. It was during this mutiny that Gurkhas solidified their loyal and brave status amongst British military soldiers—a status that is celebrated today in both the British and Indian militaries (Khalidi 2001-2002; Chisholm 2014: 11). The British authorities had no hassle in making what Charles Wood (the Secretary of State for India 1859 – 1866) termed “the territorial balancing” of the Gurkhas. The territorial balancing had to be adapted for the natives

to prevent the growth of wider feeling, which he considered to be the root cause of the mutiny (Roy 2008: 46).

One of the significant aspects that the British noticed of the Gurkhas was that these largely illiterate yeomen from the educationally-backward region of the subcontinent were not concerned with Indian politics. Bandana Rai suggests, “being in many ways as alien to the Indian plains as the British themselves, Gurkhas could safely be utilised against aggressive mobs or even, if need arose, against disaffected elements of the Indian Army itself” (Rai 2009: 23). They perhaps had no knowledge as to what had caused the mutiny nor had any interest in knowing it. They were just, as John Pemble describes: pastoral, adaptable mountain peasants, very tough but unaggressive (Pemble 2009: 373-374). Captain Vansittart appreciates and praises, as a soldier, the qualities of the Gurkha recruits, “Compared with the other Orientals, the Gurkhas are tough, enduring, faithful, honest, independent, have the courage of their opinion...they disdain the natives of India and fraternize with Europeans whom they admire for their superiority of knowledge, of force and courage and whom they endeavour to imitate” (Levi 1971: 9). It was noticed, for example, that although desertion was commonplace in the armies of Europe, and that mercenary forces like the French Foreign Legion suffered dramatically from it, “it was virtually unknown in Gurkha regiments” (Parker 1999: 57). Moreover, Gurkhas had “extraordinary martial qualities, temperament, and loyalty and selflessness and his supreme courage in battle” (Bolt 1967: 91) which are the primary qualities of the British Army Values and Standards.

1.6 Relevance of the British Army Values and Standards to Gurkhas Virtue Ethics in Habitus

1.6.1 Introduction

In *the British Army Values and Standards* which was formally launched in 2008, General Sir Richard Dannatt suggests, “The Values are about character and spirit: the Standards define our actions and behaviour: I expect everyone in the Army to abide by these Values and Standards” (Dannatt, 2008). In other words, Values are the moral principles, the intangible character and spirit that should guide and develop us into the sort of people we should be; whereas Standards are the authoritative

yardsticks that define how we behave and on which we judge and measure that behavior. They reflect, and are consistent with, the moral virtues and ethical principles that underpin any decent society (Values and Standards, 2008). In sustaining those values every soldier must strive to achieve and maintain the highest professional personal standards. There are certain standards designed to ensure that all behaviour are lawful and proportionate.

A soldier who has a legal right to use lethal force against the potential threats to the nation, can carry out his duty only if he is physically and mentally prepared. Therefore, the British Army identifies certain moral principles not only to understand fully in the wider context but to live by. Those principles are different from the values that one lives with in civil society. Killing another human being is wholly unethical if one is not bound to specific values and moral principles. Therefore, soldiers need to be educated in the values and standards through training, so that they can translate them into action until they are “instinctive”. To teach the values and standards which are also “a moral requirement” of the Army’s ethos and fighting power, the Ministry of Defence has put enormous efforts in the British Army. I suggest that the Gurkhas’ virtue of ethic, loyalty and courage are the hillboys’ natural quality developed as a direct result of the geographical remoteness, social environment and climatic conditions, as Kausik Roy suggests, “the cold climatic mountainous region generated better warriors” (Roy 2013: 1312). It is, now important to understand how cold climatic conditions and geographical remoteness contribute to generating a better warrior. This will be discussed in the next topic drawing on Bourdieu’s theory of habitus.

1.6.2 Analysis of Hillboy Virtue as It Can Be Demonstrated Within the Theoretical Framework of Habitus

While I agree with Kausik Roy that hillboys (those who live in the remote and mountainous areas) tend to have these qualities (virtues), I also attempt to examine how hillboys develop these virtues by drawing upon Bourdieu’s concept of habitus as it allows analysis of individual and social behaviours in detail over time.

The term “habitus” is derived from Latin and means “habitual or typical condition, state or appearance, particularly of the body” (Jenkins 1992: 74 cited in Ngarachu,

2014: 59). “Habitus” Paul Connolly suggests “can be applied to a wider context as an ‘analytical tool’ to understand human behaviour” (Connolly 1997: 71) or as Diane Reay puts it as “conceptual tool-box” (Reay 2004: 435). Bourdieu used habitus to explain how individual action is both constructing and constructed by the social structure and he defined it as “a system of durable and transposable dispositions... which generate organized practices and representations...” (Bourdieu 1990, 53-65). This explanation provides the key information to assimilate how social structure constructs hillboys’ disposition that ultimately develops to be the British Army Values and Standards.

As Connolly and Reay suggest, habitus is applied in the discourse of a range of disciplines which Rogers Brubaker (1985) called “too many hats” of the habitus concept (cited in Benzecry 2018: 5), such as preference for food, clothing, furniture, media, arts and cars. It also addresses the issue of non-conscious human behaviours such as talking and walking, so much so that sometimes, as Asimaki and Koustourakis argue, the concept of habitus provoked disagreements and discussions in the field of social science as it was used incorrectly by many scholars (Asimaki and Koustourakis 2014: 122). However, here, a novel effort has been made to trace the direct relationship of the Gurkhas’ virtue with habitus bringing my own experience and background into context as well as observing the Nepalese hill societies closely from a different dimension which, has somewhat, thus far been neglected by scholars.

The role of habitus in the understanding of the hillboys and their willingness to become the British Army is paramount. Gabriel Ignatow agrees that “the habitus is a robust theoretical approach to the interactions between social structures, culture, and the body” (Ignatow 2009: 101), which directly connects to my experience as a hillboy growing up in the village of Chautara, in a social structure that consisted of predominantly Lahures, teachers and traditional farmers. I grew up in a social structure where the Lahures lived in luxury while I struggled for subsistence. Not only that, they shared their experience of being abroad including at clubs, supermarkets, swimming pools and so on with great panache generating a tantalising glimpse of my own future. I witnessed the Lahures getting married to the village’s most beautiful girls; the girls too, were elated to marry them. In essence, Lahures have money,

prestige, popularity and respect which, in Bourdieu's terms are "capital". Through the concept of capital, Bourdieu attempts to explain the social status and power dynamics of human society which we shall discuss a little later. For now, more elucidation of habitus is important to understand the interrelation between the hillboys and the Lahures.

We briefly discuss two different trajectories that lead to hillboys' particular habitus- firstly, the geographical location which contributes to their physical strength then secondly social aspects which contributes to their psychological tendencies to become Gurkha soldiers (Lahure). The geographical trajectory guides us to an understanding of hillboys' biological physical structure and its mental associates such as- endurance for example and the social trajectory leads to an understanding of hillboys' psychological functioning - for example, desire. Due to the geographical structure and lack of transport in the hills, the hillboys often walk several kilometres every week, if not every day on the narrow paths. Hence, they unconsciously develop the habitus of taking risks and having endurance. According to Claudio E. Benzecry, research by Matt Desmond (2006, 2007) posits that the general habitus of what he calls the 'country boy' becomes the specific habitus of the firefighter, focusing mostly on how agents manage and perceive risk (Benzecry 2018: 23). As mentioned in *The Way of the Gurkha*: I walked two hours every day to and from my high school. I walked on the narrow path on the vertiginous slopes while collecting grass for cattle. Many hillboys endure the same predicaments in the villages. Hence their body copes with the situation. As a result, they have more endurance than the city boys. For example, when we underwent recruit training in Hong Kong in 1993, I had to help one of my *Numbaris* (sectionmates) with the weight of the military bergan that he carried by sharing some of the weight after four days of continuous walking. He had completed his high school education in Hong Kong when his father was an officer and joined the British Army from Pokhara. He had no experience of walking long distances on the narrow paths hence lacked the habitus to endurance and risk.

The second trajectory is the social environment which contributes to hillboys' psychological tendencies to become Lahure including behaviors and thought process they develop from childhood. McLennan terms this thought process "cognitive habitus" which is:

designed in order to facilitate the discussion of matters relating to the nature of cognitive skills, including their contexts of acquisition, course of development and conditions of exercise, in order that the contribution of socially developed intellectual capacities may be included within a general theory of inequality/differences (McLennan, 2003 cited in Nash 2005: 600).

The hillboys at home, at the market place, at school wherever they meet, especially British Army candidates, they talk about how they are preparing for the upcoming selection. Some even talk, act and dress like Lahures which Navarro interprets as habitus in which “the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them” (Wacquant 2005: 316 cited in Navarro 2006: 16).

Lizardo argues that the habitus can be closely linked to the psychological structuralism and accommodation of knowledge from the social environment. He suggests that the two kinds of cognitive structures proposed by Piaget (1970), *action schemas* and *logical schemas*, can be approximated to the habitus as a “structured” and “structuring” (i.e., generative) structure (Lizardo 2004: 386f; Ambrasat et al 2016: 5). Stan Houston puts it in other words as “‘structuring structure’ - a structure that structures the social world, and ‘structured structure’ - a structure structured by social world” (Houston 2002: 157). With this concept, in the hillboys context, hillboys become Lahure, come home on furlough and enjoy, and ultimately retire and live comparatively better lives. These scenarios are the structures (or Lahure culture) which structure a mass in a society which is a social world. And that social world (Lahure society) ultimately structures a Lahure culture. Therefore, whether Lahure culture structures the Lahure society or Lahure society structures a Lahure culture, either way, hillboys are the most vulnerable agents to be influenced. As a result, they psychologically develop tendencies to become Lahures.

For Bourdieu, practices are understood as “the result of an indefinite, unconscious, double relationship between habitus and the field” (Bourdieu 2003: 147 cited in Asimaki 2014: 123). In order to convey and summarize this relationship, Bourdieu constructed the following model:

$[(\text{habitus})(\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$. (Bourdieu, 1984: 101; cited in Reay 2004: 435)

The concept of capital in Bourdieu's theoretical model is wide-reaching, multiform and reveals the system of social relationships and dependences which are inherent in all the 'social universes'. Bourdieu, without underestimating the concept of 'economic capital', and the role this plays in social formation and relationships, extends the concept of capital by constructing other forms, such as cultural (knowledge and experience), social (loyalty and popularity) and symbolic capital (reputation and respect) (Chauvire and Fontaine 2003: 15; O'Brien and O'Fathaigh 2005 cited in Asimaki 2014: 123).

"Economic capital" for the Nepalese "is the most important capital as is at the root of all the other types of capital" (Bourdieu 1978: 54). This capital is directly convertible into money, and may be manifested in family income and wealth (Akerhielm, Berger, Hooker, & Wise, 1998; Ellwood & Kane, 2000; Orr, 2003; Paulsen & St. John, 2002 cited in Ra 2011: 18). The profession of the British Army is the most coveted amongst the hillboys merely because of its economic capital which not only provides a special position for Lahures in society but also financial and academic security of their children as they can afford private school for education. Therefore, economic capital plays the most fundamental role towards developing habitus in society.

The cultural capital covers broader fields of knowledge, skill, experience and education including posture and bearing, demeanour, accent, eating conventions, and aesthetic preferences (Ignatow 1995: 103). For example, for village boys' acting, dressing, talking and behaving like a Lahure is a cognitive process developed over a period through the social and cultural environment. It also clearly indicates that their position in the social order is among the martial races (mostly, Gurung, Magar, Rai and Limbu). We can also value the acting and talking like Lahure from another dimension than a mere martial class stratum such as money and power just like a posh English accent is associated with money, influence and perhaps power too (Algeo 2010: 183). However, here, I am not as content to associate Lahure with "power" in the context of administration and politics as I am with money and influence for two reasons: Firstly, they are detached from their country and society whilst serving in the British Army for a long time hence, they often do not understand the modus operandi of the administration and politics of the mainstream society of Nepal. So they hold a minimum or no power (in terms of politics) in society at least

until they retire and settle in the village for some time, and secondly, Lahure, over the period, have already developed a particular habitus of accepting the non-martial Nepalese as a ruling class who have more academic qualifications (academic capital so to speak), hence there is a gap between the two groups in society, these are administrative and political in particular.

Social capital is defined in Bourdieu's analysis as a 'network of permanent and fixed social relationships' of mutual recognition and mutual acquaintance, beneficial and productive for the one who has them and maintains them and which are linked to integration into a group (Bourdieu 1994: 92; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 95; Sobel, 2002 cited in Asimaki and Kaustourakis 2014: 124). Stan Houston truncates the definition of social capital as "a constitution of social ties" (Houston 2012: 158).

Superficially, social capital does not sound as important as cultural capital however, the wider social network one has, the more powerful the capital becomes. Lahure tradition is a prime example of social capital. The Lahures who joined the British Indian Army in the early days of recruiting had better lives than their fellow hillmen and they became "popular". They built relationships within their society and shared the experience of their lives - how they fought wars, what "loyalty" to commander and "cooperation and reciprocity" to fellow Gurkha on the battlefield meant and how much "comradery" mattered in need; all passed across the social network.

Symbolic capital is a culmination of the economic, cultural and social capital for this capital provides the foundation of one's symbolic position, reputation and respect for example. "Symbolic capital", Bourdieu argued "formed the foundation of social life and dictated one's position within the social order" (Gupta et al 2018: 25). And that includes reputation, honour, prestige, recognition and respect. Lahures accumulate the symbolic capital through achieving medals for bravery, promotion in the military rank order as well as their contribution in the village, for example, providing financial help in the education and health care sector in their village. While accumulating symbolic capital, Lahures take their distinctive position in society. According to Bourdieu, social capital transforms into symbolic capital based on mutual cognition and recognition. (Bourdieu, 1980; 1986; 1998a cited in Siisiäinen 2000: 16). In other words, symbolic capital does not function independently; it has to come via economic, cultural and social capital.

Another concept that Bourdieu propounded along with capital is “field”. In particular, the concept of field adds to the possibilities of Bourdieu's conceptual framework and gives habitus a dynamic quality:

The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways. On one side, it is a relation of conditioning: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of the field (or of a hierarchy of intersecting fields). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction: habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense or with value, in which it is worth investing one's energy (Wacquant 1989: 44 cited in Reay 2004: 435).

Fields for Bourdieu are the social and institutional grounds where the individual develops their habitus with the interplay of human action and social structure. Likewise, an individual's position and power vary according to the field they operate within. For example, a retired rifleman who serves in the village as a mayor is as powerful and prestigious as a serving Gurkha major in a battalion. In other words, a Gurkha major could be less popular than a rifleman in the village.

To summarise, the Lahures are the end product of four types of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) which play a significant role in the hillboys' practice of everyday life to develop particular a habitus in the martial race society including those qualities which the British Army categorises as Values and Standards.

1.6.3 Values and Standards of the British Army

British Army Values and Standards (2008) lists the values: courage, discipline, respect for others, integrity, and loyalty and standards: lawful, appropriate behaviour and professionalism. Based on these lists I examine some of the qualities which, I argue, Gurkhas possess as their virtues being hillboys, but before making the case, it is important to understand that virtues and values are reciprocal to each other. According to Adward Younkins “virtues should serve as a touchstone for achieving a firm's goals, values, and purpose” (Younkins 2012: 237). In other words, if values are objectives, virtues are the way to achieve those objectives. For example, integrity is a value, but one has to have virtues such as honesty, fair-mindedness, sincerity and candor to be a person of integrity.

Virtues are character traits or dispositions in a person that embody and express values that are judged desirable or admirable. A person's virtues define their ethical character. Virtues are values that have become intrinsic to the personal identity and way of life of a person. Whereas values are the ideals or standards that the individual uses to direct his behavior. Values are the standards one uses in making judgments about the importance of things in life as well as judgement of human behavior. This clarification of values and virtues helps to understand that how the hillboys develop certain virtues such as endurance, stoicism, geniality and companionship, generosity, compassion and loyalty to friends and family under the influence of capital (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic) which combined serve as the British Army Values and Standards.

1.6.4 Loyalty

According to Victoria Earl, loyalty, also based upon mutual respect and trust, is considered to be one of the highest military virtues. Loyalty is what binds soldiers together. It is this loyalty that enables sections, platoons and regiments to achieve extraordinary feats of courage, to overcome overwhelming adversity and to conquer seemingly indomitable foes, that is revered (Earl 2017: 10).

The British Army Values and Standards explains the importance and necessities of loyalty in the army, "The Nation, the army and the chain of command rely on the continuing allegiance, commitment and support of all who serve: that is, on their loyalty. Subordinates must be loyal to their leaders, their team, and their duty" (2008: 3). The best definition, so far, that has been found to relate to military discipline is "service loyalty" by Czepiel and Gilmore. They suggest, "Service loyalty is an attitude which develops under specific conditions and as a result of a particular psychological process" (Czepiel and Gilmore 1987: 91, cited in Zammit 2000: 46). This definition accurately applies to the Gurkhas and the British military as a whole. They fought the Anglo-Nepal battle to their last drop of blood despite knowing that they were outnumbered by their opposition and they knew that the weapons they had, mainly Khukuris and rudimentary guns, were of no use to fight the far superior weapons of the other side. Yet, they fought the battle for they were extremely loyal to their commander: Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa, a prudent, witty young man, who had

risen to power through the usual bloodshed and was a consummate epitome of patriotism.

In Gurkha parlance, a phrase normally circulates when an order lands from above, “CO le ta bhanyo” (The CO¹⁷ said, that is it). In other words, you must dispassionately discharge the order above and beyond the ethical question of right and wrong which Foucault defines, as a “disciplined soldier”, who “begins to obey whatever he is ordered to do; his obedience is prompt and blind; an appearance of indocility, the least delay would be a crime” (Cohen & Fermon 1996: 737). Malla (2009: 237) notes that when Gorkhali armies were taken into the British side in 1815, the Anglo-Nepal war was still afoot, so the armies of the 2nd Gurkhas were also included in a force that was to invade Nepal in 1816, but “luckily” the invasion did not take place.

Tony Gould (1999: 113), for instance, observes that the Sirmoor Battalion, commanded by Major (later Major-General Sir) Charles Reid, had already distinguished itself by firing the first shots on the mutineers. He said: “I was not questioned myself, but several asked my officers whether they thought the Goorkhas were to be trusted; when I was told of this, I said, ‘Time will show.’ ‘Shooting Brahmins,’ I said, ‘was a pretty good test’”.

One event repeatedly appears in the military writing, when the rebels hoped that the Gurkhas would join them deserting the British since they mostly share Hindu culture.

They called out to them, ‘Come on, Goorkhas; we won’t fire upon you – we expect you to join us’.

‘Oh yes,’ was the reply, ‘we are coming.’ They closed upon their centre, and when within twenty paces they gave the mutineers a well-directed volley, killing some thirty or forty of the scoundrels’. As a result of their close proximity on the ridge at Delhi where they often felt more like the besieged than the besiegers, the 60th Rifles and the Sirmoor battalion formed an enduring friendship (ibid: 119; Bolt 1967: 76).

¹⁷ Commanding Officer

The loyalty that has just been discussed, is not the one which one verbally swears in the presence of a witness but it is that loyalty which as Reamer (2013: 32) suggests, ultimately generates trust and entails confidence that another will act with the right motives and in accordance with appropriate moral norms. Sir Briyant (1971: 21) thus recognises the Gurkhas' loyalty, "During the Indian Mutiny they remained true as steel; without them the Raj could hardly have survived" while General Toker (1957) concludes, "Briton and Gurkha had one quality noticeably in common: both were honest and incorruptible (cited in Zimmdar 2004: 271).

1.6.5 Courage – It is Better To Die Than Be a Coward

In the course of the research, I have initiated scholarly debate as to who owned the motto "It is better to die than be a coward?" Hadi Ahmadzadeh quotes John Cross that "the famous motto, 'it is better to die than be a coward', 'has never once been mentioned. . . because it never was the hill-man's motto" (Ahmadzadh 2017: 7). And no scholars seem to have furthered the debate. It is a separate research project to address this question including empirical evidence, however since the phrase "better to die than be a coward" signifies courage, I attempt to address it through examining courage that the British Army Values and Standards defines.

Colonel Bernd Horn finds "an examination of courage is revealing, but also problematic" as "there is no universal definition or understanding of the term 'courage'" He suggests, "courage is often seen in two lights – one as an act or action such as a single desperate act, such as the storming of a pillbox or falling on a grenade, the second, as Socrates offered, as a very noble quality. But what is it exactly?" (Horn 2004: 11). However, in the British Army Values and Standards, courage has never been the subject of discussion: It is clearly suggested that there are two types of courage; physical courage is required from undertaking the risky activities during both training and in operation and moral courage is needed for a commander to lead men or for men to follow the leader into the danger zone. That is to say, both types of courage are equally needed by a soldier, but it is especially important for those placed in positions of authority, because others will depend on their lead and respond to it (Values and Standards 2008: 03).

The motto “It is better to die than be a coward”, which generally understood as Gurkha’s motto, certainly begs a question – Do they live by the motto? Or were they, as Caplan (2009: 177) suggests, “made to appear larger than life”? Or is it just a clichéd version of Gurkhas’ ‘blowing their own trumpet’ or it did really, as Zimmdar (2004) puts it, “resonate in the air out in the battlefield”? Or was it a watchword *mantra* either deliberately composed or uttered out of the blue by a commander to embolden himself and his men before engaging the enemy? If it indeed exists in the Gurkhas psychology, then investigating its contributing factors is just as important. Therefore, I attempt to examine if there exists any relation between the motto and the Gurkhas virtue – courage.

Courage – Ownership of the Gurkhas

The word “courage” refers to “face danger without showing fear” (Oxford dictionary, 2005 7th edition). In Nepali, there are several words to denote courage. For example, *Sahas*, *Ant*, *Bir* or *Bahadur*, *himmat* which are prevalent in the Hindu mythical stories. For example, *Bir putra Hanumana* (Ramayan), *Param bir Arjuna* (Mahabharata). Some even invoke *Hanumana* – ‘*Jai Hanuman!*’ out loud as they do something striking. *Bir* and *Bahadur* are ubiquitous among the Nepalese hill men’s names. My own name has *Bir* as middle name - *Muli* (Head) *Bir* (Brave) *Rai* is my surname; Keshar *Bahadur*, Sher *Bahadur*, Kul *Bir*, Ram *Bir* and so on. At least one in every ten Nepalese men, in the villages, has either *Bir* or *Bahadur* as middle name; some even have *Bir Bahadur* as both first and middle name. It is therefore clearly evident that the Gurkhas conceive *Sahas* (courage) as an indispensable quality that they wish their sons to have.

According to the *British Army’s Values and Standards*, it is suggested that moral courage is equally important as physical courage. That is the courage to do what is right even when it may be unpopular, or risk ridicule or danger, and to insist on maintaining the highest standards of decency and behaviour at all times. Courage, both physical and moral, creates the strength upon which fighting spirit and success in operations depend.

During World War II, Subedar Netrabahdaur Thapa VC¹⁸, with more than half of his men casualties, with low ammunition, and an enemy in possession of part of his perimeter, reported to his Commanding Officer that he intended to hold on and asked for reinforcements and ammunition. The London Gazette (1944) suggests:

Burma, June 1944...At 0400 hours a section of eight men with grenades and small arms ammunition arrived. Their arrival inevitably drew fire and all the eight were soon casualties. Undismayed, however, Subedar¹⁹ Thapa retrieved the ammunition and himself with platoon headquarters took the offensive armed with grenades and khukris. Whilst so doing, he received a bullet wound in the mouth shortly afterwards by a grenade which killed him outright. His body was found the next day, khukri in hand and a dead Japanese with a cleft skull by his side.

Similarly, Rifleman Thaman Gurung VC alone crossed the skyline exposed to heavy fire at short range allowing his section to withdraw without further loss. The London Gazette (1945) cites:

He then, again, ran to the top of the hill and, although he well knew that his action meant almost certain death, stood up on the bullet-swept summit in full view of the enemy, and opened fire at the nearest enemy position. It was not until he had emptied two complete magazines, and the remaining section was well on its way to safety, that Rifleman Thaman Gurung was killed.

All 13 Gurkha VC accounts read similarly; some focused on killing the enemies before they died while others saved as many of their comrades as possible before dying. There was not even the slightest inkling of surrendering. In the worst-case scenario, they adopted the tactics of feigning death. For example, one of the survivors of the battle of Monte Cassino, Rifleman Parshuram Rai, recounts:

The order came 'Attack!'. We began to fire toward the German posts atop Monte Cassino climbing up the hill. They were in a defensive position. Firing from both side was like a hailstorm. We ran out of the ammunition shortly after our advance. We had

¹⁸ The Victoria Cross the highest decoration for valour in the British armed forces, awarded for extreme bravery in the face of the enemy

¹⁹ Indian rank, equivalent to Captain

no supplies of ammunition. I lost two of my friends on my either sides but I was saved by the God. Two German came towards me. I feigned dead. They kicked me on my back to see if I was dead. I was thinking that if they knew I was alive I would ask them to thrust me with their bayonet right here (pointing to his chest) so that I could die at once. But again, the God saved me.²⁰

He says, the “sound of breath alone would have made my body riddled with bullets let alone getting the chance of drawing my khukuri, so feigning death gave me 50/50 chance.” He still did not think of surrender which could, more or less, have saved his life.

In my documentary *The Way of the Gurkha* (1:00:05), Lt Col (Retired) Cross clearly mentions that: “There are millions; no, thousands of examples that I can give you” of the Gurkhas’ courageous actions. I asked him if the Gurkhas had ever let him down during his almost three decades of a military career with the Gurkha battalion. He answered, “Yes, very few times, but not worthy to be mentioned.”

Further research on the Gurkhas’ courage was conducted on the new generation of Gurkhas. Since the Falkland War, Gurkhas have been involved in peace-keeping missions in various parts of the globe, including Bosnia, Kosovo and Sierra Leone. Following the 9/11 attack in the U. S. in 2001, and the subsequent western invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, Gurkhas once again were an integral part of the British Army, and they had the opportunity to prove that they still hold the legacy of their forbears while also adapting themselves to 21st-century technology. A 15-year-long battle in Iraq and Afghanistan was primarily driven by the coalition forces’ airpower, however ‘boots on the ground’ were also most important to win the battle, and allowed the opportunity for men to testify to their ultimate bravery.

In my documentary, Sergeant Dip Prakash Pun who was awarded the second most distinguished medal, CGC (Conspicuous Gallantry Cross) in 2010 for single-

²⁰ Interview with the researcher on 5 December 20011. Rifleman Parshu Ram Rai died in 2013 in Pokhara Nepal.

handedly defeating a dozen or more members of the Taliban at his check post in Helmand Province says:

My father [a veteran of British Army] told me that I must never ever surrender, I must give maximum effort until I my last breath...I thought they were definitely going to kill me, so I have to kill as much as I can before they kill me.²¹

It is important to note that his father's words might well have played a role in giving him the courage to continue fighting with the group of Taliban alone, as Caplan (2009: 170) suggests: "This [courage] cannot be taught, but is learnt from parents."

Sergeant Bikash Rai, who was subsequently awarded MID (Mentioned In Dispatch)²², says:

I always hated my height. But for the first time, I'm happy to be short. Just further an inch of height would have taken my life in Afghanistan as a bullet came from the medium-range machine gun fired by Taliban chopped off the antenna of the radio that I carried on his back just at the level of his head. I didn't really feel so scared then but now I feel a bit nervous as I remember that split-second's incident.²³

Rifleman Kushal Rai, who survived but lost both his legs in a roadside bomb explosion in which his commander Colour Sergeant Krishna Dura was killed, says:

At the time of the contact, I don't think of my identity as Gurkha but my identity being as a Gurkha has definitely helped me to be stronger. I think if any Gurkha comes to a stage of giving up then he definitely thinks who he is. His identity makes him think twice before giving up.²⁴

²¹ Interview with the researcher on 22 March 2012.

²² Mention In Dispatch is a recognition awarded to the soldier for his/her gallantry in battle.

²³ Telephone conversation with the researcher shortly after his return from Afghanistan in September 2009.

²⁴ Interview with the researcher 16 July 2013.

Trainee Rifleman Rabising Thakuri struggles to answer promptly when asked how courageous he is. He says, "I'm courageous Sir, I can prove that when the situation comes".²⁵

A group of new Gurkha recruits from the intake of 2013 had mixed answers. The majority say that the situation will dictate whether 'it is better to die than be a coward' while few wholeheartedly agree that it is indeed 'better to die than be a coward'. For example, Rifleman Arbin Magar considers war as an adventure and is excited to be deployed to Afghanistan while his colleague Rifleman Prabin Rai considers them as part of his duty and is not so keen to go to Afghanistan. Therefore, research suggests that the old generation of Gurkhas, in the majority, were closer to the Gurkhas motto than the new ones. Captain (Retired) Bishnu Sing, the first Gurkha SAS who served alongside Prince Harry and deputised the platoon commander during OP HERRIC²⁶ emphatically agrees that the Gurkhas deserve the motto. He suggests, "Surrendering to the enemy and being a Gurkha does not correspond each other... I think I could not have been as courageous as I am now if I were not a Gurkha."²⁷

1.6.6 Selfless Commitment

According to the Values and Standards (2008) selfless commitment is:

On joining the army, soldiers accept a commitment to serve whenever and wherever they are needed, whatever the difficulties or dangers may be. Such commitment imposes certain limitations on individual freedom, and requires a degree of self-sacrifice. Ultimately it may require soldiers to lay down their lives.

This value has not so often been mentioned in the military writing to deal with Gurkhas, although selfless commitment, from a military perspective, cannot stand alone without courage. But when it comes to dealing with the selflessness in a

²⁵ A short documentary during my research in 2012. The documentary can be accessed online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GQ4zmGOB_s

²⁶ OP HERRIC is the codename under which all British operations in the War in Afghanistan were conducted from 2002 to the end of combat operations in 2014.

²⁷ Interview with the researcher 29 May 2017.

broader sense, especially in an experiential understanding, it has no relationship with courage. According to the philosophy of Buddhism, “selflessness really means acknowledging the ways in which the individual is entirely constituted by non-individual parts” (Bradbury 2013: 71). It guides us more towards the meditational (peaceful) world rather than physical and confrontational (warrior) world. Ricard (2011: 139) points out the middle way of both war and peace suggesting, “selflessness is characterised by a low level of self-centeredness and low degree of importance given to self.”

In essence, all three of the above suggestions have the same meaning – in selflessness ‘Self’ is not important or the importance is not to be given to ‘self’. In the Gurkhas’ context, selfless commitment can be categorised in two parts: (a), in peace - looking after the immediate families, extended families and community and (b), in war - defending the British crown making “a degree of self-sacrifice”. Some may term commitment at work or on duty also as ‘selfless’, but my argument remains that if one is paid to do the job and shows occasional extraordinarily noticeable commitment – for example, weeks of sleepless nights, sheer fatigue and starvation when providing support for his troops, this is also part of the duty. Anything that one is not obliged to do, yet one does for the family, friends, relatives, community and nation sacrificing his personal desire, wealth and ultimately life is ‘true selflessness’ For instance, VC Kulbir Thapa’s citation (London Gazette 1943) in brief reads:

Although urged to save himself, the Gurkha stayed with the wounded man all day and night. Early next day, in misty weather, he dragged him through the German wire, within spitting distance from the Germans, and, leaving him in a place of comparative safety, returned and brought in two wounded Gurkhas, one after the other. He then went back, and, in broad daylight, fetched the British soldier, carrying him most of the way under enemy fire. Such an incredible act of faith and courage had by now attracted a good deal of attention, and when he emerged from his trench for the third time with one more wounded comrade over his shoulder, the German soldiers actually clapped their hands to encourage the Gurkha on. Only this time, the Gurkha walked right across the No-Mans-Land back to his own side.

There are, as Cross puts it, “thousands of examples” of Gurkhas’ war-time selfless commitments (devotion). Gould (1999: 187) notes:

Acts of selfless devotion to British officers by Gurkha soldiers were not uncommon. At Ypres a wounded and exhausted Captain J. R. Hartwell of ¼ GR crawled into a ditch not far from where Rifleman Motilal Thapa was lying with a shattered shoulder and his arm almost severed from his body. When the second line of attackers reached the ditch Captain Hartwell had Motilal carried into the ditch and his arm bound up. The attack passed on, and Captain Hartwell fell asleep and slept for some hours. When he awoke he found Motilal had dropped himself up against the side of the ditch and was holding his field service hat over Captain in great pain, and Captain Hartwell heard him muttering continuously that he must not groan or cry out because he was a Gurkha. The devoted man died as he was being carried to the aid post.

G. L. Rai Zimmdar summarises with General Francis Toker's saying, "Let any enquirer be assured that if he seeks to understand the meaning of courage and selfless devotion, then he should soldier with a Gurkha regiment. He will return an enlightened and a better man from experience" (Zimmdar 2004: 270).

1.7 Gurkha Families' Cultural Values

In sociological terms, traditional families make up all Gurkha households. In the past, most hillboys got married either before joining the British Army at age 17 or during their first six month's furlough after three years and they married as young as 15-year-old girls in the village, often without seeing each other before. This showed that both parties were committed to the values which existed in the society for ages. My attempt here is to examine Gurkha families' cultural values in order to determine how the cultural values of the Gurkhas and their families underpin the British military training, and what role the language and religion have in cultural appropriation.

Those Gurkhas who served only 15 years, would have only one so-called "family tour" in their duty station. This means, the families were, more or less, inured to living without their husbands. This practice would have implicitly helped Gurkhas in getting on with their training in faraway places from home. Bellamy (2011: 60) accurately notes, "as long as the Gurkhas knew that their families in the base at Dehradun would be looked after, they are ready to undertake any service, however distant". However, separation is after all separation. It can never be as easy as one wishes. Gurkha families would have to endure various difficulties while their husbands were away.

One of our neighbours, Bhailachhi Rai, had returned home from Hong Kong with her husband. She had three children. After four months, her husband, Bajra returned to Hong Kong leaving his wife and three children behind. The wife had to look after their three children as well as the farms and cattle. She had to face difficulties in restoring herself to the life she lived three years before after living a relatively comfortable life in Hong Kong. Above all, she greatly missed her husband in that difficult time. The only way of communication was sending letters, which would take months to reach the other end. She was illiterate in the first place, so she had to ask someone to write letters for her. After some months of battling with extreme hardship, loneliness and lack of a proper diet she began to lose weight first, before falling ill and dying after a few months. Some officials from the Gurkhas Welfare Centre Rumjataan, which is a day's walk from our village, turned up with some medicine but they were far too late to save her. Her husband arrived from Hong Kong soon after he received the letter only to witness his wife's fresh grave.

Another instance was of Mrs Jagana Gurung from Rimche Village in the Kaski district. She herself was a daughter of a Gurkha. She married a Gurkha from another village. They had a very good time when they were together in Hong Kong. After completing their family tour, they returned to Rimche. She had lived with her mother-in-law. Everything was fine when her husband was with her but as soon as her husband returned to Hong Kong, she began to be persecuted by her mother-in-law, blaming her for pilfering a cloth from Jagana's coffer. Mrs Gurung subsequently had to leave the house and seek solace in her mother's home (Lekali and Bishta 2002: 483). Despite the fact that both Gurkhas and their families have to go through, at times, unpleasant situations while being away from each other, they still continue with their soldierly duties with as Cross (see 00:59:12) puts it, "no grumbling, no illness".

In the old days, even if the families joined their husbands, their routine chores would not have been much different. As the documentary illustrates, my aunty who returned to Nepal with her one-year-old daughter following her husband's death in battle, said their married quarters in Malaysia were thatched houses with what Gould (1999: 308) describes as "inferior accommodation and facilities". The families would mop with fresh mud every morning just like in the village in Nepal. Their husbands,

just like nowadays, would be away for weeks, sometimes months on operations and exercises. The SSAFA (Soldiers and Sailors Families Association), was established in 1885, not only to look after the families back in Nepal, but also to organise get-together events so that the families share their stories and feelings with each other. This must have been fully functional by then, however Gurkha families had not even heard of its existence at that time. Gurkha families' integration with British families is, even today, far from normal. As the documentary illustrates, the language barrier is one of the reasons that Gurkhas and their families tend to feel discouraged from integrating into the British community. But as far as families are concerned, a male-dominated society that is influenced by the Hindu religion and what Marx calls "objectification" (Wendling 2009: 18) is also largely responsible for the Gurkha families' setbacks. Even in Hong Kong, families lived under the strict military rule of what Gurkhas called "Gurkha Kaida"²⁸. They were not allowed to wear *Lungi* (Sarong) in public places. They always had to wear a sari. Families getting drunk is still almost taboo in Nepalese society. Their routine chores in family quarters were not very different from what they would be in Nepal. During the three years of an accompanied tour in Malaysia and Hong Kong they would pass the time maintaining their quarters to the highest standards of cleanliness, and nurturing their gardens for the senior officers who would inspect the married quarters periodically. As a result, most wives would return to Nepal without having had a decent holiday with their husbands.

Said observes that "oriental women" are the "object of a male-power fantasy" who "have been seen as unlimitedly sensual, lacking in rationality, and, most importantly, willing" (Jouhki 2006: 4). However, I argue that the Gurkha wives, then did not consider themselves to be the object of a male-power fantasy for they sincerely followed Hindu religious practice. The Hindu religion has suffused every aspect of life of both Gurkhas and their families. Gurkhas' provenance is directly connected to Hindu Warrior Saint Guru Gorakhnath, hence the "Brahmanical sacral traditions" from the Vedic Age have been carried on until today. Gurkha families widely practice fasting during the *Teej* festival in the UK, wishing their husbands a long life and

²⁸ Gurkha Kaida generally refers the Gurkha's etiquette to distinguish themselves from others.

prosperity. The practices of celebrating Hindu festivals, particularly female-related, *Swasthani Brata* for example, which Professor Khagendra Luintel calls “real diasporic identity”²⁹ are as popular among the Gurkha diaspora as in Nepal, if not more.

To summarise, much time has passed since the Gurkhas left India in 1947, from where they would go on leave every year to see their families. Their relocation to Malaysia, then Singapore, then Hong Kong has made the separation even wider, so much so that many, including myself, would miss their children’s toddler stages. Yet, it is clearly evident that unstinting support from their families empowered them to continue with their duty in foreign lands.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has placed the Gurkha’s discourse in its historical context incorporating my own experience, developing through the Gurkha’s ethos and values and standards and their families’ cultural values.

The word “Gurkha” is anglicised from the word ‘Gorkhali’ – an army of the small hill kingdom called ‘Gorkha,’ after they had been taken into their own army following the defeat of Gorkhalis in the Anglo-Nepal War in 1815. The British took a long time to trust the Gurkhas fully; at least until the mutiny, it is when the Gurkhas proved their loyalty not only by refusing to join the mutineers, but also by fighting heroically against them at every opportunity. The mutiny also led the British Empire to reorganise the structure and composition of the Indian army so that it could play a crucial role in the defense of Britain’s empire and imperial dominance.

Gurkha virtues and values and standards that stem from the hillmen’s poor socio-economic background, which I have examined with reference to myself as a hillboy, through Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’ that interacts between social structures, culture, and the body and Bourdieu’s theory of capital and field. As a hillboy from a working-class family, I had to overcome both physical and economic hardship, as a result I

²⁹ Professor Luintel argues that diaspora is not only spreading out from the homeland but also practicing the culture(s) from the homeland. (Luintel conversation with the researcher, 2013)

developed physical (body) and mental (mind) strength for survival. Those who had their family member(s) serving in the British Army lived without experiencing any hardship at all. This distinction between the two groups particularly determined by the lifestyle (*Style de Vie*) is termed “Habitus” (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1969 cited in Walther 2014: 12), and the capital (economic, social, cultural and symbolic) of the Lahures has significant influence in shaping the mind of the hillboys whilst their daily chores in the hill terrain (walking for hours to get to school, for example) shapes their body by instilling a level of fitness appropriate to the British Army.

Likewise, the Gurkha wives, heavily influenced by Hindu religious texts where the husbands are depicted as lords, faithfully await their husband until they come home for a short period of time on furlough, often after three years, during which they have been looking after the husbands’ family. Therefore, I argue that the Gurkhas’ submission to military discipline is the result of the Gurkhas’ values and standards and their families’ Brahmanical tradition and culture, as well as the culture of both social and economic dependency on the husband. Thus, there is no disjuncture between the two values – the value that underpins the British military training and Gurkha family values.

Chapter 2: REPRESENTATIONS OF GURKHA EXPERIENCE (LITERATURE REVIEW)

2.1 Introduction

The proverb: “Gurkhas for fighting not writing” (Gould 2000: 04) was a true reflection of the Gurkhas until the end of the twentieth century. Any written works about the Gurkhas in the form of historical accounts or personal memoirs that we find today were produced by former British Officers who commanded the Gurkhas while serving with the Gurkha Regiments. An obvious reason was all Gurkha regiments have their own periodically updated regimental history which mostly contained the regimental activities and involvement in battles and campaigns including sports competitions and visits that took place throughout the year. As the commander of the regiment, the responsibility for updating the regimental history would ultimately lie with the British Officers. Above all, these accounts and memoirs were written for their successors rather than a wider audience in general. Therefore, in the past, as Purushottam Baskota suggests, “no scholarly work has been done” on the Gurkhas (Baskota 1994: preface cited in Onta 1997: 445).

This introductory section provides a brief overview of the existing contemporary literature particularly drawing on Lionel Caplan’s seminal work *Warrior Gentleman* (1995) followed by some brief insights of *Gurkha Bharti, Katha Byatha ra Andolan* (2005) by Surendra K.C. Then it considers *The Legend of the Gurkhas* (2009) by Col (Retired) G. L Rai Zimmdar including some works produced by the serving and retired Gurkha soldiers, namely : *A Gurkha's Story: The Explosive True Story of the First Gurkha in the SAS* (2013) by Captain (Retired) Johnny Gurkha³⁰, *Gurkha: Better to Die Than Live a Coward: My Life in the Gurkhas* by Colour Sergeant Kailash Limbu, who is now serving with the 2nd Battalion, and *The Royal Gurkha Rifles and Fearless Gurkhas* by Naresh Kangmang Rai (2017), a retired member of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

³⁰ Johnny Gurkha is his sobriquet name in the book.

In the main body of this chapter I further the scholarly discourse as to how ideas about the Orient (and Orientals) may have been shaped (and may continue to be shaped) and representation of Gurkhas followed by a review and analysis of existing literature about martial race theory. I then analyse what made the British enlist the Gurkhas into their army as well as which factors have played a part in making the Nepalese hillmen join the British Army. In the final section of the literature review I analyse the literature about the subaltern providing a clear account of the theoretical and interpretative frameworks with which this project seeks to engage. And finally, I discuss the audiovisual literature focusing on the first-person film making approach before concluding the chapter with the significance and original contribution of my research to knowledge, which distinguishes it from the existing literature.

2.2 Overview

Lionel Caplan (1995, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2015), has researched much of the writing about Gurkhas over the past decades and produced widely acknowledged material, such as *Warrior Gentlemen* (1995) which, according to Harka Gurung (1995: preface), “presents an entirely new perspective that will contradict those attuned to the stereo typed genre” and continues to inform academic audiences. In the *Warrior Gentlemen*, Caplan, with his own fieldwork, investigates the wider social and cultural contexts in which the European chroniclers of the Gurkhas have been placed. Caplan discusses the political and economic background of how the recruitment of Gurkhas for the British military began in the early 19th century and how service involved intense political struggle and compensatory negotiations with the Nepalese government. He discovers the power structure of the dominant high castes, both in politics and administration within the Nepalese society.

Caplan is one of the few academic intellectuals (at least to my knowledge) who has drawn the Gurkhas into the Oriental discourse among the few others who have briefly discussed Orientalism in their works, namely, Gavin Rand (2006 & 2011), Mary Des Chene (1999), John Pemble (2009), Kausik Roy (2013), Bidhan Golay (2006), and Ravina Aggarwal (1996) who also argues that the “widespread reputation of Gurkha bravery is not fully examined” (Aggarwal 1996: 196).

Unlike Caplan and other scholars, Zimmdar seems to have refrained from mapping his argument within the theoretical frameworks such as Orientalism and post-colonialism. However, Zimmdar's accounts, as a retired Colonel of the Indian Gurkha regiment, with a substantial academic background, provides empirical evidence of how Gurkha regiments function under the post-colonial British military concept.

Surendra KC, one of the renowned political analysts and historians of Nepal and one of the very few Nepali intellectuals who openly support the *Gurkha Justice Campaign*, presents an entirely new perspective on the Gurkhas in his book *Gurkha Bharti Katha, Byathara Andolan (2005)* which literally translates as '*Gurkha recruitment and their stories, predicaments and movement*'. His work stands out particularly for its detailed analysis of all the historical phenomena that took place throughout the 19th century, i.e. the Anglo-Nepal War (1814-16), Gurkha recruiting, and the Tripartite Agreement also known as 'TPA' between Nepal, India and Great Britain. KC argues that Nepal was duped in the process of documenting the Tripartite Agreement. When the agreement was signed on 9 November 1947, Nepal was not informed about the attachment to the document about the Gurkhas' pay and allowances which were signed separately by only India and Great Britain on 7 November 1947. He argues that "India was apprehensive about the fact that the UK could have increased the British Gurkhas' salary, thereby obligating India to follow suit" (KC 2005: 133). This particular argument has never been refuted. His other unprecedented argument is that he believes the Gurkha officers are pampered with attractive pay and a pension by the British MoD, thereby not only keeping the Gurkha officers quiet but also persuading their men not to speak out against the unfairness of the situation. A retired Warrant Officer, Gyanraj Rai, agrees "to some degree" with KC.

There are some other Nepalese-origin scholars, particularly from Darjeeling and Sikkim, who have published literature in regard to the Gurkhas, *Gurkha: The Warrior Race* by Bandana Rai (Darjeeling), *Rethinking Gurkha Identity* by Bidhan Golay (Sikkim) as well as other writers such as *The Land of the Gurkkas or the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal* by W Brook Northy. They have published literature on a variety of topics about the Gurkhas in different journals which have been referred to across this

thesis. Yet, existing literature seems to have lacked the clarity of the Gurkha position in the British Army which is the principal focus of this thesis.

Recently, three Gurkhas have published autobiographical literature about being in the British Army. Johnny Gurkha and Colour Sergeant Kailash Limbu have adopted the first-person approach to share the experiences of their childhood, village memories, friends, dreams of becoming a Gurkha, the happiness they felt when their dream came true, the training and their experiences in the battlefield. No efforts seem to have been made by these writers to examine their hillboy experiences from an analytical perspective. Johnny Gurkha presents his experience of how he completed his SAS (Special Air Service) course; the hardship, the challenges and the joy after achieving success. At one point, he suspects that the Gurkha officers of a martial caste background did have a partial attitude towards non-martial subordinates:

Miscellaneous perks did not really matter, but courses did. These were by invitation only and so far I had simply not been invited, and from the attitudes and behaviour of certain Gurkha officers it seemed fairly clear my caste was at the root of it (Johnny Gurkha 2013: 63).

This study shall not attempt to determine whether that is the case in the Brigade of Gurkhas. Instead, I have observed that all but non-martial castes who join the British Army including Johnny Gurkha himself, have attained promotion to commissioned officer.

Colour Sergeant Limbu (recently commissioned to officer – Captain) also had similar stories to share in his book *Gurkha: Better to Die than Live a Coward: My Life in the Gurkhas*. He does not seem to have endeavoured to pass any particular message across through his autobiography. His recollection of his childhood growing up in a well-to-do family in the Taplejung district of east Nepal however, supports the argument that I have made in this thesis: that the reason for joining the British Army is not merely for money. His grandfather as a retired Gurkha Sergeant Major had imposed strict rules at home in their village too. He shares his experience of being involved in combat with Taliban fighters with great panache.

Kangmang Naresh Rai, a retired Gurkha soldier, has compiled and edited 24 Gurkha war veterans' interviews including VC winner Ram Bahadur Limbu (awarded in 1962), the only Gurkha VC holder alive out of 13, to Kangmang himself (medically discharged in 2012) and other retired Gurkha soldiers in his book. Owing to the contents of the materials, Kangmang appears to have given special attention to the veterans' opinions on how they were/are treated by the British Government. For example:

It's true that some Gurkhas are now granted rights to stay in the UK, but our pensions are still not remotely equivalent to that British soldiers. I think we should be given equal pensions according to our service, just as our British counterparts get, but that hasn't happened (VC Ram Bahadur Limbu's interview, Kangmang 2017:17).

The war ended when I was Corporal. I was then made redundant, I had served for only 5 years then. I was in their training centre, so it was fair to me, but it wasn't fair to those who fought in the front line. We didn't receive even a penny on our redundancy. All we received was a piece of fabric; that's all (Bhagatbahadur Gurung's interview, Kangmang 2017: 43).

These works provide a personal insight into their experiences, however they do not contain scholarly discourses nor have hypotheses to discuss or argue. Yet the endeavour they have made in putting their message across – “Gurkhas are for writing as well as fighting”, is loud and clear.

2.3 Analysis of Lionel Caplan's Oriental Perspective on Gurkhas

Prior to considering Orientalism in the context of the Gurkhas, it is important to engage with the concept of Orientalism as defined by Edward W Said in his highly-celebrated book “Orientalism” (1978) in which he wrote:

Orientalism is the generic term that I have been employing to describe the Western approach to the Orient; Orientalism is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice (Said 1995: 73).

This statement refers to all the scientific and academic disciplines whose purpose is to learn, study and write about Oriental cultures and customs. There is no mention of

the power relation between the East and the West. Said gradually develops his arguments on Orientalism, “accusing” the Orientalists of exaggerating the differences between East and West, particularly in terms of tradition, culture and civilization. For Said: “the Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely there, just as the Occident itself is not just there either” (1979: 4). “The Orient”, Said suggests, “was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (ibid: Introduction). These are accusations, which Eric Hawarton (2013: 92) finds “justifiable” - he suggests:

Said’s objections to the project of Orientalism cannot be reasonably disputed, as Orientalist literature is riddled with: exaggerations of cultural differences between Europeans and Orientals; ethnocentric judgments; authorial bias and unexamined prejudices; ... and literary misrepresentations of Orientals that doggedly conform and homogenize diverse human populations into forced sameness (ibid: 1).

I shall analyse how Orientalist exaggerations relate to the Gurkha culture a bit later but here, I continue with Said’s main argument which is “of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (Said 1978: 5). For Said, the West’s knowledge about the Orient is inextricably bound up with its domination over it. He suggests: “because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action.... Orientalism as a source of power for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (ibid: 3). Therefore, Said’s Orientalism can be perceived mainly in three dimensions: firstly, it (Orientalism) is understood as a representation of the culture and people of “the East”. Secondly, ideological suppositions, images and fantasies of the Orient and thirdly, power relations between the West and East.

Lionel Caplan (1995: 2) considered the literature produced by the British officers who fought the Anglo-Nepal War and served as superiors to the Himalayan soldiers, a “particular mode of orientalist discourse”. Through this analysis, here, I attempt to apply Said’s latter two dimensions, mainly the study of Orientalism, to hegemonic colonialism, specifically British officer discourse about the Gurkhas, concentrating on Gurkha-Orientalist essentialism which means projecting the essential elements of Gurkha soldiers in the literature produced by mainly British officers.

While referring to Said, it is important to mention that Caplan is aware that Said has been criticized for his ambiguity about the relevance of the 'real' Orient to set beside the constructions of the Orientalists (see Mani and Frankenberg 1985: 181 cited in Caplan 1991: 593). Hawarton has similar views, so critics of Said's Orientalism have accused him of simultaneously gainsaying the methods of Orientalist scholars whilst using similar methods to create post-colonial discourse (Hawarton 2013: 84). Some scholars have criticised Said even further - Bernard Lewis, for example, states that: "the inadequacies of Mr. Said's book are further clarified by its author's inability to deal with critical comments. To these, his responses have been bluster and abuse, sometimes diluted with obfuscation" (Lewis 1982: 14). These criticisms suggest that Said's Orientalism does not have enough universal approval to be applied to scholarly analysis, however- it is not appropriate, here at least, to discuss criticisms of Orientalism for it not only needs empirical investigation but also poses the danger that this thesis could deviate from its principal course. Therefore, from the standpoint of the Gurkha, Said's concept of Orientalism is clear: "The Orient was a European invention" - so were the "Gurkhas" (as discussed in the first chapter). Hence, it is not difficult to comprehend that one can name, rename, recreate, describe and even modify its invention/construction/creation according to the inventor's convenience. As Said suggests, "...one aspect of this was that "Orientals" themselves were not permitted to participate in its production; instead their histories, languages, and cultures were recreated and appropriated by Western authorities for their own ends" (cited in Morrison 2009: 623). The history of the Gurkhas is independently written by the British Officers based on their personal experience, perception and judgement, at times in an exaggerated manner, as Tony Gould suggests:

... Some officers no doubt exaggerated the differences between easterners and westerners in order to foster regimental rivalry and make each battalion strive to prove itself better than all the others. In terms of actual performance there seemed little to choose between them (Gould 1999: 14).

Caplan also agrees with Stiller (1973: 291) that “the Gurkha qualities (as cruel and barbarous)³¹ may have been exaggerated by their British opponents, however”, he suggests, “the Nepalis undoubtedly acquitted themselves commendably well in the face of superior forces” (Caplan 1995: 25). At the same time, he also suggests that the relationship between the Gurkhas and their British commander was “marked by both dominance and affection” (ibid: 3-4). This statement shows, to some degree, ambiguity as to whether the Gurkhas are really Oriental, for Said suggests, “Western Orientalism often leads to understanding as overriding concern in domination and control” (cited in Caplan 1991: 594). Caplan points out the relationship of inequality as characterized by immense courtesy, respect and affection between the British officers and the Gurkhas while also applying the term “domination” to the British-Gurkha relationship.

As a serving Gurkha soldier, I would not interpret the term “domination”, particularly within the military hierarchy as being as powerful as it is in the context of Orientalism. However, it still does not provide enough grounds to exclude the British-Gurkha relationship from Oriental discourse, because plenty of evidence has been presented of the “Gurkha” being a British invention and the inventor remains “superior [one]” which, for Said, “is the position of Occident and the Orient, textually marked as the inferior one” (cited by Azam 2014: 424).

Moreover, they [Occident] “see the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption” (Dehab 2003: 3). This is exactly how the British officers understood the Gurkhas – requiring western (British Officers’) attention. There are innumerable examples that the British officers genuinely saw themselves as superior masters including fairly recent ones, let alone from the past. Major

³¹ Referring to the Anglo Nepal War in 1814 -1816 Ensign Shipp commented on Nepalese fighters’ courage while he also had some very unflattering comments: “They are more savage in their nature than the hungry tiger, cruel as the vulture; cold-hearted as their snowy mountains; subtle and cunning as the fiend of night...”(Caplan 1995: 185)

Timothy Corrigan, who for many years served in the Gurkha regiment as the Company Commander, suggests explicitly that:

There will always be a place for a few seconded officers – and some have, if found suitable, subsequently transferred to the permanent cadre (including Bullock himself and this reviewer) – but Gurkhas must continue to be led by British officers who have been thoroughly immersed in the language and the culture of their men... (Corrigan 2009/10:141).

Again, from my current position as a serving Gurkha soldier, I often hear similar comments from various British Officers which mostly pass unnoticed, however the comment can certainly be interpreted as “Oriental requiring western attention” as Tony Gould wrote, “...in disposition they (Gurkhas) are loyally attached to the British service to which they look up for protection” (Gould 1999: 60). I argue that Gurkhas indeed looked up to their officers but not for protection, instead it was in veneration. Military writers, unlike anthropologists, by and large exercised personal dominance over the subjects of their discourse as Said argues, “...in each of these cases the Oriental is contained and represented by dominating frameworks” (Said 1978: 48).

To summarise: Lionel Caplan skillfully argues that the undercurrent of superiority that scores of Western writers have shown in often crafty ways in the relations with the Gurkhas is an integral facet of the transcendental ideology of empire-building, and concludes the argument by answering a question regarding the discourse itself, “How Oriental is it?”:

If orientalism means speaking for, producing authoritative knowledge about others, then these representations of the Gurkha are clearly part of an orientalist genre. If orientalism 'dichotomises and essentialises' in its portrayal of others, and in so doing functions as an element of (colonial or neo-colonial) domination (Clifford 1980: 216), then I think by these criteria as well, the Gurkha literature qualifies as orientalist (Caplan 1991: 594).

2.4 Scholarly Analysis of the Theory of Martial Race and the Gurkha Recruiting

The British ruled India through the mobilization and recruitment of the local Indian community, as a result, “a peculiar relationship between colonial power and

indigenous military labour” was established which became “increasingly racialized” throughout the late nineteenth century. Only certain native communities including Nepalese Gurkhas, Punjabi Sikhs and Muslims, were considered so-called “martial races”, suitable for imperial military service (Rand and Wagner 2012: 232-233). On this basis, it is argued that the martial race was also an Orientalist (British) invention. Tejimala Gurung suggests similarly that the notion of “martial race” was constructed, legitimized and developed by the Raj as an ideology (Gurung 2014: 520) whereas, for Cynthia Enloe, the concept of martial race “flags an ethnic community as somehow inherently inclined towards military occupations; it possesses some special characteristic embedded in its physical make-up, in its 'blood' (Enloe, 1980: 39 cited in Caplan 1991: 581). David Omissi more specifically relates the ideology as a set of beliefs borne out of specific recruiting needs, and colonial comprehension of Indian society (Omissi, 2007 cited in Street 2004: introduction). In this regard, Subhasis Ray has a slightly different view suggesting that “martial races” have become a “contested terrain”. He proposes two alternative narratives emerging as rivals to the constructivist narrative.

The first narrative restates the primordialist view of colonial historiographers that the martial races were “precolonial” military powers and not products of colonial discourse, whereas the second narrative takes the more relativist position that colonial recruitment practices were idiosyncratic - the martial race was a constructed identity in some cases, but not in others (Roy 2012: 561). However, in the contemporary discourse of “martial race” the “primordialist view” seems to be heavily shadowed as scholars focused on the 1857 event as a flashpoint for a close examination of the martial race theory. Colonial administrations did not begin to apply martial race logics actively in the construction of their indigenous armies until the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. This event marked the point at which it became paramount for the colonial administrators to find soldiers they could trust, and “the desire for trustworthy soldiers was coupled with a growing belief that some indigenous populations were more suitable for military labour – and therefore more reliable – than others” (Rand & Wagner 2012: 234; Chisholm 2014: 355).

Vidya Prakash Tyagi also suggests that the notion of “martial race” which Gavin Rand sees as a “product of imperial power and governance” (Rand 2006: 8), did not exist in

the Indian subcontinent until the British formulated this term for brave and well-built fighters (Tyagi 2009: preface) which Lieutenant-General Sir George MacMunn has “elegantly” outlined in his *The Armies in India (1911)*:

It is one of the essential differences between the East and the West, that in the East, with certain exceptions, only certain clans and classes can bear arms; others have not physical courage necessary for the warrior ...the courage that we should talk of . . . as “guts” (cited in Rand 2006: 8; Subba et al 2009: 77).

It cannot be determined whether Sir MacMunn had prior knowledge of the eastern martial race concept explained from a religious perspective in the Hindu sacred text *Geeta* in which only *Kshatriyas* amongst the three other castes - Brahmins, Vaishya and Sudras - are regarded as a warrior class regardless of their masculine nature, build and fighting prowess. Street rightly notes that “the ultra-masculine, warlike and violent ‘martial race’ ideal did not seem to resonate strongly among Nepal’s hill communities from whence the British drew their ‘Gurkha’ recruits” (Street 2004: 215). Moreover, the term “martial race” itself is completely foreign in Nepalese society except for it is observed from the religious dimension. In the Hindu religion, human society has been divided into four casts – Brahmin, Kshetriya, Vaishya, and Sudra - which are assigned to scholarly duty, rulers (warriors), business and farming and manual and labour respectively (Geeta Chapter 9, Verses 32 and 33). Therefore, unlike the “West”, at least from the religious perspective, only certain clans bear arms in the East. However, paradoxically, the Gurkhas who are regarded as a “martial race” are not Kshetriyas, for Gurungs, Magars, Rais and Limbus fall into the Vaishya category. Hence, the martial race that we discuss in this context is purely a colonial construction, as David Omissi suggests, focussing principally on the question of recruitment (cited in Rand 2004: 20). Therefore, first and foremost, in order to determine the specificity of a "martial race", its discourse seemed to have become fundamental in the larger scheme of colonial knowledge and its relation with power and domination which Philip Constable describes as follows:

Rather than being simply an orientalist invention by British colonial officers for strategic recruitment and hegemonic control, martial-race ideology was in fact a late nineteenth-century racial manifestation of a longer-term Indian trend of social differentiation of kshatriya identity between an exclusive kshatriya naukari of higher-

caste Marathas, and an inclusive/open-status kshatriya naukari based on non-ascriptive kshatriya status, in which dalit warriors played crucial roles (Constable 2001: 443).

While Constable's suggestion touches on the Kshatriya in the martial race discourse, although it is not from the religious perspective, he also points towards the British "divide and rule" strategy which, as Cynthia Enloe delineates, "the martial race theory provided a convenient means to pursue a strategy of divide and rule" (cited in Rand 2011: 4). For the Gurkhas, the "divide and rule" strategy is not as applicable as how and why they were categorized as a martial race for their country Nepal was never colonized. Therefore, my focus remains on the investigation of the martial race theory in relation to recruitment.

Further to MacMunn's explicit assertion that martial quality is about "masculinity and guts", scholars namely Omissi (1994), Street (2004), Metcalf (2007), Gurung (2014) and Rand (2004) delved into the elements involved in the martial qualities, suggesting that the martial race theory which Telija Gurung (2014: 521) terms, "pseudoscientific theory" was based on two strands of thought: one on the idea of natural qualities, emphasizing that martiality was an inherited trait. Heather Street also suggests that "martial qualities, even if largely fabricated, are described as 'innate', as intrinsic biological imperatives" (the primordialist point of view, cf. Huskinson 2000b:10-11 cited in Mathew 2017: 65; Streets 2004: 173) and therefore an aspect of 'race'; and secondly that climatic factors influenced the biological and sociological attributes of the inhabitants. Both British and Indian authorities also believed that the cold climatic mountainous region generated better warriors (Roy 2013: 1312). Race in martial race ideology increasingly referred to the idea that the ability to make war was inherent in the blood of some populations more than in others. The term 'martial race' was not colour specific (cited in Gurung 2014: 520).

With the confirmation that being a martial race is an "inherited trait" and a "climatic factor", Gurkhas seemed to fit firmly into the criteria since the root of the martial race theory stems from the Anglo-Nepalese war during which multiple accounts were written on Gurkhas' climatic (geographical) background and military aptitude. Lord Roberts (Commander-in-Chief of India 1885–1893) portrayed himself as the father figure of the martial race theory, arguing that the people living in western and

southern India lacked courage and possessed an inferior physique. He believed that the fighting races of the subcontinent were Sikhs, Gurkhas, Dogras, Rajputs and Pathans (Roy 2013: 1312; Rand 2011: 7) which Heather Street confirms by suggesting “these (Highland, Sikh and Gurkha) regiments all managed to live up to their reputation as ‘crack corps’” (Street 2004: 218). Although she acknowledged them as ‘crack corps’ she seems reluctant to acknowledge them as “bravest of the brave”. She argues:

It is impossible to know what Sikh or Gurkha soldiers would have written about, had more been able to do so in this period...That said, the letters and diaries of highland soldiers at least permit us to explore the possibility that some of the Indian ‘martial races’ may have similarly accepted British constructions of themselves as ‘bravest of the brave’. While we have virtually no evidence of this for Gurkhas (ibid: 205).

The debate about martial race theory developed intensely, particularly in the face of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. The British continued recruiting Gurkhas from a certain ethnic group, primarily the Magars and Gurungs from central west Nepal, for their martial race status remained with the martial qualities of being – “Brave and Loyal”. Therefore, the mutiny provided the opportunity for the British to confirm the martiality of those ethnic groups which, according to Gavin Rand, “...the events of 1857 were consistently framed in terms which codified and reaffirmed the centrality of the ethnographic modality” (Rand 2004: 24).

British authorities were so rigid in their “abstract belief” (Gurung 2014: 520) that only Gurungs and Magars from the west of Nepal were genuinely ‘martial’, that they rejected Gurungs who relocated to the hills of east Nepal. The obvious reason is that the Gurungs and Magars whose fighting skills were witnessed by the British, were the local soldiers of the Prithvi Narayan Shah during the Anglo-Nepal War which took place in the western part of Nepal in the early 19th Century. Other similar ethnic groups, including Tamangs, who shared geo-cultural contiguity with Gurungs and Magars, were not considered to be martial. In other words, British authorities were rigid with the concept that “only the west Nepal” could produce soldiers of martial quality. However, Mary Des Chene observes that Brian Houghton Hodgson had a slightly different opinion. Hodgson carried out extensive ethnological research. He put the question of who were ‘genuine Goorkhas’ into the form of a question

about the 'martial classes' of Nepal. His answer, arrived at through historical reconstruction, established race and traditions, rather than locality [east or west], as the primary determinants of who was a candidate to be a Gurkha. The Khas, Magars and Gurungs emerged from his analysis as the 'military tribes' of Nepal (Des Chene 1999: 124). However, Hodgson's other military class, the Khas, whom he deemed to be somewhat less desirable because of their 'brahmanical prejudices' and devotion to the House of Gorkha were lightly recruited before the mutiny, but hardly at all for several decades after (Cardew 1891: 136 cited in Caplan 1991: 584). Hence, the Khas' status as a martial race seemed to be overshadowed by the Magars, Gurungs, Rais and Limbus who were not as strict followers of the Hindu religion as the Khas, whilst the administration focused on the castes who were unlike Brahmins and indifferent to religion.

Thus, the Gurkhas who "like the British, did not require, and apparently positively scorned, the time-consuming rituals and regimen of high caste Hindus" (Rand 2004: 129) became the focus of colonial recruiting while there was also the imperial conviction that "if Indians were to be made officers at all then it would be better to enlist the loyal 'martial' groups rather than the "seditious 'babus'³²", i.e. the university educated urban middle class" (Roy 2013: 21).

2.5 Why Gurkhas Want to Join the British Army – An Academic Analysis

2.5.1 Introduction

The question of why martial Gurkhas chose to become a colonial fighting force is just as important as why the colonials chose martial Gurkhas as colonial subjects. In other words, as David Omissi puts it: "the issue [who is martial?] was not merely on who the British selected but also on those groups who were eager to serve in the British-led Indian Army" (Omissi 1991: 8 cited in Roy 2013: 1324) or what made them [Gurkhas] 'eager' to serve in the British Army?

³² Educated Gurkhas; normally clerks were referred as 'babus' or 'babujis'

Various contemporary researchers including Ché Singh Kochhar-George (2015: 49), Elijah Wohl (2013: 31), Juni Singh (2017: 01), Kamal Raj Singh Rathaur (2001: 24), Sivaji Gurung (2011: 151), Pratyoush R. Onta (1997: 447), Amanda Chisholm (2014: 31 & 352), Low, Xiaoyu Wu & Kui Zhu (2017: 120) have commonly pointed out that the dire economic conditions of the hillmen is their reason for joining the British Army. However, there is still a paucity of insightful investigation explaining other reasons. To find out, this study employed a “push and pull” strategy to investigate how and why the Nepalese young men join the foreign military labour (British Army). More importantly, the investigation is conducted from within rather than from without.

Vron Ware, Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at Kingston University, in her book *Military Migrants: Fighting for YOUR Country (Migration, Diasporas and Citizenship)*, presents striking evidence of the inclusiveness and multiculturalism in the British Army by engaging personally with the serving British Army from Fiji, Nepal, Jamaica, Belize and Ghana. Ware, at the same time, reveals scars caused by the British soldiers’ resentment buried in the foreign and commonwealth soldiers. She observes that, “The extent of violence within the organization continued to present an intractable problem despite the policy of zero tolerance” (Ware 2014: 178). I have analysed the attitudes of British soldiers towards Commonwealth soldiers incorporating my own experience in Chapter 4 on the analysis of the documentary film, *The Way of the Gurkha* that forms the practice part of this practice-based research project. Ware finds a majority of Commonwealth soldiers join the British Army for better economic opportunities with a few exceptions, for example:

I work in a brewery at home. It all worked but it became monotonous, too boring. In the army you move around and meet new cultures. You stay fit, wear uniform (Ware 2012: 64).

As for the UK soldiers, Ware finds “out of 20 people in the room, ... more than half had the same reason: to get away from home” while also quoting the instructor in the Infantry Battle School Breacon that there is a “general perception that the majority of UK recruits came from ‘broken homes’ or from economically deprived backgrounds.” (ibid: 67). Ware states that the Nepalese men also have similar reasons to

Commonwealth soldiers, in the meantime she also endorses the Gurkha justice campaign suggesting that:

Numerous online forums, phone-ins and other sources of public reaction testified to the popularity of the Gurkhas in contrast to the wrong kind of claimants: those economic migrants and spongers who had nothing to contribute in return. The Nepalese ex-servicemen had earned their claims to citizenship rights, if not their entitlement to retire in dignity in the country for which they had risked their lives (Ware 2010: 13).

Amanda Chisholm (2014 & 2015) has also extensively discussed contemporary colonial relations within the field of private military and security companies (PMSC), and the global security market, placing the Gurkha security labour at the fore. She discovers that the Gurkhas, with their martial race background and experience of service in the British Army, are in high demand in the PMSCs. She suggests Gurkha labour, like that of other men from the Global South, is desired by PMSCs because of the martial traits that appear to make them amenable to particular forms of security work (Chisholm 2014: 365).

Thus, almost all studies mentioned above conclude that most of migrants have moved in search of better lives. The above-mentioned research, conducted from without, evidently, in one way or other, focuses on economic factors, that the Nepalese men seek overseas employment. But they completely fail to detect the other factors hidden in the martial race community which force them to seek service in the British military. The strategy of push and pull, propounded here is the first approach in addressing this particular question in relating to the Gurkhas' employment in the British Army.

2.5.2 Push-Pull Strategy and Gurkha Recruitment

Nepal has supplied approximately 480,000 (Kandangwa 2009: 148-9) men to the British Army since its inception in 1815 to date. No country would supply its own citizens to other countries had its own economy been strong. However, as far as Nepal is concerned, the circumstances were slightly different when it let its citizens join the British and Indian Army dating back to the early nineteenth century when it was defeated in the Anglo-Nepal War. As part of the agreement, Nepal had to agree

to release its men to join the East India Company Army. Then, the despot Rana's regimes suppressed their own citizens, deprived them of education and pleased the East India Company by supplying their citizens to East India Company according to its demand. The economists term this practice of 'supply and demand' as 'push-pull' model in the marketing strategy (Choe and Ji 2019: 1).

The strategy of 'push and pull' has been widely employed by many scholars in the field of migration studies including Ramya Rane Konna Segaran and Sofri Yahya, (2018), Angelina Stanojoska (2012) And Felipe Cuamea Velázquez (2000). Everett S. Lee defines migration as "a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. No restriction is placed upon the distance of the move or upon the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act, and no distinction is made between external and internal migration" (Lee 1966: 49). Following the changes in the immigration policy for the Gurkhas, they have begun to settle in the UK, hence they firmly fall into migrant category but the question is, "are they 'purely' economic migrants?"

"Push and pull factors synthesize conditions that exist in the two worlds – the poor and rich countries" (Angelina 2012: 1). The basic contention of the supply-push and demand-pull theory is that "the origins of international migration are to be found in the economic backwardness of developing countries, where economic conditions operate as 'push' or expulsion forces, fostering legal and illegal migration toward industrialized nations" (Velazquez 2000: 139). In other words, push and pull factors link poor countries with rich ones and vice versa. The push factors compel a person, due to different reasons, to leave that place and go elsewhere. The common push factors are "low productivity, unemployment and underdevelopment, poor economic conditions, lack of opportunities for advancement, exhaustion of natural resources and natural calamities" (Thet 2014: 3). These factors ultimately rest under a commonly-acknowledged economic umbrella. Especially when it comes to Gurkhas' military service abroad, Cynthia Enloe suggests, "recruitment into the state military offered economic advancement that was otherwise unattainable. Through incorporation into the economic security of military service, the group members gained respect from and superiority over similar marginal groups who were less suited for martial typecasting" (Enloe 1980: 27 cited in Mathew 2017: 65). However, generally there are some uncommon factors which exceptionally apply to specific

groups of immigrants. Those uncommon factors have been divided into three groups: politico-religious, sociocultural and other factors.

2.5.2.1 Push Strategy - Politico-Religious Factor

Unlike the recent (2017) exodus of Rohingya Muslims to Bangladesh following the Myanmar government's intervention in the religious conflict between Buddhists and Muslims, the politico-religious factor has never been detected and subsequently summoned to academic discourse as a culprit of a 'push' strategy that forces Nepalese men to join the British Army. However indigenous group campaigners namely Gopal Kirati, former member of the constitutional assembly, Dr Gopal Gurung, founder of the Mangol National Organisation and Ang Kaji Sherpa, a prominent *Janajati*³³ leader have consistently argued that the intelligent and elite have always exploited the docile and as Vancittart (1915: 95) put it, "extremely simple minded" *Janajatis* in the name of the Hindu religion.

King Prithvi Narayan Shah built a new kingdom called Nepal through conquering the small princely states but at the same time he also conquered the diversity of the religions and faiths. He enforced the rule that celebrating the Hindu festival *Dashain* was mandatory. Ang Kaji Sherpa argues that during King Shah's tenure every household had to have a palm print painted with blood on their door as evidence that they sacrificed an animal on the Mar Day (Sherpa 2015)³⁴. Eating beef was forbidden for *Janajatis* as the cow was declared as a sacred animal³⁵. Above all, King Shah declared the country "a garden of four *Verna* and thirty six *Jat* (caste)". This deconstructed the structure of Nepali society into Hindu religious hierarchical segments assigning the Brahmin and Kshetriya as the ruling and administering group and Vaishya and Sudras (the indigenous group, including Magar, Gurung Rai

³³ *Janajati* is the Nepali word for 'indigenous people'.

³⁴ Kantipur Television debate, 15 March 2015.

³⁵ Part IV, section 7 of the New National Code of Nepal (*Muluki Ain*) of 1963 prohibited killing a cow because it is a Hindu deity, and those who violate it may be imprisoned for 12 years, equivalent to life imprisonment

and Limbu who ostensibly fall into imperial concept of martial category) as the farming, business and serving other people group.

Professor Mahendra Lawoti, one of leading pioneers in inclusive democracy³⁶ in Nepal, argues that the dominance of the caste Hindu elite groups in political, civic, cultural and economic spheres in Nepal has created a situation whereby the Westminster model of democracy has enabled the dominant group to impose their values and norms on the rest of society through public policies. Lack of accommodative and power-sharing governance structures have excluded the indigenous peoples from governance (Lawoti 2001: 4).

Table 2.1. Integrated National Index of Governance, 1999

Institutions	Brahmin/Kshetri	Indigenous (Includes Magar, Gurung, Rai and Limbu)	Other	Total
Courts	181	4	40	235
Parliament	159	36	70	265
Public Administration	190	3	52	245
Political Parties Leadership	97	25	43	165
Science and Technology	36	2	24	62

³⁶ Demand for wider representation for marginalised groups while a new Nepal is created.

Total	663	70	229	972
Percentage	68.21%	7.21%	23.56%	

Source: (Lawoti 2001: 9-10)

Anup Pahari provides further evidence that “following the Anglo-Nepal war, the high-caste officer corps began to prefer soldiers ‘of their own kind’, so that the Nepalese army became ‘the monopoly of nineteenth-century Nepali elites’, encouraging Tibeto-Burman men (indigenous) to look elsewhere for military employment” (Pahari 1991: 7). This clearly indicates that the members of the martial group were politically “push(ed)” to seek alternative accommodation. Above all, the Ranas did virtually everything to remain in power including “selling” their own citizens. The regime benefitted from an annual British government subsidy for allowing the British to recruit Gurkhas. Nepal was granted an annual payment of Rs 1m (then approx. £10,000.00) in perpetuity and this was raised to Rs 3m after the Second World War (ibid: 9; Gurung 2004: 14; Bolt 1867: 97).

2.5.2.2 Push Strategy - Socio-Cultural Factor

Sociocultural aspects are another hidden ‘push’ factor that leads Nepalese hillmen to join the British Army. By the time the Ranas handed power to the Shah monarchs in 1951, the British Army occupation had already been established as a hillmen’s tradition for at least three generations since 1815. Particularly, during and after the Second World War, every household had at least one member serving in the British Army. Many stories were told to their children and many songs of battle and the battlefield were composed by them. For example:

Nainitala, Nainitala³⁷, Ghumi aayo rela,

³⁷ Nainital was annexed from Nepal during the Anglo-Nepal War. It was formerly a British hill station and Indian Gurkhas Depot, and is now a Himalayan town in Northern India.

Aankhama laune kalo gajal, Bhulbhulema tela, Nainita

The song translates as “Here comes a rail in Nainitala via a bendy track, carrying a girl with a mascara in her eyes and oily hair”. Hillmen who had never been to Nainital nor had seen rails would certainly covet such experiences. Sivaji Gurung notes that socio-cultural circumstances encourage the young Gurung men to join the British Army. The children grow up listening to the stories of bravery of their father and forefathers. They are attracted to the lifestyle of the army (Gurung 2011: 153). During this research, I met a group of Tamang boys from Makwanpur, a neighboring district of Kathmandu. They told me that they had not even heard of the British Army recruiting when I asked if they wanted to join it. Therefore, the evidence suggests that the hillmen from only those societies where the Lahure is prevalent seem to be attracted to the British Army. Many hillmen communities have gained promotions in the army which subsequently have enhanced their personal status in the society in the hills. In the martial race community, when the elders offer blessings to their children during the Dashain Festival, they bless the children in the hope of achieving ranks in the British Army. Basically, hillboys are enticed by the Lahure atmosphere. I also would not have joined the British Army had I not been surrounded by Lahure neighbours or heard their tantalizing stories and witnessed their lavish lifestyle. Therefore, the study suggests that the socio-cultural is a “push” factor for the young hillmen to join the British Army.

2.5.2.3 Push Strategy - Other Factors

Other factors include purely individual choice. They are under no obligation to migrate but do so because they perceive opportunities from afar and they can weigh the advantages and disadvantages at origin and destination (Lee 1966: 56). Highly educated and wealthy persons who are already comfortably situated frequently migrate because they receive better offers elsewhere. For example, two candidates who were sons of British Army Gurkha Majors (GMs) competed with us for the British Army in 1993. Both of them were members of the decision-making team at Pokhara Camp when their sons competed with us. After passing the selection, they chose the Singapore Police Force rather than the British Army in Hong Kong because the Gurkhas in the Singapore Police Force served for a longer period than those in the British Army and they had almost three times the pension of the British Gurkhas.

Then, there was no indication of the Gurkhas' Terms and Conditions of Service (GTACOS) and the immigration policy getting reviewed which could allow the Gurkhas to settle in the UK. When they underwent clerical training with us (their Clerical trade course for the Singapore Police took place together with the British Army) in Hong Kong they would receive "pocket money" from their fathers whilst I tried to save as much money as I could to support my family. Both of my cohorts had absolutely no economic reasons to seek service in the foreign military other than their personal choice. During this research, I also met a few Gurkha recruits whose main purpose to join the British Army is to come to the UK as their retired father told them, "go, that is also your country". As George Evans notes in *The Gurkhas*, "Many have come to regard Britain as a second home" (Evans 2000: 197).

In summary, while the economic factor is an obvious factor, the hidden factors just discussed also have significant roles to play as "push" factors for the hillmen to join the British Army.

2.5.3 Pull Factor

In economic terms, "pull" factors are exactly the opposite of push factors - they attract people to a certain location. Typical examples of pull factors are more job opportunities and better living conditions; easy availability of land for settling and agriculture, political and/or religious freedom, superior education and welfare systems, better transportation and communication facilities, a better healthcare system and a stress-free environment, and security (Krishnakumar 2016: 1).

Neha Mishra identifies the demand for cheap labour as a crucial "pull" factor in labour migration. Often, migrant workers fill positions that workers in the domestic workforce refuse to do because of low wages or harsh working conditions (Mishra 2007: 2). This scenario applies to the British Army recruiting vacancies. According to Kaushik Roy, even after the Great Rebellion of 1857, the Sepoy Army had to use South Asian manpower, because Britain lacked an adequate number of males to garrison the subcontinent. Moreover, sepoys compared to the British soldiers were

three times cheaper and far more effective in the Indian climate³⁸ (Roy 2008: 20). Juni Singh also agrees that in most countries, the military is a unique employer, not just because of its size (the military is typically one of the largest employers), but also because the military tends to recruit disproportionately more from disadvantaged groups (Singh 2016: 1). The Gurkhas in Nepal (the origin country) are a disadvantaged group as a result of politico-religious factors and the UK (destination country) has attracting (pull) factors such as education, welfare and an economy for the Gurkhas to make up the numbers of the British Army, as fewer and fewer young men are electing to join the army with its [UK's] growing economy (Wohl 2013: 40).

2.6 Western Perspective: Subaltern Gurkhas

All available literature about Gurkhas including that of Caplan seems to have failed to observe the Gurkhas from one more alternative yet prominent dimension - subalternity whilst engaging with Orientalist and martial race discourse, which I attempt to capture under this rubric.

As a British Army Gurkha, I am used to the term 'subaltern' which refers to junior officers, Second Lieutenants in particular. When I pursued the academic avenue, I learnt that the term 'subaltern' pervades the domain of post-colonial studies which deals with the literature of colonized people within two agendas; firstly, the dismantling of the Eurocentric world view and secondly, to foreground the voice of the oppressed and create the condition at least within academic institutions, where people subjugated by colonialism can be heard (Chattopadhyay, 2017)³⁹. This topic "the subaltern Gurkha" examines the latter agenda by investigating the term

³⁸ *Peel Committee*, pp. 1, 11. In 1864, the annual cost of maintaining an Indian Infantry regiment in India was Rs 183000 and the annual cost of maintaining a British infantry regiment in came to Rs 609000 (Records of Chief Commands, 1865-75, Notes and Minutes by Napier of Magdala, MSS.EUR.F.114, 5(4), OIOC).

³⁹ Prof. Sayan Chattopadhyay, Lecture 17 - Gayatri C. Spivak: Answering the question Can the Subaltern Speak? 12 Feb 2017 Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nxjtmeoBz0>

“subaltern” from a Gramscian perspective first, then post-colonial subaltern groups including Gayatri Spivak. I then examine how these concepts apply to the Gurkhas.

The word “subaltern” was originally coined by the Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, in *The Prison Notebooks* (1925). However, the term “subaltern”, according to Marcus Green did not appear as a concept first; he used the term in the literary sense, referring to non-commissioned military troops who are subordinate to the authority of lieutenants, colonels and generals (Notebook 1, 48, & 54). He developed the term as a concept over a period using it figuratively in non-military instances, in regards to the position of subordination or lower status. In Notebook 25, Gramsci identifies slaves, peasants, religious groups, women, different races, and the proletariat as subaltern social groups (Gramsci 1975, 3:2279–94 cited in Green 2002: 1-2).

It is important to note that Gramsci’s concept of subaltern correlates with the notion of hegemony and power but not necessarily with domination, because, for Gramsci, hegemony is a process based on leadership, rather than a state built on domination. Fontana suggests that the key to understanding Gramsci’s conception of hegemony lies in the use of the Ancient Greek ‘hēgemoniā’ (Or ‘egemonia’ in Italian), meaning ‘leadership’, as different and distinct from domination (Williams, 1960; Fontana 200: 308-309 cited in Smith 2010: 41). Hegemony is a mode of exercising non-coercive authority for which, according to Reed, Gramsci sets out to theoretically formulate a counter-hegemonic strategy out of capitalist domination. Counter-hegemony refers to, to be more precise, a process that challenges the normative view that capitalism is the only viable politico-economic arrangement available to humanity. It unfolds through moral and intellectual leadership designed to gain the consent of the masses (Reed 2012: 563).

According to Marcus Green, Gramsci is interested in how the subaltern came to being, what socio-political relations caused their formation, what political power they hold, how they are represented in history and literature, and how they can transform their consciousness and, in turn, their living conditions. In this sense, the concept of the subaltern interrelates with Gramsci’s other concepts, thoughts and strategies of radical socio-political transformation (Green 2002: 2) and the transformation requires a counter-hegemonic effort to take into account ‘the interests and the tendencies’ of subaltern groups but these must be made ‘ideologically coherent’ in order to move

society beyond its present capitalistic state (Gramsci, 1987: 161, 421, 323 cited in Reed 2012: 563). Kylie Smith puts it in other words: “if real social change (in Green’s word socio-political transformation) is to occur subalternity must be understood in its specific historical context by seeing ‘themselves’ as subaltern, and to look for the ways in which they resist these sorts of power relation in everyday life” (Smith 2010: 45-46). This is exactly what I as a Gurkha soldier in the British Army attempt to do – locating my position as a subaltern and observing the ongoing *Gurkha Justice Campaign* as a counter-hegemony in the present context. But in order to succeed in the attempt, a further investigation of the term ‘subaltern’ from the perspective of post-colonial subaltern studies, particularly subaltern study groups / subaltern study collectives including Gayatri Chakraverty Spivak is paramount.

In the early 1980s, a group known as the Subaltern Studies Group or Subaltern Studies Collective emerged consisting of eminent Indian scholars namely Touraj Atabki, Shahid Amin, Gyanendra Panday, Dipesh Chakrabarty, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman, Sumit Sarkar and Ranjit Guha. Their works were a counter-narrative to the existing colonial and nationalist historiography. What this means is that it is a history based on the colonisers’ claim that the colonised are uncivilised masses and they (colonisers) are there to civilise and enlighten them (the colonised). In colonial historiography, natives will be convinced that the colonisers’ presence in the region is for their well-being, just as Said saw the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention. As far as nationalist historiography is concerned, its master narrative was that the mass movement during the colonial period was a progression towards the formation of a nation state. The subaltern collectives, Guha in particular, proposed that studies of colonial India understand power in terms of unmediated relationships between ‘the elite’ and ‘the subaltern’ pointing to the gap between the “elite-led nationalist movement” and the peasants who “had their own reasons for joining or not joining” the movement and who, when they did join, “did not join for the same reasons as the elite nationalists” (Roosa 2006: 133).

The group published a series of volumes of modern Indian history edited by Ranjit Guha beginning with *Subaltern Studies: Writing on Indian History and society* in 1982. The group, referring particularly to Cambridge historians, argued that colonial historiography was “a portion of the British history and not the history of India

because *inter alia*, they stressed the importance of government and constitutional structures in shaping politics” (Robb 1994: 243). According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, one of the members of the Subaltern Studies Group, Subaltern Study was part of an attempt to align historical reasoning with larger movements for democracy in India. Chakrabarty further suggests that the Subaltern Group's anti-elitist approach to history writing shared the approach of "history from below" pioneered by Christopher Hill and his colleagues. Both Subaltern Studies and "history from below" were Marxist in inspiration; both owed a certain intellectual debt to the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci in trying to move away from deterministic, Stalinist readings of Marx (Chakrabarty 2000: 14).

My focus here is more on how the Subaltern Studies Group used the term 'subaltern' in relation to Gramsci's concept of subaltern rather than on the dissection of the term and the Subaltern Studies Group's project - counter-narrative of colonial historiography.

The group used the term 'subaltern' as a category that “cut across several kinds of political and cultural binaries such as colonialism versus nationalism, or imperialism versus indigenous cultural expression, in favour of a more general distinction between subaltern and elite” (Aschroft 2000: 218 cited in Ezzeldin 2017: 105). Therefore, the term subaltern was generally understood as 'non-elite' group or 'elite vs non-elite'. However, it is important to note that this particular understanding later seemed to have become vague and subtle as it was dissected further into sub-categories:

The subaltern collective's study on subaltern historiography began with Guha's initial subaltern-elite dichotomy with a generic analysis of power, by the time Guha divided both his elite and subaltern into sub-categories, the distinction between subaltern and elite, was “not just blurry but hopelessly ambiguous” and too crude to be of much use to historians (Roosa 2006: 135).

In fact, Peter Robb ascribes the prominence of the term among post-colonial scholars to the Subaltern Studies Group suggesting that “they have dragged the 'subaltern' out of his obscurity, as an army officer below the rank of captain, and quite changed the meaning of this English word, to bring it into Gramsci's Italian” (Robb 1994: 242). However, I argue that the 'subaltern' was not so obscure that it

needed to be 'dragged out' for its exposure as Gramsci had already applied the term figuratively to the non-elite groups. I rather agree with Al Habib Louai who eulogises the Subaltern Studies Group suggesting that they "excavated the origins of the concept of the subaltern by referring to a genealogical study of the foundational academic theoretical works which dealt with notion of the subaltern" (Louai 2012: 5). In other words, the subaltern group, in the context of Indian history, uncovered the hidden histories of forgotten subjects such as peasants, workers, low caste and untouchable groups that traditional historical frameworks had neglected.

The concept of subaltern further moved to a more complex theoretical debate following Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak's fundamental question, "Can the subaltern speak?" which emerged in the form of an essay in 1985 in the context of the gendered position of the most oppressed individuals within Indian society. Throughout the essay, Spivak introduces the question of gender and sexual difference and analyses their representation, offering a profound critique of both subaltern history and radical western philosophy. One of the major problems Spivak attempts to address is that the dependence on western intellectuals to 'speak for' the subaltern condition – not allowing subalterns to speak for themselves. With this argument, she stands out from the subaltern studies group because "the group focuses largely on historical records and ethnography, which do not lend themselves to an analysis of narrative voice" (Shandilya 2014: 2). In other words, they focus on representation of subaltern alone without taking the narrative voice that structures subalternity into account. Whereas, Spivak's approach to subalternity questions whether subalterns have the voice, if not why? Her arguments offer an alternative vision of subaltern agency and a close study of narrative voice. For Spivak, the subalterns are unorganized and do not often speak; they do not represent themselves politically or textually. For her, representation and organization are key to subalternity and once they are capable by themselves, they cease to be subaltern. In an interview, she states:

The subaltern is all that is not elite, but the trouble with those kinds of names is that if you have any kind of political interest you name it in the hope that the name will disappear. That's what class consciousness is in the interest of: the class disappearing. What politically we want to see is that the name would not be possible. So what I'm interested in is seeing ourselves as namers of the subaltern. If the

subaltern can speak then, thank God, the subaltern is not a subaltern any more (Spivak 1990a, 158 cited in Green 2002: 19).

De Jung, et al suggest that Spivak's concept of the subaltern "displays a peculiar troubling quality, as it can only be defined via *negativa*, namely through its inherent status as a non-subject or non-agent ...she repeatedly alludes to 'the shadow' as the location of the female subaltern in 'Can the subaltern speak'? The subaltern woman is "even more deeply in shadow' compared to her male counterpart" (Spivak 1988, p. 287 cited in Jong et al 2016: 718). In Hend Ezzeldin's words, subaltern women "are subjected to oppression and subjugation more than subaltern men; no one is actually aware of their daily struggles to the extent that they are seen as mere ghosts in the society" (Ezzeldin 2017: 106).

In fact, Spivak's essay, *Can the subaltern Speak?* (1988) and its conclusion, "subaltern cannot speak" has been "controversial" from the outset. According to Jong & Mascat, the controversy emerged in response to both the question and the conclusion. For instance, Loomba (1993); Lazarus (1994); Parry (1995) argued that the essay became that which holds that the subaltern cannot be heard, rather than that he subaltern cannot speak (cited in Jong and Mascat 2016: 719-720).

Particularly, after the era of Indian independence, Spivak has been committed to re-thinking and revising theoretical concepts and approaches in response to social, economic and political changes in the contemporary world order. For example, in *Ethics and politics in Tagore*, she wrote:

I presented 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' as a paper twenty years ago. In that paper I suggested that the subaltern could not 'speak' because, in the absence of institutionally validated agency, there was no listening subject. My listening, separated by space and time, was perhaps an ethical impulse... (Spivak 2002: 24).

This is the reason why Spivak concludes by upholding the view that subalternity is nothing but a rhetorical space; the "secrete", the "(im)possible". The subaltern never speaks because he is not given a chance to speak; and even when he is given this chance, there is always an 'omnipotent' individual who speaks for him thinking that he is not gifted with the faculty of talking and expressing himself (Ezzeldin 2017: 106).

Application of the term “Subaltern” to the context of Gurkhas

As for the contextual relation of the Gramscian, Subaltern Studies Collective and Spivakian concepts of subaltern to Gurkhas is concerned, they (all three) operated from the position from which they could observe/examine the subalternity from without but not from within in terms of the experiential level. For example, although, Antonio Gramsci’s family suffered dire poverty following his father’s arrest and imprisonment on corruption charges, unlike workers of Fiat and Lancia factories in the region, he was still able to receive school and university education. For him “subalterns were peasants and workers who were oppressed and discriminated by the leader of the National Fascist Party, Benito Mussolini and his agents” (Louai 2012: 5). Although Gramsci died in a fascist jail as a political prisoner in the 1930s, it is fair to say that Gramsci was not a member of one of those groups (worker and peasant) to be oppressed and discriminated; hence he was not a subaltern.

Likewise, Ranjit Guha who founded the *Subaltern Studies Group / Subaltern Studies Collective* was born to a prosperous landowner family in East Bengal in 1923. He lectured in England between 1959-1980 first at the University of Manchester and then at the University of Sussex. When he was in India in 1970-71 for research, he was deeply struck by the young Maoist militants groups operating in the region. This upsurge of peasant and tribal armed radicalism in India drove him to study the history of similar movements, and to try and discern some sort of inner logic to them⁴⁰. During the late 1970s, Guha and other similar-minded so-called ‘subalternist’ scholars argued that there were two separate domains of politics in colonial India: ‘elite’ and ‘subaltern’. Although, Ranajit Guha defined the Subaltern Studies as “a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way” (Guha 1988: preface), given their (Subalternist) positions as scholars with

⁴⁰ Accessed online on 16 November 2018-

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/students/modules/hi323/lectures/ranajit_guha_and_subaltern_studies_sakar_2016.pdf

privileged family background, none of them belonged to the subordinated group. Hence, they were not subaltern.

Finally, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, born in 1942 to “solidly metropolitan middle class” parents, thus belonging to the first generation of Indian intellectuals after independence, earned her undergraduate degree in English at the University of Calcutta (1959). Spivak’s most celebrated essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” sparked great controversy inviting much scholarly criticism for choosing Bhuvaneshwari Bhaduri who committed self-immolation on her husband’s pyre as an example of subaltern, whereas “the woman (Bhuvaneshwari Bhaduri) was representative from the bourgeois nationalist elite” so much so “Spivak herself refused to allow it to be included in a collection until she could clear up what she considered to be some confusion caused by some interpretations of the text” (Carbonell 2006: 150-151). One can argue that she has argued from the position of women, for she is a woman from the patriarchal hegemonic society. However, she is clearly not a subaltern (woman) for she was not “someone who’s not getting a piece of the pie” (Kock 1992: 45).

Considering the above facts, the position from where I attempt to examine the subalternity is unique. To some extent, with the reasons just mentioned, I argue that Gramsci, Subaltern Studies Group and Spivak have only heard and observed the subaltern, not experienced it, but I have. This is where the representation of the subaltern group needs to be analysed. Green argues, “Gramsci was concerned with how literary representations of the subaltern reinforced the subaltern’s subordinated position...In historical or literary documents, the subaltern may be presented as humble, passive or ignorant, but their actual lived experience may prove the contrary. Hence, the integral historian has to analyse critically the way in which intellectuals represent the conditions and aspirations of the subaltern” (Green 2000: 15 cited in Smith 2010: 45). This is exactly what happened in terms of the representation of Gurkhas for the last two centuries. The British officers who were self-appointed representatives, presented the Gurkhas as “humble and passive; just for fighting not writing.”

According to Kylie Smith, “Gramsci’s concept of subalternity is most often used for an analysis of a group’s position, and in these analyses subalternity is usually

assumed to be a negative condition, based on a lack, that needs to be overcome by a confrontation with the structures of power.” Given the fact that the Gurkhas served in the British Army for almost two centuries subserviently notwithstanding the periodic unconditional redundancies and unfair treatment whilst on service. The British authorities were less concerned about whether Gurkhas should or should not have equal pay and pension. They were rather engaged with their own concept of how to lead Gurkhas based on their common understanding that “Eastern races, however brave and accustomed to war, do not possess the qualities that go to make good leaders of men . . .” (Mason 1974: 347 cited in Caplan 1991: 579). For example, Eden Vansittart (1915: 74; 1887: 233) wrote:

The Gurkha needs a strong hand because he is at base something of an innocent, less than an adult, not fully grown. So Gurkhas are frequently described in diminutives, indicating immense affection and a patronizing manner. They are tykes, little highlanders, little Gurkhas, little blighters, doughty little Mongolian hillmen. Animal metaphors also abound: they are tigers, ferrets, mountain goats, and gambolling bull-pups (cited in Caplan 1991: 587).

Most British officers that I spoke to, have told me that they (those who chose to join the Gurkhas regiments) were briefed at Sandhurst, where they underwent their commissioning course, about the Gurkhas but they did not want to disclose darker aspects which might have been a part of the brief. However, Colonel Eden Vansittart’s note clearly indicates how the British young officers might have been briefed: “No officer can be too strict with them (Gurkhas) on parades, but they hate being ‘nagged at’. With a slack hand over them they very soon deteriorate and become slovenly” (Vansittart 1992: 77). With this mentality, British officers join the Gurkha regiment as a commander and with a preconception of how to be a commander, which certainly does not include the elements of fair play. It does not seem to be a deliberate ignorance of the British subaltern (junior) officers however, this is where, as Gramsci argues, hegemony (domination of one group over another) exists. It does not necessarily have to be conscious and deliberate nor has it to be from the top. Hegemony, Gramsci argued, “did not exist merely at this [white male-oriented institution of power] level. It comes from below, originating in the thoughts, beliefs and actions of everyday people who may or may not see themselves as part

of organised groups". Ultimately, these junior officers are the ones who reach the top and make the policy.

When it comes to subalternity, the "negative condition" created as a result of hegemony needs to be overcome by a confrontation with the structures of power, which Gramsci theoretically formulated as a "counter-hegemonic strategy" (Reed 2012: 561). Confronting the power structure for the Gurkhas was not as easy as it could have been in the non-military institutions. However, after nearly two centuries of silence, the Gurkhas finally found the courage to voice their concern over unequal treatment, thereby making a move of "counter-hegemony". But the question was clear – were they heard?

Spivak concludes her essay with the statement, "The Subaltern cannot 'speak' - not because he or she is incapable of utterance, but rather because speech is a reciprocal interaction which involves talking and being heard, talking and being legitimated by the listener" (Ghandour 2010: 83). Although the subaltern was not forced to be silent, he was made silent one way or another. In contrast to this conclusion, Gurkhas were not physically silent, they could indeed speak, however their voice that consistently resonated across both the British and Nepalese political platform since 1990 was tantamount to silence, for the voice was continuously ignored by the British government until the "celestial intervention" of the colonial and upper middle-class background Joanna Lumley, whom the retired Gurkhas and their families deified as a goddess (Hoyle 2009: 1).

To conclude this topic, the existing literature, post-colonial in particular, relating to the subaltern studies, indicates that history has been used as an instrument of power and periodically "manipulated by the elites (power) to protect their interests in the present and mute the voice of the historically oppressed and exploited" (Kaunda 2017: 2). The Gurkha, who played a significant role not only in helping the British to build the colonial empire but also in framing the positive image of British colonialism by displaying unswerving loyalty to the British, were handed a one-way ticket to their country with a small pension after their years of service in the British Army (which was of at least 15 years) what Laubenthal and Schumacher term "colonial veterans - clear-cut victims of imperial oppression" (2018: 2). While the Gurkha Justice Campaign launched by the Gurkha veterans continues outside the military camp, I,

as a serving Gurkha soldier, speak to wider audiences directly through the film representing the complexities of Gurkha experience as an attempt to deconstruct the Gurkhas' historical representation "as exotic figures out of the colonial fantasy or as frail old men saved by acts of British paternalism" (ibid: 9).

2.7 Film and Documentary

One of the most venerated Nepalese filmmakers Tulsi Ghimire, who comes from Darjeeling, made a film *Lahure* (1989) one of the very few films made about the Gurkha experience, which presented the memories of a widow who lost her husband in the war and how, despite that, she raised her son Surya (Shrawan) to be a Lahure like her husband.

The significance of this film is that three generations of Gurkhas served in the British-Indian Army. The first two generations died in wars, yet their widows raise their sons to become *Lahure*. The film demonstrates that, not only do the deaths of Gurkhas in wars not prevent Gurkhas from continuing to serve, following the footsteps of their forefathers but they are not afraid of dying a hero's death as their mothers' blessings are "Do not show your back to the enemy on the battlefield."

The most recent documentary made about the Gurkhas is *Who Will be a Gurkha* (2012) by Kesang Tseten. That focuses on the recruiting process, challenges, mental and physical stress that the candidates go through, social pressures and individuals' propensity of becoming a Gurkha soldier. Since the documentary has adopted an observational approach, there is no background voice to support the unfolding events in the scene. The filmmaker has let viewers make their own judgements on the unfolding events. For example, in the beginning there is a close-up shot of written letters: "W...(number)", "GC...(number)" made with permanent ink pen on the chests of the candidates. There is no further explanation of what those letters mean, which may lead viewers to make their own judgement from the humanistic perspective; that the candidates are being branded and organised like animals, though there is no way to confirm the exact interpretation of an abstractive action such as this.

It has been observed in the documentary that though the candidates come from different backgrounds they share the same opinion, that there is a risk in joining the British Army which they are prepared to take:

Participant 1 - I'm going (to war) even if I die.

Participant 2 - It's even better if we die because our parents get the money.

Participant 3 - But we don't die like a coward; we do or die.

With this conversation, it can be construed that Participant 2 takes the risk because his parents get the money and Participant 3 is less concerned with the money than a dignified death. But their ultimate goal is to succeed in joining the British Army. The documentary shows the recruitment process from the beginning to the end, but it could have gone further into investigating the lives of those that did not pass the selection. Thousands of Nepalese youths vie for a limited number of vacancies every year. It is not just turning up at the gate of the British Camp in Pokhara, the candidates will have already made an arduous journey by the time they arrive. They have to put everything on hold including their studies and jobs and enrol in training academies located in the cities to enhance their chances of achieving success. Some would end up failing in all their attempts to join the British Army, and on top of that they would also end up with a huge debt to come to the city to join the training academies. Others would struggle to continue with their studies due to the mental pressure that they had been through. The documentary ends with successful candidates celebrating with their families and preparing for a journey they had always dreamt of, while the unsuccessful ones prepare for another journey filled with yet more hope and uncertainty.

From the position of a non-Gurkha filmmaker, both Tulasi Ghimire and Kesang Tseten do full justice to their film and documentary by including the Gurkha's historical, mythical, social, emotional as well as aesthetical aspects. However, both filmmakers missed the dynamics of the ongoing complex relationship for both Gurkha's systematic recruiting and the Gurkhas Justice Campaign continue at the same time.

With reference to the distinctive gap between the existing literature and their authors/makers, through this research project I, as a Gurkha soldier with 24 years' service in the British Army, have examined the Gurkhas' position, both in audiovisual language, talking directly to audiences through the documentary *The Way of the Gurkha* and textual writing. The film and thesis present an insight into Gurkha experience that challenges the colonial perception of the Gurkha as a 'fighting soldier' which continues to occupy a powerful place in the public imagination.

2.8 Original Contribution to Knowledge

Linda Candy suggests that the nature of the original contribution to knowledge is one of the key factors that distinguish a practice-based PhD from a conventional PhD for creative outcomes from the research process may be included in the submission for examination and the claims for an original contribution to the field are held to be demonstrated through the original creative work (Candy 2006: 3). As this research is a practice-based I have submitted a feature-length documentary "The Way of the Gurkha" as a creative product, therefore, it is a solid original contribution to knowledge. However, this claim alone will not justify the whole notion of original contribution to knowledge which "commonly associated with something truly novel or unique" (Gill and Dolan, 2015: 12). But in what way can one's thesis be truly novel and unique? The answer would be - propounding original research questions, being critical of the literature, demonstrating a gap in the literature and collecting and analyzing original data. In order to be able to do this or develop the skills one has to have significant experience and a great deal of knowledge in practical and theoretical aspects of the research respectively.

Making a film as a Gurkha is a significant aspect of the practice-based research project's original contribution to existing scholarship, there has not been a documentary film on Gurkha experience made by a serving Gurkha. There are mainly three reasons to support the claim. They are:

1. In terms of methodology, this thesis responds creatively to practice-based autobiographic and autoethnographic research projects by theorising and designing creative approach to Gurkha issues.

2. The research's methodology (documentary) made with a first-person film making approach, covers the interviews of a diverse community of both Nepalese civilians and Gorkha veterans and serving soldiers as well as British officers of different ranks and experience. The documentary is filmed in different geographical locations including Nepal, UK and Italy. The documentary contains evidence of dealing with technical complexity such as filming myself and pieces to camera (PTC) and tackling the intricacies of the editing process as more than sixty hours of video footage and dozens of archival stills and moving images demanding meticulous attention to be paid in selecting and processing the appropriate footage.
3. In terms of theoretical framework, I have employed Bourdieu's habitus to examine the Gurkhas' physical and psychological tendency to join the British Army and the pull-push strategy to analyse the factors that drive Nepalese hill men to seek employment in the foreign military. Likewise, I have applied the Gramscian concept of subaltern and Foucault's definition of disciplinary power to examine the Gurkhas' hierarchical position in the historical and contemporary British Army and to analyse how and why Gurkhas' are trained and shaped as a docile military force from the outset of their military journey and finally, I have engaged with de Certeau's tactics to examine the research methodology - film making from pre- to post-production including 'stealing' time from my work (military service) to pursue a PhD.

It is understood that declaring 'no one has ever done this before' could potentially be problematic if it is not sufficiently clarified however given the ample evidence discussed in the literature review, the practical and theoretical approach in conducting research about Gurkhas through the methodology of filmmaking practice is yet to be conducted, hence I would not hesitate to claim that the concept, the approach and the outcome of the project are fundamentally 'novel and unique'.

2.9 Conclusion

The literature review reveals that the Europeans held the stereotypical view that only Europeans were strong, brave and loyal soldiers, and that Asians (including Gurkhas) were considered "weak" and "uncivilised" (Jacob, 2015: 10). In other

words, the Europeans and British officers differentiate themselves through the lens of the Orientalist gaze and martial race ideology respectively. Unlike in the West, with certain exceptions, only certain clans and classes can bear arms in the East; others do not have the physical courage necessary for the warrior. The Gurkhas, against whom the British fought during the Anglo-Nepal war, were one of the classes that the British classified as a martial race. The doubt about the Gurkha loyalty that the British had vanished following the Gurkhas' glorifying role during the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. Ever since, the relations between the Gurkhas and British officers, which appear to be one of the 'close friends' have been closely studied by many scholars including Lionel Caplan. Caplan, in his own words, "has placed the Gurkhas discourse in its historical and socio military context – political, military and intellectual, emphasising Gurkhas' loyalty to the British" (Caplan 1991: 593). He soon discovers the Gurkha literature produced by mostly British officers as an 'Oriental discourse' whose works function to help the West construct an 'other'(opposite to the West).

Through fighting for the British Empire, in the colonial and European wars, the Gurkhas certainly overcame the stereotypes of uncivilized and weak Asians but the concept of "Gurkhas for fighting, not writing" remained until recently, as the British recruited only unlettered Gurkhas in the past. This thesis has challenged the stereotypical colonial concept that Gurkhas cannot write or should not write. In fact, this thesis per se is a challenge to the concept that Gurkhas are only for fighting. The British now need educated Gurkhas so that they can operate in modern warfare. Not only that, Gurkhas themselves are also more conscious of their position in the British Army and they attempt to find ways to 'counter' the colonial 'hegemonic' attitudes; writing by themselves and of themselves is also a 'counter' action which, in Gramscian terms, is performed by subalterns.

In studying the existing literature, it has also come to my understanding that the price that the Gurkhas have paid for the privileges they have enjoyed by joining the British Army has not been fully examined. Onta (1997: 447) for instance, notes: "Gurkhas have enhanced Nepal's prestige, contributed to the modernisation of the Nepali Army, become 'enlightened' through education in the army and improved their social and economic conditions in their homes." In economic terms, these are "pull" factors

which attract migrants from developing to developed countries. But the pull factor, as discussed above, only works in conjunction with push factors. The existing literature seems to have rested on the economic reason that drives the Gurkhas to seek employment in the foreign Army.

As far as the audiovisual medium is concerned, no previous attempts seem to have been made in producing research-based material that answers the question that I endeavour to address – the Gurkhas' position in the British Army - in this thesis. All existing audiovisual material, both film and documentary, provide historic, cultural and economic details for instance, the Anglo-Nepal War, the Gurkhas' participation in the World Wars and the sacrifice they have made for the empire. However, no one in the field of media seems to have delved into the core reasons for the Gurkhas' sacrifice, nor does it seem to be analysed properly in an audiovisual form. Therefore, my research is different from the existing literature, including those of three serving Gurkhas' who have published books, by talking directly to the audience about my experience of hillboy life, enlistment into the British Army, socio-economic changes, rewards and sacrifices, training and education and finally disparity and discontent through the medium of the documentary.

In the next chapter, I discuss the audiovisual element of my project (documentary), and the methodology that I have used to conduct this research.

Chapter 3: Methodology – Documentary Filmmaking

3.1 Introduction

As a practice-based doctoral project, the main body of research was undertaken through filmmaking, an audiovisual methodology, which Sarah Pink argues, is “becoming more acceptable, more viable and more central to qualitative research practice” (Pink 2010: 3). Therefore, in this chapter I attempt to investigate the reason why filmmaking (visual methodology) has become imperative to this qualitative research project while also analysing the process, applying the theoretical framework provided by Bill Nichols’ *documentary modes* (1991, 2001 and 2010) and Michel de Certeau’s *the practice of everyday life* (1984).

As the documentary is a part of an academic research project, I am not confined by commercial motives in the production of *The Way of the Gurkha*. I rather have used a documentary purely as a research tool “focusing on the product for archive” which Timothy Asch and Patsy Asch discuss as an “ethnographic research film” (Asch et al 1995: 335) using light weight video equipment. A critical endeavour of this documentary is to examine Gurkhas from multiple dimensions: historically, culturally, socially and economically. Ultimately it will try to reach as near to the Gurkhas’ position in the British Army and their core relationship with the British people as possible. Thus, the end result of this project will directly address one of the research questions - Can an informed programme of documentary filmmaking reveal the complexity of the relationship between Gurkhas and the British people?

Moreover, as Pink argues that while “for some visual methodology is a tool through which to achieve research findings, ... for others it is something that should be critically reflected on as a crucial component in the processes through which we produce knowledge” (2012: 4). The methodology that I have chosen for this project serves as both - a tool to achieve research findings and a crucial component to produce knowledge, because the documentary provides empirical evidence of all four research questions – (1) the Gurkhas’ position, (2) cultural and family values, (3) complex British-Gurkha relations and (4) synthesis between folk memory and emotional account, academic analysis and technology. A detailed analysis as to how

the documentary serves as empirical evidence will be discussed in the next chapter. This chapter focuses on the analysis of theoretical and epistemological aspects of the process that produces an academic archival document in audiovisual language.

3.2 Specificity of Audio-Visual Language

Andre Malraux has described the cinema as the furthestmost evolution to date of plastic realism, the beginnings of which were first manifest in the Renaissance and which found its most complete expression in baroque painting (cited in Bazin 1967: 10). Malraux's definition of cinema, which was appropriate then, had already been modified to a broader perspective in terms of conceptual and ideological context. Bazin himself defines cinema as: "An idealistic phenomenon. The concept men had of it existed so to speak fully armed in their minds, as if in some platonic heaven, and what strikes us most of all is the obstinate resistance of matter to ideas rather than of any help offered by techniques to the imagination of the researchers" (Bazin 1967: 17).

Every film of any genre, tells the tale of lives, society, politics, culture, country, nature, music and so on and, in that, the film makers express themselves and propound their ideas and philosophy or strive to find answers to hitherto unanswered questions, or try to reveal something that cannot be done or is at least, difficult to achieve through other means. Therefore, through films, Pierre Perrault, a Québécois filmmaker who made films particularly after the documentary *Ile-aux-Coudre* (1962), "probing the beginnings of the French presence and identity in North America and revealing the mythologies that sustained it as the old folkways were going to decline"(Clandfield 2004: 37), can bring interesting or even unpleasant facts within society to light, thereby raising public awareness. Nepalese filmmaker Tulsi Ghimire made one of the few films about the Gurkha experience, *Lahure* (1989) which presented the vivid memories of a widow who lost her husband in the war but, despite that, raised her son Surya (Shrawan) to be a Lahure like her husband.

In the film, Surya comes home on furlough with a porter behind him. His elderly mother insists he marries a girl so that she can help her with the routine chores. Surya tells his mother that he has not found any girls yet. His childhood friend Jange abruptly interrupts, "Girls die for Lahure. All you have to do is 'Say yes' and the most

beautiful of the beautiful girls are at your disposal". He finally finds a girl Manjari (Tripti Nadakar) but before the wedding ceremony, he gets called forward by his regiment as the war breaks out. His mother blesses him, "You are the son of a brave father, don't show your back to the enemy at the battle field, shine the history like your ancestors did. We shall pray for you." While he is on the battlefield, Manjari, who is pregnant, gets in trouble as she murders a man who tries to rape her. She has to run away from the village as a result. Manjari gives birth to a son, Bijay in a far-flung village where she lives with a surrogate brother. Later, Bijay also joins the Gurkha Regiment where his unknown father still serves. They get to know each other only when they operate together on a battlefield. Unfortunately, the father Surya dies from a gunshot wound. Bijay returns home with the bullet extracted from the body of his father and hands it to his mother Manjari as Surya's final wish. This is how films "demonstrate the potential of the genre to work towards social and political change" (Chen et al 2007: 47). Timothy Corrigan summarises:

Cinema is quite simply becoming a means of expression, just as all the other arts have been before it, and in particular painting and the novel. After having been successively a fairground attraction, an amusement analogous to boulevard theatre, or a means of preserving the images of an era, it is gradually becoming a language (Corrigan 1999: 159).

Moreover, it is not only a language but a powerful language that is spoken not only through verbal communication but expressed through emotional gestures that can be understood easily at all levels throughout the world. *The Way of the Gurkha*, if written in English, would not have been understood by my own family members, let alone other non-English speaking members of our society and the world, had it not been translated into a visual art, specifically documentary. With execution in this medium, it transforms into a visually rich intelligible story about the Gurkhas which is universally accessible to all audiences regardless of their language, sex and culture.

3.3 Filmmaking Context

3.3.1 Autobiography

In *The Way of the Gurkha* I communicate my experience and position which has not been heard, rather it has been told from without, by outsiders with a vested interest

in preserving the hegemonic/hierarchical status quo. I am making first-person non-fiction films to which “scholars in this field use different terms to describe this practice, such as ‘filmic autobiography’⁴¹, ‘autoethnography’⁴², ‘first-person documentary’⁴³, and ‘personal cinema’⁴⁴” (Yu 2012: 25). “An autobiography” according to Shodhganga⁴⁵, “is a literature of personal revelation” and it aims “to give the truth about oneself”. One would think that there could be little disagreement with this basic definition, but critics are anxious to elaborate on it and offer their own definitions. One of the English critics of the genre, Roy Pascal, suggests that autobiography:

... involves the reconstruction of the movement of a life, or part of it... Its centre of interest is the self, not the outside world, though necessarily the outside world must appear, so that, in give and take with it, the personality finds its peculiar shape... in every case it is his present position which enables him to see his life as something of a unity, something that may be reduced to order (Pascal 1960: 9).

Pascal’s definition of autobiography, in the context of *The Way of the Gurkha* is perhaps too narrow to apply to my work, for the documentary attempts to explore “outside” of autobiographical matters too (for example, the Gurkha Justice Campaign). However, these outside matters are still familiar territory for me to engage with. Hence, the path the documentary walks is autobiographical, although it may not be purely autobiographical. In fact, given the fact that the documentary contains brief biographies of my parents and family members as well as many historical accounts, it may lean partly towards a hybrid genre. As Rachel Gabara suggests, “much contemporary art, whether fiction or nonfiction (autobiography) exhibits what Ihab Hasssan has called a postmodern hybridization of genres” (Gabara 2003: 333) and *The Way of the Gurkha* is no exception. However, the documentary is still overwhelmed by the autobiographical genre as it is a “literature

⁴¹ Renov, “First-person Film,” 30-50

⁴² Russell, “Autoethnography,” 275-314

⁴³ Lebow, *First Person Jewish*

⁴⁴ Rascaroli, *The personal cinema*

⁴⁵ Indian Electronic Theses & Dissertation. Available online:

https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/107338/7/07_chapter%202.pdf

of personal revelation” and a “cinematic representation of memory and identity” which Jill Daniels terms “autobiographical documentary” (Daniels 2013: 1).

Since it is impossible for the person behind the camera to be in front of the camera at the same time, the voice-over (narrating “I” – a first-person narrative) connects the autobiographer and the subject in front of the camera through the audio track. This is where Catherine Russell finds the “richness”. She suggests, “three voices” – speaker, seer and seen – are what generate the richness and diversity of autobiographical filmmaking” (Russell 1999: 277 cited in Dowmunt 2013: 264).

3.3.2 Autoethnography

Peter Mcllveen defines autoethnography as something that “entails the scientist or practitioner performing narrative analysis pertaining to himself or herself as intimately related to a particular phenomenon” (Mcllveen 2008: 3). As for the autoethnographic film, it is generally defined as “film that reveals cultural patterning” or we can expect that an ethnographic film will “reveal something about primitive culture – and ultimately all of culture – which can be grasped in no other way” (Brigard 1995: 15). With this expectation, there is another expectation that one’s culture will be studied by someone who does not belong to this culture. Asch and Asch (1999: 330) admit that, “ethnographers have rarely been natives of the communities they studied. Their position as outsiders was supposed to ensure their objectivity”. In the meantime, they also suggest that, “today many ethnographers have shifted from the role of detached observer to that of participant observer... spending considerable time describing events they have witnessed”.

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), ethnography usually involves the ethnographer participating covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts - in fact, gathering whatever data is available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry (cited in O’Reilly 2012: 11).

Rouch (1974: 87) suggests that Robert Flaherty spent a year on the Samoan Island before filming *Nanook of the North* which is still cited as a seminal moment in the development of documentary film, and considered the first ethnographic

documentary in history. Marcus Banks recalls: “As a master’s student in 1989–1990 I viewed *Nanook* under different circumstances, as the first ethnographic film, and with concerns about questions of representation, reconstruction and film style” (Pink 2003: 180). Yet Flaherty imbued his passion for examining ‘other’ cultures by portraying them with colonial romanticism and voyeuristic exoticism. He reconstructed sequences for the camera, directing *Nanook* and his family to perform daily routines, and hunting expeditions around the camera, maintaining the classical narrative structure. Regardless of how long Flaherty spent with the community, he remained an outsider, bringing with him the weight of his colonial position, which informed and directed his filmmaking. He spoke for them. They, as subaltern, did not speak unmediated. Whereas, my position is as that of *Nanook*, making a film about his own life and own community without being under the service of Flaherty. Therefore, I have moved one step closer to constructing a more authentic autoethnographical film than Flaherty’s ethnographic film.

Catherine Russell suggests, “A common feature of autoethnography is the first-person voice-over that is intently and unambiguously subjective” (Russell 1999: 277). This statement alone confirms that *The Way of the Gurkha* is an autoethnographical documentary as the documentary is predominantly guided by voice-over. Although we discussed autobiographical documentary separately a researcher, Yu (2012: 25), notes that anything that refers to first-person filmmaking or in Catherine Russell’s words “journey of the self” (1999: 1) can generally be termed as ‘filmic autobiography’⁴⁶, ‘autoethnography’⁴⁷, ‘first-person documentary’⁴⁸, and ‘personal cinema’⁴⁹.

For Russell, “autobiography becomes ethnographic at the point where the film - or videomaker understands his or her personal history to be implicated in larger social formations and historical processes” (Russell 1999: 276). In *The Way of the Gurkha*,

⁴⁶ Renov, “First-person Film,” 30-50

⁴⁷ Russell, “Autoethnography,” 275-314

⁴⁸ Lebow, *First Person Jewish*

⁴⁹ Rascaroli, *The personal cinema*

I have tried to understand my history which represents the generic social strata to which the Gurkhas belong. Therefore, it is important to examine this documentary from the autoethnographic perspective as well as autobiographical one. Russell further suggests, “autoethnography is a vehicle and a strategy for challenging imposed forms of identity and exploring the discursive possibilities of inauthentic subjectivities” (ibid: 256) whereas Reed-Danahay terms autoethnography “a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context” (cited in Butz and Besio 2009: 6260). Although Danahay’s definition is within the context of indigenous ethnography rather than in filmography in the discipline of arts and social science, the suggestions he makes correspond well with the context of ethnographical documentary.

In the documentary I mention that hundreds of Nepalese youth particularly from “non-Brahmin ethnicity” try to join the British Army every year with only a handful achieving success. Being among them (ethnic group) and telling my story through the autobiographical film is what Russell terms “the authorial subject offering themselves up for inspection.” She further suggests, they are “mediating their own image and identifying obliquely with the technologies of representation, identifying themselves as film-and video-makers” (Russell 1999: 279), which is absolutely true. I have to identify as a filmmaker, only then the product (documentary) that I have produced with the “technological representation” has been able to help the audiences identify me as a hillboy, a son, a husband, a Gurkha soldier, and a potential resident of the United Kingdom.

3.4 First Serving Gurkha Filmmaker

In order to highlight the importance of the documentary that is used as a methodology of this research project, it is essential to demonstrate that I have the right skills, time, position and most of all, I am the right person to make the documentary. Therefore, in this topic firstly, I try to demonstrate that I am the first Gurkha making films whilst still serving in the British Army and secondly why I made the documentary.

The Gurkha film maker, namely Gore Gurung, currently residing in the UK, is known to be the first Gurkha film maker who has made some non-commercial videos based

on the Gurung culture and tradition which includes *Mayako Bandhan* (Bound of Love) (1993) and *Herbye Cha* (Son of the Himalaya) (2005). He began making films during his retirement after fifteen years of service in the Brigade of Gurkhas. Recently, more retired Gurkhas seem to be passionate about making movies and documentaries. Bhimsen Lama, a retired Gurkha soldier has directed an “award-winning and internationally acclaimed” short movie ‘*Maya*’ in 2015. Milan Chams, a member of the 2nd Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles, voluntarily signed off from military service to pursue his career as filmmaker. He has directed *Hasiya* (2013) and *Birabikram* (2016). Both of them became highly successful at the Nepalese box office. As far as Gurkha academics are concerned, Chandra Loksamba, who earned his PhD degree at the University of Surrey in 2004, is the first Gurkha ever to earn such a degree. However, he was already retired after serving 19 years in the Brigade of Gurkhas when he attained the PhD. Therefore, I am the first Gurkha ever in the history of the Brigade of Gurkhas to undertake PhD research by practice in film making while also serving in the army. Unlike other documentary films on the armed forces, particularly a regiment as specific as the Gurkhas, this is the first film made by a serving Gurkha soldier. Long have filmmakers made films about subjects, of which they are not a part, from outside. There is a long tradition of ethnographic films from Flaherty to Rouch. None of the other documentary filmmakers are believed to have been serving in the armed forces, let alone with the Gurkha Regiment.

The filmmakers are generally instigators, provocateurs but still outside the subject/community. But I as a filmmaker, am an instigator of the new tradition that serving Gurkhas can make films, am a provocateur showing that they have spoken about the unfairness, yet still remaining inside the community/society being both participant and participatory designer. Preben Holst Mogensen, Associate Professor at Aarhus University, Denmark, who participated in, managed and coordinated numerous national and international research projects on “participatory design”⁵⁰ writes:

⁵⁰ The term is often used to describe any design process that asks users to contribute ideas about a design (DiSalvo et al 2017: 177)

Why am I engaged in participatory design? 'I am engaged in participatory design because I see it as one of the most powerful and at the same time sensitive approaches... to support and enhance practices (Simonsen and Robertson 2013: xv).

The point I am trying to make in referring to Mogensen is that the researcher engaging in participatory design alone can be very powerful, even more so if the participant himself/herself is carrying out research on herself/himself. In my case, I am a participant undertaking the research on myself, my community and my organisation, the Brigade of Gurkhas.

3.5 Application of Theoretical Framework to a Methodological Approach to Filmmaking

As a serving member of the military, I come across the term 'strategy and tactics' and they are commonly used together to refer to planning, coordination, preparation and key concepts that are necessary to accomplish operational objectives. As the great military theorist Carl von Clausewitz suggests, "tactic is the art of using troops in battle: strategy is the art of using battle to win the war" (cited in Kennedy 1991: 1).

A French scholar Michel de Certeau, however, describes these strategies and tactics differently. The concept of 'strategies' describes both concrete material space and the institutional frameworks that dominate it (often geometrical in nature); 'tactics' are the mobile, temporal and personal occupations of space enacted by an individual.

I call a "strategy" the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an "environment." A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, "clienteles," "targets," or "objects" of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model.

I call a "tactic," on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a border-line distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without

being able to keep it at a distance...it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing." The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them" (de Certeau 1984: xx).

In short, strategy is a blue print but a tactic is an individual tool to make the strategy happen. Strategy is a way of operating in the world that operates from a particular place of power, so a strategy is used by any being or social body that has an established demarcation in the world from which they operate. Strategies are enacted by those who have particular places to gather more resources whether money or space or something tangible. So, that the body can continue to grow and prosper. Tactics, on the other hand, are practices that are developed completely differently from strategies. Tactics are not implied in certain institutional or spatial borders. They have no explicit borders. They leak into strategies and they are like poaching or eroding power mechanisms. Tactics, which depend on reasonable utilization of time, are practices that come together and disrupt rapidly. Resistance acts that are developed against strategies of power lack permanent positions. When circumstances require, tactics develop as crucial practices that are interferences to strategies or power mechanisms (Kentel 2011: 7, cited in Yilmaz 2012: 67). While strategy deals with space, tactic, in contrast, deals with time for a tactical move and operates on the basis of opportunity. One cannot accrue a great deal of power using tactics however the weak make use of the strong, thus lending a political dimension to everyday practices (de Certeau 1984: xviii).

One privilege that the person can have in using a tactic is freedom to move about in terms of time and take advantage of other people's resources rather than gathering any of your own. As de Certeau (1984: 37) famously suggest "a tactic is an art of the weak." As a serving soldier, my position is bound to military discipline, hence I am "weak" to make the situation in favour of personal development such as pursuing a PhD through film making. Therefore, there needs to be some form of tactic in place to overcome the situation. I have employed de Certeau's model of "tactic" which is a makeshift creation of groups or individuals already caught in the net of "discipline" (de Certeau 1984: XV).

3.5.1 Tactics in Filmmaking Practice

There are two ways that we can define tactics in the context of film making:

Firstly, tactics of promoting oneself as a successful filmmaker for which one needs tactics of seizing the opportunity in terms of time, money, and skill and secondly, the tactic of filming the intended subject(s) or object(s) despite an adverse situation or environment in order to present the filmed material to the audience as empirical evidence of the story.

Formerly, a tactician had to check if there was appropriate weather, indoor/outdoor, day/night for filming and how expensive the equipment or how experienced the technicians he/she had to choose from to complete the film within the intended time frame. More recently, tacticians focus on how safely and effectively footage can be obtained for which his/her crew, equipment and time frame must be as practical as possible. In the context of *The Way of the Gurkha*, not being a commercial film but a PhD research project means that the second category of tactics have been applied.

The PhD was partly (about 30%) funded by an army resettlement grant, aimed at helping soldiers adjust to civilian life. I have chosen to embark on this research, a resettlement into the academic and filmmaking spheres while other opportunities for retired Gurkhas mostly in the field of security remain open. In undertaking this research, my time and concentration have been divided between my professional job and the research, resulting in it being detrimental to my performance at work, thereby causing me to fall behind in promotional opportunities in the army, and as a result I have been unable to progress further than the rank of sergeant.

The Way of the Gurkha was not filmed over a specific time frame by a dedicated crew – it was completed over a six-year period by collecting footage bit-by-bit from various individuals from different places: from the village in the hills of Nepal where I was born, to the recruitment location in Pokhara. Several districts of both the eastern and western part of Nepal have been covered during the research, including Khotang, Bhojpur, Sahkhuwashabha, Sunsari, Kaski, Solukhumbu and capital Kathmandu as well as Gorkha from where the word ‘Gurkhas’ was originated; as well

as Monte Cassino in Italy, where the Gurkha regiment alone lost “more than 5000 lives”⁵¹.

It is not a commercial documentary, but a research project that requires the collecting and piecing together of material (footage) in order to analyse and present the findings of the research. During the process of collecting the footage, I carried a digital video camera with me when I was deployed on military exercises out in the field, which, at times, required actions on my part to seize any opportunity for my personal benefit although not to the extent that de Certeau suggests, being as: “sly as a fox and twice as quick” (de Certeau 1984: 29). As a senior member of the team, I had comparatively more free time than junior and new team members would have, which gave me some chances for filming. However, it did not mean that I could set up the camera and shoot when I wanted. Particularly in tactical training I had to use my mobile phone (a Samsung Galaxy Note 4) which was capable of recording 4k footage. Still, it was not usual practice to film while on routine military exercises, hence I did get stared at sometimes. However, I had given assurance to the senior member in the team that I would be filming as discreetly as possible.

3.5.2 Tactical Timeframe

I enrolled for the PhD in September 2009. Ever since, every minute that I can spare from my professional duty has been invested in the research, which included both academic studies and filming. I had been lucky to serve with the Gurkha Language Wing as a Chief Clerk from 2009 - 2013 which allowed me to film the recruitment selection taking place in Pokhara and recruit training centre in Catterick Garrison during that period. More than 60 hours of footage have been produced over the period of almost five years before concentrating on the thesis writing. The length of footage has been reduced to less than one-and-a-half hours, which charts the process of becoming a Gurkha through to retiring as a veteran.

Since it is practice-based, the majority of the research project is presented as a documentary which covers the period of my childhood-hillboy life to enlistment into

⁵¹ Battle Field Tour Guide Major (retired) T Bettley, July 2013.

the British Army and training, and finally the prospect of being a potential British resident following the changes in the Gurkha immigration policy in 2009. In order to produce a meaningful archival document of the Gurkhas' experience, my personal experience, opinion and study alone cannot justify the whole project unless it incorporates within it a wide spectrum of Nepalese and Gurkha society. Therefore, it has taken almost five years to film (collect data) before editing the material to form a meaningful archival documentary. During that period, the impediments that I had to deal with were time management between my research and professional duty, and projecting the Gurkhas' gratitude as well as grievances in the documentary without harming the reputation of both the Gurkhas and British Army. This I have successfully dealt with by seizing the opportunity which de Certeau defines as "tactics" that "does not have a place, depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing'". In this tactic, the worker diverts time away from producing profit for their employer and "instead uses it for his or her own enjoyment, for activities that are free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit" (de Certeau 1984: xix). Although it is a part-time research project, the amount of time and effort I have given to this project is on a par with full-time research for I took time from my working hours for my research which in de Certeau's term is "diverting time away...." For me, stealing the time needed required me to be tactical, including reading the minds and moods of my commander and finding excuses to avoid long meetings and social activities, which in de Certeau's word is a "clever trick, knowing how to get away with things" (ibid: 25).

In order to deal with the situation that I have no freedom of speech within the organisation, I have taken risks to speak the truth to a degree but mostly I employed de Certeau's tactic of "making do" which is: "a tactic that insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance" (ibid: XX). For example, in the documentary, I have used retired Gurkhas as the representation of the subject of inequality in the British Army. This tactic is a 'taking place' of the retired Gurkhas as I am not directly speaking to the camera. Yet, the documentary has informed audiences about the issues just as strongly and effectively. Therefore, tactically dealing with these impediments was paramount for me to complete the whole research within a nine-year time frame.

3.5.3 Tactical Crew

I filmed either alone, or with a small crew of non-professional individuals. The remote nature of the locations in the hills of Nepal, returning to my village and the restricted access to British Army locations, along with the timeframe and structure of the shoot meant that this project could not use a full-scale commercial film crew. This had implications for the filmic style of the documentary. On many occasions, particularly in Nepal, I had to ask onlookers and passers-by to hold the camera, leaving it on auto-function. But asking for help with this was not simple, particularly when asking people to use high-end technical equipment, which, above all, was on the inventory of Kingston University. On many occasions, there was no time to explain why I was filming. Even if I had explained, I suspect it would not have been of any interest for them at all. Most of the project was completed without any widespread information to the people around me.

3.6 Why Documentary for This Project?

Documentary filmmaking is a method of representing stories through which visual and aural representation can relate with audiences in different ways than written storytelling. The ability to hear and see someone as they are sharing an experience or a story can empathically connect the audience and enhance the understanding of the holistic nature of what is being conveyed. Not only that, filmmaking can indeed contribute to social change movements, with filmmakers and storytellers as activists who are contributing to shifts in everyday consciousness (Winton & Klein, 2010 cited in Carlson 2017: 25). Andy Glynne also suggests, “documentaries have often been about changing the world: Since the very first days of documentary filmmaking, there have been attempts to point out injustices and make us aware of abuses and transgressions across the globe” (Glynne 2012: 161). He cites *The Dying Rooms* (1995), directed by Kate Blewett, as an example - which tells the tale of the one-child policy in China. “The images of a new-born girl tied up in urine-soaked blankets, scabs of dried mucus growing across her eyes, her face shrinking to a skull... that literally thousands will be left to die in places that became known as *The Dying Rooms*.” Following its broadcast on Channel 4, it garnered international attention which led to various reforms of the one-child policy. Likewise, following the release of *Malcolm & Barbara* (1999), Barbara successfully launched a campaign for

Alzheimer's disease and gathered significant support from the British public. *Malcolm & Barbara* is a simple and powerful story of a couple's relationship in the face of devastating illness. Filmmaker Paul Watson's observational documentary reveals how Malcolm Pointon gradually declines into Alzheimer's disease while Barbara copes with this tragedy with resilience and compassion. *The Boy Whose Skin Fell Off* (2004), produced and directed by Patrick Collerton, is a story of a "brave" man called Jonny Kennedy who was born on 4 November 1966 with the agonising skin condition known as dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa (DEB) and died on 26 September 2003 (*The Guardian*, 2004)⁵². *The Guardian* described the documentary as "shocking, moving and sets a new standard in unflinching frankness by focusing on Jonny's blistered, skinless body, on the intense distress he experiences from his condition, and finally on his death". According to ChronicleLive (2004), a charity "was set up in 2006 in memory of Jonny and raised more than £330,000 in a short period of time" (Michael Muncaster, 2017).

Jill Nelmes, for instance, argues the conventional view that "documentary has become an increasingly valuable form in attempting to critically evaluate the supposed progress of society, and the real implications of cultural history. One of the starkest pieces of evidence of how documentary can be used as a powerful tool in revealing truth is Errol Morris's *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) which John A. Little suggests "is recognised as the tool that vindicated a falsely imprisoned man and identified a murderer who was ultimately convicted" (Little 2007: 14). In the documentary, Errol Morris slowly reveals a hidden phenomenon by simply allowing everyone involved, criminals, judges, police officers, and witnesses, to talk on camera for as long as was necessary. Long uninterrupted interviews slowly draw the viewer into the surreal world of the accused, the accuser and the small town of Vidor, Texas and its 'justice' system. The murderer, David Harris, indirectly confessed to his crime during the production of the documentary on audio tape, leading the police to arrest, try and convict him for the crime.

⁵² <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/mar/21/channel4.broadcasting>

The above further validates that documentary is the best approach to explore the insight of the Gurkhas thereby determining their position in the British Army and revealing the complexities of the historical and contemporary relations between the Gurkhas and the British. As Roscoe and Hight (2001: 6) suggest: “Documentary holds a privileged position within society as it promises to present the most accurate portrayal of the social-historical world” *The Way of the Gurkha*, from its “privileged position”, delivers proportionate and accurate information about Gurkhas to a broad social demography of viewers: old, young, rich, poor, serving, retired, farmers, bureaucrats, writers and filmmakers, Nepalese and foreigners.

In the past, Gurkhas were not exposed to the British public as much as they are today. Although a handful of media and documentaries covered the stories of Gurkha soldiers, only the positive side of the stories were told. When the BBC made *The Gurkhas* (1995), the Gurkha Army Ex-servicemen Association (GAESO)’s Gurkha justice campaign was already well underway. However, the documentary did not mention anything about the campaign at all. This research does not attempt to find out why that happened, however it makes clear that the campaign has certainly ruffled the relationships between the Gurkhas and the British. It might well have been a “shock”⁵³ for the British authorities to learn that Gurkhas, who are “so often described as ‘closed’ and ‘unchanging’” (Des Chene 1997: 2), are now open and they have changed. The later part of the documentary broadly covers the Gurkhas’ justice campaign and its provenance, thereby informing the general audience that the relationship between the Gurkhas and the British has not always been smooth. On one hand, the Gurkhas are staging the Gurkha Justice Campaign, but on the other, they are serving the Queen and her country with the same loyalty and courage they have throughout the British Empire’s most difficult periods in the past. In addition, the British Government admires the Gurkhas. Sir Ralf Turner calls them “the most faithful friend” (Gurkha statue in Whitehall London, also cited in Gillott 2017: 205). But they also seem to have no hesitation in sending the entire battalion

⁵³ In May 2012, Steve Burton, one of my mortgage advisers told me that he was shocked to learn that Gurkhas were not allowed to come to this country (UK) after their retirement.

away without any pension after the wars end (see documentary 01:21:43); this is where the complexity of the relationships between the British and the Gurkhas lies.

It is understandable that covering everything in one episode of the story may not be possible or even if it is, the viewers may not find all (both) sides of the story interesting. That may be the reason that highlighting one side of the story was, according to Rosenthal, “prevalent until the mid-1970s”. She argues that many historians of the Holocaust implied that the six million Jews killed by the Nazis went to their deaths like 'lambs to the slaughter'. In fact, there were revolts and uprisings in over 110 ghettos and in the death camps — but these events were, of course, never filmed by the Nazis and so were, all too often, ignored by filmmakers and historians alike. Therefore, in *The Way of the Gurkha*, I have been as honest as I humanly could; nothing has been made up as “documentary films speak about actual situations or events and honour known facts; they do not introduce new, unverifiable ones. They speak directly about the historical world rather than allegorically” (Rosenthal 1998: 428).

In summary, documentary embodies an art form, a modern incarnation of the age-old tradition of storytelling. Like oral and written stories of the past, documentaries seek to take their viewers on an unforgettable journey, observing and consequently preserving what makes humanity human: hope and fear, comedy and tragedy, compassion and cruelty. This is the reason why documentary was used for this project.

3.7 Documentary Filmmaking Approach: Historical Background and Documentary Genre

“It has been nearly seven decades since John Grierson first applied the term ‘documentary’ to movies. Still, the definition of the term remains a vexed and controversial issue, not just among film theorists but also among people who make and watch documentaries” (Eitzen 1995: 81). However, differing opinions about the nature of documentary have emerged in recent years. Alan Rosenthal (1998:12) suggests, “A strong and widely-held assumption in the past was the documentary has a special claim to the truth”. According to Brian Winston “documentary would be something written, inscribed...which furnishes evidence or information” (Taylor et al

2008: 104). That is why we make documentaries and why people watch them. This claim is now under attack by many theoreticians, including Alan Rosenthal who argues that “semiology and structuralism have shown that the documentary film, like the feature film, uses signifying practices that, structured like a language, are already symbolic. Hence, all film, including documentary, is ultimately ‘fiction’” (Rosenthal 1998: 12). However, if the documentary is fiction, a serious question emerges - how do we distinguish documentaries from movies? Those two genres (film and documentary) have distinctive characteristics: a fiction film presents a story that is not based on reality, or at least not in the form it is represented; a documentary, however, tells something about the reality of our world – shows us the real world. At best, we can categorise non-fiction movies as a documentary, for Erik Barnouw observes that many started with nonfiction items, calling them documentaries, actualities, topical, interest films, educations, expedition films, travel films - or, after 1907 ‘travelogues’ (Barnouw 1993: 19). If a documentary can be fiction, then why should one be bothered to define documentary in the first place? Michael Chanan (2007: 68) explicitly says, “Documentary emerged as a distinctive genre by differentiating itself from fiction.” If we look at the history of the documentary in Great Britain, Aitken et al (1997: 58) suggests, “the central paradigms of British national film culture are realism, then the documentary film movement is one of the principal sources of that tradition”. In the nascent days of world cinema, that is, at the beginning of the 20th century, everything we now associate with the cinema — story writing, filming, editing and visual impact — were in the experimental phase; hence, filmmakers back then had little thought of fiction films, which eventually grew rapidly as the filmmaking industry took shape. A time came when films had to be distinguished by classifying them into different genres.

Bill Nichols who is best known for his “modes” theory of classifying documentary films at a macro level by examining genres, structures, and aesthetics, suggests, “documentary films speak about actual situations or events and honour known facts; they do not introduce new, unverifiable ones. They speak directly about the historical world rather than allegorically” (Nichols 2010: 364), and that is what people like to observe. “The documentary is a genre of film devoted to describing and examining the organisation of human life. There are no actresses or actors” (Goodman 2004: 326). In a documentary, the characters are not stars and do not understand the filmic

language or terminology. The camera captures the event(s) continuously as the story unfolds. It can be, as Bruzzi (2000: 99) puts it: “accidental or unplanned, they are about not necessarily knowing where they will end up.” The film crews sometimes would not have time to communicate and coordinate each other. Lights, reflectors, jib arms, dollies and tracks often get abandoned. But its beauty and end-product would be actual and tangible. In turn, this encapsulates Grierson's definition of documentary as “the creative treatment of actuality” (Glynne 2012: 19).

Barbash (1997: 20) suggests, “recent impressionistic documentaries often celebrate their own subjectivity to such a degree that they form a hybrid genre somewhere between documentary and fiction (like *Moi un noir* [1957], and *La Pyramide Humaine* [1958])”. “Particularly” as Paul Ward suggests, “after the development of digital technology, many questions have been asked whether a documentary necessarily requires indexical images from the real world” (Ward 2005: 101). There are documentaries like *Walking With Dinosaurs* (BBC, 2000), which have been made using computer-generated imagery (CGI). It is, however, still presenting a reality (at least an assumed one, dealing as it does with life during prehistoric times). Although Richard Denton rejects the notion of *Walking With Dinosaurs* being called a documentary, I, to some extent, support Vaughan (1999: xiii) that: “it is simply film about the real world; or it is film using shots of the real world”. This documentary even won the Peabody Award for ‘Outstanding Animated Program’ and ‘Outstanding Special Visual Effects for Miniseries’ (Peabody: 2000). This could be one reason, as Chanan (2007: 21) notes, “there has been a loss of faith in the legitimacy of the documentary claim of the real, in which the form has succumbed to general disbelief in the possibility of objective truth, at least as formally understood.” I agree that “the cinematic flavour governs documentaries these days, however it has also not forgotten yet that the image makers have the moral obligation to reveal the covert, to never appear to produce an objective mirror by which the world can see its 'true' image” (Rosenthal and Corner 2005: 210).

3.8 Documentary Modes: Hybrid Approach

Bill Nichols attempted to distinguish between different documentaries in what he describes as ‘modes of representation’. He suggests that every documentary has its own distinct voice. He suggests:

Like every speaking voice, every cinematic voice has a style or 'grain' all its own that acts like a signature or fingerprint...in documentary film and video, we can identify six modes of representation that function something like sub-genres of the documentary genre itself: poetic, expository, participatory, observational reflexive and performative (Nichols 2001: 99).

We shall discuss each mode in detail later but first it is essential to understand whether each mode functions independently in the documentaries, without assistance from each other. The study suggests that it is difficult to complete a feature-length documentary remaining strictly within one mode or sub-genre nor can the mode be defined strictly in one particular way (Cagle 2012 cited in Natusch and Hawkins 2014: 105). Nichols admits that each documentary film does not necessarily fall into one mode but can consist of a combination of modes. At the same time, the fluidity of the modes opens the possibility for a variety of interpretations for documentary films. According to Nichols, most films incorporate more than one mode, even though some modes are more prominent at one time or place than another. For example, Bruzzi finds 'performative' "confusing" if it is not supported by other forms of documentaries. Sometimes performance could well be abstract or vague or figurative, particularly when performative documentary approaches the poetic domain of experimental cinema in which case, it will be clarified by other means, voice-over for instance. It brings the emotional intensity of embodied experience and knowledge to the fore rather than any attempt to do something tangible (ibid: 143-144).

Michael Moore's documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* is another example of the hybrid mode of documentary in which Moore interweaves systematically or thematically connected, yet individually unrelated, vignettes of people or places with narrative stories to create a tapestry of ironic and humorous tragedy. This performative film reveals expository, interactive, reflexive and performative elements. In *The Guardian* (2004) Peter Bradshaw described its approach as follows:

Clips and graphics are stitched together with a droll, deadpan voiceover and often a declamatory musical score, though Moore's ursine baseball-capped form does not itself shamle into view until well into the film (Bradshaw, 2004)

Moore interacts with his subjects by appearing on camera in 'man on the street' style interviews. For example, Moore interviews marine recruiters, forming questions designed to make them look like sociopathic and hyper-predatory liars. Moore never confronts the recruiters, but instead crafts his questions, feigning a 'genuine' curiosity and implied innocence. His act helps the viewer to look beyond Moore's political agenda and accept the sequence's suggestion that he seeks the truth. In fact, "performative films give added emphasis to the subjective qualities of experience" (Nichol 2001:131). Modern documentaries are often a combination of multiple Nichol's modes, unapologetically making the transition from reconstruction to archive footage to the participatory mode within a short period of time. The contemporary documentarist is rarely confined to one style, drawing from a century of barriers overcome with a knowledge and respect of both audience and film, creating a hybrid of forms. Chris Cagle also suggests:

The Documentary Studies research agenda [therefore] has often seen documentary modes per se as categories flattening the complexity of documentary or has argued that contemporary documentary in its art-film or more mainstream versions is inclined to hybridity (Cagle 2012: 46).

For example, Little (2007: 24-25) also suggests that performative documentary incorporates other modes i.e. expository, observational, interactive, poetic and reflexive modes of documentary rather than functioning on its own in order to be a complete documentary. More specifically, Barry Natusch and Beryl Hawkins have extensively tested Nichols modes taxonomy at micro level on two critically acclaimed documentaries - *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* (Klayman, 2012) and *Helvetica* (Hustwit, 2007) which contain 116 scenes (79 scenes from *Ai Weiwei* and 37 scenes from *Helvetica*).

In *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*, Ai Weiwei calls attention to human rights violation on an epic scale. He defines the art form from a new dimension and advocates democracy and freedom. One of the most prominent features of the documentary is that Ai Weiwei who helped design the Bird's Nest stadium, a soaring feat of architecture, which was the centre piece of the Olympic Games in 2008, boycotted the game accusing the government of using the games as propaganda. Keith Richburg, in *The Washington Post*, writes, "He has been beaten up and kept under house arrest and

his newly-built studio was demolished by the government. Despite all odds, he continued to speak not only through the arts but using social media - Instagram and Twitter in particular - as one of the primary media” (Richburg, 2011).

Another documentary, *Helvetica* which Chris Cagle describes as “a theatrical feature in the ‘quirkumentary’ vein, drawing simultaneously on technology and design cultures and on social history” (Cagle 2012: 47), is a unique subject as opposed to historical and social documentaries made with a conventional approach for it “explores the split between modernist and post modernists’ and why the revolution and evolution of fonts has presented a dispute”⁵⁴. In *The New York Times*, Matt Zoller Seitz writes:

Overlong, but fascinating, Mr Hustwit’s documentary posits Helvetica - a sans-serif typeface developed in 1957 at the Haas Foundry in Hunchenstein, Switzerland - as an emblem of the machine age, a harbinger of globalization and an ally of modern art’s impulse toward innovation, simplicity and abstraction. ...The film’s provocative lively interviews with graphic designers and theorists...assess Helvetica’s impact on human life and thought (Seitz, 2007).

The point I attempt to make here is that these two distinctly different documentaries exhibit different approaches in terms of documentary film making; *Ai Weiwei* is the account of an artist/social activist’s life, whereas *Helvetica* is a lyrical, historical account of the proliferation of a ubiquitous typeface; yet they share the commonalities that both have used participatory interviews and expository montage. Through the microanalysis of Nichols’ mode, Natusch and Hawkin find the expository and participatory modes covering nearly 60% of the entire documentary (59.0% of *Ai Weiwei* and 59.4% of *Helvetica*). The other modes demonstrated different patterns of distribution including poetic 21.7% in *Helvetica* and 13.5% in *Ai Weiwei*; and observational 15.4% in *Ai Weiwei* and 5.4% in *Helvetica*. The reflexive and performative modes were almost equally present in both films, even though they represented a minor portion of the data (11.3% in *Ai Weiwei* and 13.5% in *Helvetica*).

⁵⁴ <https://nhelha.wordpress.com/2016/04/21/history-of-helvetica/amp/>

In the same manner, I have analysed *The Way of the Gurkha*, which contains 181 scenes. The documentary predominantly uses the expository mode as the voice-over is its main driving force. Other modes have been distributed across the documentary led mainly by the participatory mode.

Table 3.1. Scenes classified by Nichols' modes in *The Way of the Gurkha*

Mode	Scenes	Percentage
Expository	81	44.75%
Participatory	47	25.97%
Performative	21	11.6%
Observational	23	12.7%
Poetic	9	4.97%
Reflexive	-	-

3.9 Microanalysis of Nichols' Modes in the Way of the Gurkha

3.9.1 Expository Mode

The expository modes “relies heavily on an informing logic carried by the spoken world. In a reversal of the traditional emphasis in film, images serve a supporting role. They illuminate, illustrate, evoke, or act in counterpoint to what is said” (Nichols 2001: 107).

The significance of this particular mode is that the voice-over which is also often termed “Voice of God”, as Barbash and Taylor (1997: 19) suggest, “presents its point of view clearly, and leaves little room for misinterpretation or interpretation for that matter”. That is the reason why the “expository documentary is popular among

television". For instance, *Brett* (1965) looks at the life of Brett Nielson, a boy born without arms due to the effect of the drug thalidomide that his mother was prescribed when she was pregnant. The voiceover narration by Stanley Baxter runs together with Nielson's predicament of having to do things as easily as his two brothers. His parents take him to hospital and convince him to try prosthetic arms which do not help Neilson at all as he feels uncomfortable with them. In the final voice-over narration, the family are encouraged to see a bright future for Brett as the voice-over narrates:

"...but some children older than Brett have already learnt to write and feed themselves and thus unlock the chains of dependence that bind their future. This is the challenge. It no less difficult for having been met before by millions of handicapped people, in separate personal struggles like Brett's."

Before further the discussion of the expository mode, it is essential to clarify that I have used the term voice-over rather than voice-of-God in this thesis for the reason that, because many scholars, including Charles Wolfe, seem to have used the term voice-over and voice-of-God indiscriminately and suggest voice-over is commonly equated with a voice of God (Wolfe 1997: 149). Bill Nichols separates them by suggesting that "a filmmaker takes on a personal persona, either directly or through a surrogate. A typical surrogate is the 'voice-of-God' commentator with a deep male voice, whom we hear speaking in a 'voice-over' but do not see" (Nichols 2001: 13). Desmond Bell further clarifies:

This voice-of-God is often didactic in tone, authoritative in manner and expository in form. ... Voice-over does not have to be like this, it can problematize truth and authority claims...the voice-over often is used to reveal a person's inner thoughts and motivations (Bell 2011: 19).

The commentary that supports the unfolding events in *The Way of the Gurkha* is not authoritative nor is it the completely anonymous voice of professionals hired for the project. I appear occasionally to address the audience directly with the same voice and tone. Therefore, it is a voice-over rather than a voice-of-God.

Going back to *Brett*, voiceover narration in the documentary not only narrates events literally but also translates them into emotion by revealing their background and it,

according to Bruzzi (2000: 40), “gives insights and information not immediately available from within the diegesis”. Not all are content with the notion though; some, including Kozloff (1988: 21), vigorously argue that “voiceover is the unnecessary evil of documentary, the resort of the ‘unimaginative and incompetent’” (cited in Bruzzi 2000: 41).

To some extent, I agree with the argument that voiceover may well restrict the viewers’ freedom of interpretation, thereby restricting the viewers’ judgment of the narrator’s ideas. For example, in Tseten’s *Who Wants to be a Gurkha* (2012), which is made in the observational mode, a recruiting officer interrogates a candidate in a brusque tone, “Why did you shave your leg?” The candidate gets perturbed. After a moment’s pause, the officer again asks, “You are trying to look younger, right?” The candidate remains silent. The interviewer (recruiting officer) interprets the candidate’s silence as an assent. The viewers may find the interview uneasy, as the officer put undue pressure on the candidate by asking arbitrary questions which he answers himself on behalf of the candidate. However, the recruiting officer knows exactly what he is doing as he has undertaken this role for years. He identifies what the candidate’s *tactics* are to get through the selection. When I joined in 1993, some of the candidates, particularly those who had hairy arms and legs, had to go through the same predicament. Yet, leaving room for audiences to interpret the objects in their own way would sometimes be a good idea because viewers can focus on the object on the screen rather than being carried away by the voiceover.

However, I would not go as far as Robert Drew who suggests, “narration can be a killer” (Bruzzi 2000: 41). On occasion stories, particularly those utilising the observational mode, require a voiceover for clarity and accuracy. For example, in *Who Will Be A Gurkha?* (2012), Tseten begins with a close-up shot of written letters: “W...(number)”, “GC...(number)” made with permanent ink on the chests of the candidates. There is no voice-over to explain where the location is and what those letters mean. If there was a voice-over it would explain that ‘W’ means a candidate from West Nepal, and that GC means a candidate for the Gurkha Contingent

Singapore (not for the British Army).⁵⁵ But the documentary *Who Will Be A Gurkha?* leaves viewers unaware of this, leaving them to interpret things as best they can which can be, for some, candidates being treated like animals as their bare chests get painted with indelible ink while for others, it could just be like footballers having their t-shirts with their names to identify who is who. Similarly, these candidates also must be identified by which part of the country they are from. However, when it comes to the filmmaker's intent, it is clear that he has not even thought about the perspective of the former (who interpret the chest painting inhumane) as his film begins with:

In 1815, British authority in India was put to a severe test by the marauding forces of an expanding Nepal State. Impressed by their art of hill warfare and tenacity. Britain began recruiting Nepalese.

This clearly indicates that the filmmaker's intent is to celebrate the Gurkhas' service in the British Army, but not to project the Gurkhas as animal. Still, the meaning of "W" and "GC" in the documentary remains unsaid purely because of its mode being observational. As Nichols (2010: 33) has made clear, the observational mode "limits the filmmaker to the present moment and requires a disciplined detachment from the events themselves" as opposed to the expository mode, whose "text addresses the viewer directly, with titles or voices that advance an argument about the historical world... The expository mode emphasises the impression of objectivity, and of well-established judgement" (Bruzzi 2000: 41).

Keith Beattie suggests that the expository mode complements, reinforces, or elaborates the impressions, opinions, reactions and written research articulated in the spoken commentary (and thus of the filmmakers themselves, their position/argument) (Beattie 2004: 21). I agree with the suggestion that this mode creates the impression of an objective and balanced approach to its material as it keeps the audience in making their own judgement and submitting to the presenter completely like in the newscast. Variations of this method exist today in many

⁵⁵ The recruitment selection for both the British Army and the Singapore Police Force takes place at the same time.

television documentaries in the voice of a commentator who encodes expertise and authority, translating the subject matter for a lay audience.

In the microanalysis of Nichols' documentary mode in *Ai Weiwei* and *Helvetica*, Natusch and Hawking find, in addition to voice-over, the primary faculty of the expository mode containing a range of archival and news footage, images, such as school bags found in the debris after the Chengdu earthquake and use of titles to support the basic claims addressing the viewer directly.

In *The Way of the Gurkha*, from the beginning to the end, most of the sequences are of the expository approach. For example, the documentary opens by addressing the audience directly while walking along a path. Immediately after that, a group of young boys carrying shacks of rice on their backs walk past me on a road still-under-construction while a few other children rest on one side. The voice-over follows:



The villagers had worked tirelessly in that time to construct a five-foot-wide road, this was a huge change. The village children no longer had to walk for three days to Katari like me, merely to see vehicles (See documentary 00:01:23).

Let us take the above voice-over out from the scene for example. Now what the audience will see is just me walking alone on the newly-constructed wide road. Who would possibly link this particular scene with my childhood story that I had to walk for three days to Katari merely to see vehicles if it had not been explained in the background? Or who watching would be aware that the vehicles are available in the villages to see, unless it is explained that the road has just reached the village and the villagers who have not been to the cities can now see and ride vehicles? The audience would not even know that I am returning to my village; at best, I can be viewed simply as a trekker.



Chris Cagle emphasizes the importance of voice-over by suggesting the example of *Eyes on the Prize*, an American television series and 14-part documentary about the civil rights movement in the United States, in which voice-over is used to explain historical events to affix meaning to that actuality footage (a fight between teens, an arrest). For instance, the cut from Schweid to a young white man being arrested occurs just when Schweid says the word "fear"; the look on the man's face aptly illustrates the idea of white fear but also, in and of itself, is relatively meaningless

without the voice-over to code it as “fear” (Cagle 2012: 49). Therefore, the voice-over is a fundamental aspect to deal with the complexity of the *historical facts*.

Table 3.2. Sample scenes in The Way of the Gurkha as Expository Mode

Expository Mode Subcategories	Illustration	Corresponding Frame
Explained through voice-over	Voice-over – "While Dipendra and his friends prepare a meal for me during my two-week trek in Nepal I contemplate how lucky I am to be free from the worries of survival. I realised how lucky I am to experience such a happy life since joining the British Army in 1993"	 <p>56</p>
Image supports basic claims	Through subtitle - Gurkha Justice Campaign rally in London, 2006.	

⁵⁶In the absence of the above narration, the picture on its own will not tell the audience exactly what role it has in the documentary unless it is meant to be an observational mode, which would leave the audience to make their own subjective judgement (interpretation) which, at times, could lead to misinterpretation.

<p>Direct address to viewer</p>	<p>Through PTC - Talking to viewers about myself being one of the recruiting staff at Pokhara Camp in 2012.</p>	
<p>Archival pictures</p>	<p>Through voice-over Anglo-Nepal War 1814-1816. (image Courtesy of Gurkha Museum Winchester)</p>	

3.9.2 Participatory Mode

In participatory mode⁵⁷, the filmmaker engages with the subject(s) and becomes part of the event. In Nichols' words, the filmmaker "becomes a social actor (almost) like any other". He further suggests, "We expect to witness the historical world as represented by someone who actively engages with, rather than unobtrusively observes, poetically reconfigures, or argumentatively assembles that world" (2001: 116). This mode is often described as the style that holds the most truth because it allows both observation and engagement.

A participatory mode is an inclusive and collaborative process that engages communities in designing and carrying out the collection and dissemination of their own story. This mode is popular in ethnographic documentary making in which the director becomes an investigator and enters unknown territory and participates in the

⁵⁷ Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary Film*. Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2010, pp.179-194 [Extract: The Participatory Mode, originally called the Interactive Mode]

lives of others. At the same time the researcher retains a degree of detachment that differentiates him/her from those about whom he/she makes the film. Even if it is not ethnographic film, Nichols suggests:

Documentary filmmakers go into the fields; they [too] live among others and speak about or represent what they experience. ... Observational documentary de-emphasizes persuasion to give us a sense of what it is like to be in a given situation but without a sense of what it is like for the filmmaker to be there, too. Participatory gives us a sense of what it is like for the filmmaker to be in the given situation and how that situation alters as a result (Nichols 2001: 116).

In the microanalysis of Nichols' mode on *Ai Weiwei* and *Helvetica* Natusch and Hawkins specifically focus on Nichols' suggestion that in the participatory mode the filmmaker(s) make use of the interview to bring different accounts together in a single story suggesting further that:

They [interviews] are the most important element of investigative news programmes; hence they serve as the persuasive mechanism charged with convincing the audience of the film's veracity. It is not only the mere presence of interviews, but also the variety of voices and opinions from multiple individuals that enhance our belief in the film's credibility (Natusch and Hawkins 2014: 118-119).

In the case of *Ai Weiwei*, and *Helvetica* they find a series of interviews. For example, in *Ai Weiwei*, the artist himself tells his story, his brother Ai Dan talks about their previous family life, magazine publisher Hung Huang talks about broad social issues. Likewise, in *Helvetica*, Mathew Carter talks about his father and the origin of Helvetica, Hoefler and Tobias talk about *Helvetica's* ubiquity and the range of attitudes towards the font, and Wim Crouwel talks about the computer's role in typeface design.

Table 3.3. Sample Scenes in *The Way of the Gurkha* as participatory mode categories

Participatory Mode Subcategories	Illustration	Corresponding Frame
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<p>Interview #1</p> <p>Emotional account</p>	<p>Deshu Rai weeps when the researcher asks if she knew anything about her father who died in a Malayan emergency in 1950.</p>	
<p>Interview #2</p> <p>Education in the village</p>	<p>A secondary school teacher, Gajendra K.C., talks about the situation of English education in the village schools.</p>	
<p>Interview # 3 socio-political issues</p>	<p>Retired Warrant Officer Gyan Raj Rai explains how Gurkhas were treated differently.</p>	

3.9.3 Poetic Mode

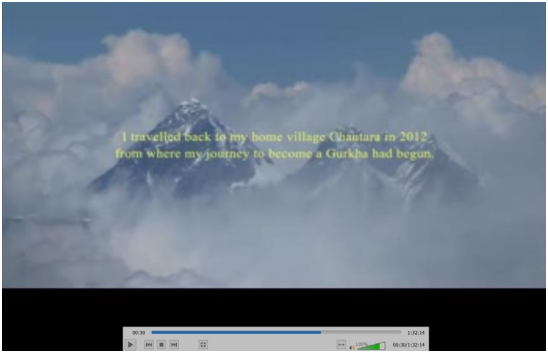
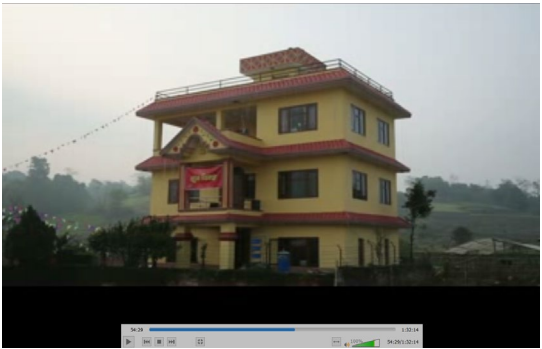
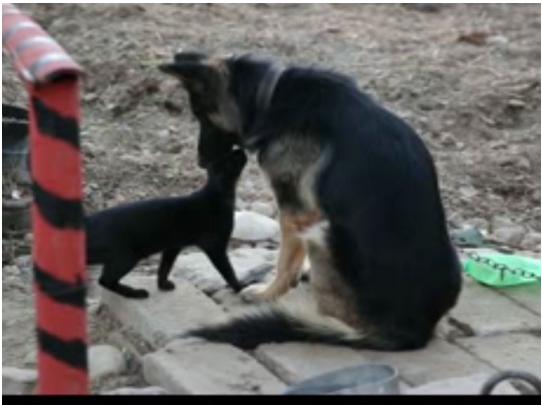
According to Nichols, the poetic mode sacrifices the conventions of continuity editing and the sense of a very specific location in time and place that follows from it, to explore associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions. (Nichols 2001: 101). In other words, the film maker manipulates the “spatial juxtaposition” and creates “temporal rhythms” moving away from the objective reality of a given situation or people to grasp at an inner truth. One of the



films Nichols suggests as an example is Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's *Play of Light: Black, White and Gray* (1930), in which Nagy presents various views of one of his own kinetic sculptures to emphasize the gradation of light passing across the film frame rather than to document the material shape of the sculpture itself. The effect of this play of light on the viewer takes on more importance than the object it refers to in the historical world. Likewise, Oscar Fischinger's *Composition in Blue* (1935) uses abstract patterns of form or colour or animated figures and has a minimal relationship to a documentary tradition of representing the historical world rather than a world of artist's imagining.

As discussed earlier, any of the six modes on their own cannot complete a documentary and this is more so for the poetic mode. However, as Nichols suggests the "poetic mode has many facets, but they all emphasize the ways in which the filmmaker's voice gives fragments of the historical world a formal, aesthetic integrity peculiar to the film itself" (Nichols 2010: 105). For example, in *Song of Ceylong* (1934), Basil Wright projects the religious lives of Ceylong and its relation to modernity in a poetic and rather complex aesthetic way. The film is a mixture of anthropological observation, travelogue, poetic expression and sound-image experimentation. It incorporates conventional voice-over narration and subtitles describing sequences projected on the screen. Therefore, it is a more challenging task to clearly identify and segregate the poetic mode embedded with other modes in the documentaries. Yet, Natusch and Hawkins parse *Ai Weiwei* and *Helvetica* by probing from sequence to sequence and find almost 12% of the total sequences of the poetic mode which includes images of metaphorical representation, fragmented art images, historic footage and slow-motion images.

The Way of the Gurkha opens with aerial footage of Mount Everest shrouded in moving cloud whilst the passage "I travelled back to my home village Chautara in 2012 from where my journey to become a Gurkha had begun" appears on the screen with a melodious sound track in the background. By opening the documentary in this way, I have tried to project the geographical aesthetics of Nepal whilst also trying to leave the impression that Nepal from where the hillboys are drawn from the British Army is a Himalayan country.

Table 3.4. Sample Scenes in The Way of the Gurkha as Poetic Mode Category

Poetic Mode Subcategories	Illustration	Corresponding Frame
Metaphorical representation #1	A juxtaposition of the beauty of mountains in Nepal and its citizens who seek service in the foreign army.	
Metaphorical representation #2	A healthy German shepherd and a cat happily meet outside the filmmaker's house in Kathmandu as the voice-over plays in the background, "Not only my family in the UK but my extended families back in Nepal are also better off since they have been relocated from the village."	 
Poetic Expression footage	When the deputy recruiting officer (DRO) called out my number 343, the filmmaker	

	<p>thanked the goddess of victory 'Jai Kali' out loud.</p>	
<p>Editing: Slow rhythm</p>	<p>A close up shot of the film maker sitting alone in the classroom in a village school relapses to his past.</p>	

3.9.4 Performative Mode

The performative mode, according to Nichols, differs from the other modes in the way that social actors' performances draw "more heavily on the tradition of acting as a way to bring a heightened emotional involvement to a situation or a role... They want us to feel on a visceral level rather than on a conceptual level" (Nichols 2010: 203). Nichols further suggests that the performative firms:

Engage us less rhetorical commands or imperatives than with a sense of their own vivid responsiveness. The filmmakers' responsiveness seeks to animate our own. We engage with their representation of the historical world but do so obliquely, via the affective charge they apply to it and seek to make our own (Nichols 2001: 17).

What it basically means is that the filmmakers try to explain the historical world (what happened in the past) by representing it through effective means, i.e. enactment. Bruzzi (2000: 155) also suggests, "the enactment of the documentary specially for the camera – will always be the heart of the non-fiction film". Furthermore, the filmmaker takes part in the documentary as the main subject who is trying something out for an experiment. They are part of the filming as well as being the documentary maker. This is often confused with participatory documentaries. Being very personal,

the performative mode is particularly well-suited to telling the stories of filmmakers from different social groups, offering the chance to air unique perspectives without having to argue both sides of their experiences. Wilma de Jong suggests:

They perform different roles to prove, elicit, persuade, cajole, or seduce their subjects into revealing feelings, ideas, fantasies or wishes... This mode of representation requires a filmmaker with strong interview and social skills. Experience, control over the narrative (script) and an ability to integrate unexpected events or reactions of interviewees are essential (Jong 2008: 103).

As a travel documentarian, Michael Palin has used this mode fully in his documentaries. In *Around the World in 80 Days* (BBC, 1988), it starts with him receiving a call from BBC television about whether he wants to take the challenge to complete the world tour using only land and sea. Throughout the documentary, scenes unveil, documenting Palin's effort to learn the local language, sampling local cuisines and joining in the celebration of cultural events. Likewise, in *Himalaya with Michael Palin* (BBC, 2004), he acts like he choked on food and lies on the table feigning having fainted while having his breakfast in a hotel before he sets off to meet the former England cricketer Imran Khan in northern Pakistan. Ed Van Der Kooy, a Dutch filmmaker and artist, spent many months in Nepal while making *History of Kathmandu Nepal, My Diary 1978*. He entertains kids on the streets of Kathmandu by playing guitar for them. Sometimes it sounds like the word 'performative' refers to dramatic performances through actions but not necessarily in this particular context. 'Performative' refers to, according to Beattie (2004: 23), "drawing attention to itself" which Bruzzi (2000: 154) clarifies further – "performative documentary uses performance within a non-fiction context to draw attention to the impossibilities of authentic documentary representation."

Where traditional documentary usually exists within the boundaries of its intended form (expository, observational, interactive or reflexive), the performative mode represents a continuum of means for establishing the film-viewer connection, which varies without prejudice across the boundaries of modes. In *Blurred Boundaries*, Nichols suggests:


When a filmmaker integrates these elements in the performative mode, ... expository qualities may speak less about the historical world than serve to evoke... this world.

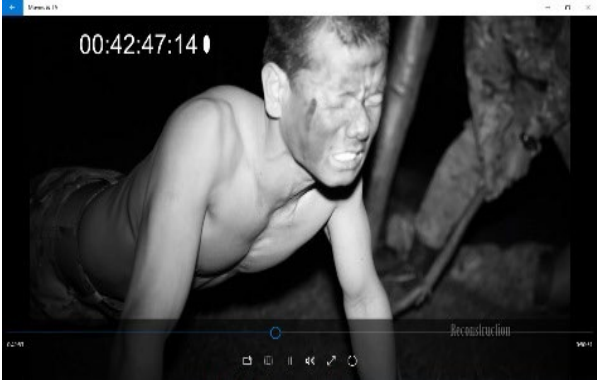

Questions of authority may diminish in favour of questions of tone, style and voice. Observational techniques... lend stress to qualities of duration, texture, and experience, often liberated from ... social actors giving virtual performances ... familiar to us from fiction. Reflexive techniques... do not so much estrange us from the text's own procedures as draw our attention to the subjectivities and intensities that surround and bathe the scene as represented (Nichol 1991: 95-96).

Nichols has also suggested Riggs's *Tongues Untied* (1989) as an example of a performative documentary in which Riggs presented the recollections of his personal life while at the same time detailing the black gay culture in North America. Not only that, Riggs reveals homophobic attitudes in the society, exclusion, political racism and contemporary sexual politics through *Tongues Untied*. Likewise, Natusch and Hawkins suggest the dropping of a Han dynasty vase, which is valuable and evokes a subject response in *Ai Weiwei* and Matthew Carter showing how he designed a typeface on a computer screen in *Helvetica* as a performative category.

The Way of the Gurkha uses the performative mode; specifically, when the documentary deals with the basic infantry training which has significantly changed in terms of tactics, technologies and punishment policies over the period. Corporal punishment through physical contact has now been abolished, whereas it used to be the norm when I underwent the training in Hong Kong in 1993.

Table 3.5. Sample Scenes in The Way of the Gurkha in Performative Mode Category

Performative Mode Subcategories	Illustration	Corresponding Frame
Performance # 1 Hillboy - hardship	Karan Rai, acts as the researcher in his childhood	 <p>Gurkha</p>

<p>Performance #1</p> <p>Punishment in the past</p>	<p>Demonstration of corporal punishment - Trainee Rifleman Tonil performs one of the events when the researcher was punished during training in 1993</p>	
<p>Performance # 3</p> <p>Reflection of past event</p>	<p>Gurkha veterans perform a dance to the song composed by Monte Cassino war veterans in 1944</p>	


3.9.5 Observational Mode


In observational mode, “the filmmaker gathered the necessary raw materials and then fashioned a meditation, perspective, or argument from them.” (Nichols 2001: 109). Critics of observational documentary often argue that it runs the risk of becoming voiceless, a kind of filmic orphan that lacks artful construction, engaging narrative and auteurist elements usually found in good films (Rabiger 1998, 2004 cited in Milojkovic 2008: 1). This mode is more showing (observing) than saying and recording reality as it unfolds. “The filmmaker tried to make himself/herself disappear, to become a fly on the wall and calls on the viewer to take a more active role in determining the significance of what is said and done” (Muster and Sylvest 2015: 234). For example, in *Soldier Girls*, which Alan Rosenthal brands as “pure observational” (1988: 51), we do not hear any commentaries or voiceover to elaborate or explain the unfolding events. Typically, in this mode, the camera alone

will work with the characters, however, "the presence of camera will not influence the behaviours of the characters in the film"(Jong 2008: 103), as though no one is present except for the character(s) or there is an attempt to deny the filmmaker's presence. Impromptu events unfurl by themselves which "occasionally [bring] unforeseen and dire consequences into the lives of filmed subjects" (Rosenthal 1988: 245). Therefore, one of the drawbacks of the observational mode could be ethical questions about the representation of individuals in crisis or in stressful situations. Rosenthal observes Flaherty's documentaries *Nanook of the North* and *Man of Aran*, in ethical term, as a complete failure as both documentaries exploited the participants (Nanooks and fishermen) by putting their lives in danger in the course of filming (Rosenthal 1988: 246).

In *Ai Weiwei* and *Helvetica*, Natusch and Hawkins (2014: 116) detect the observational mode having a lower ranking in both film (15.2% and 5.5%). The observational mode's footage includes a cat opening the gate, Ai Weiwei having social time with friends and unedited footage like rushes in the station. They suggest, this mode is also subtle like the poetic but easier to detect.

Table 3.6. Sample Scenes in The Way of the Gurkha Identified as Observational Mode

Observational Mode Subcategories	Illustration	Corresponding Frame
Unedited footage	The researcher tries to write something but the pen does not work	

<p>Camera simply observes</p>	<p>No voice-over, no sound track while potential recruits prepare for Doko basket-carrying training near Kathmandu valley.</p>	
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3.9.6 Reflexive Mode


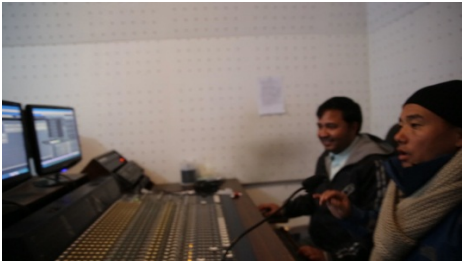

The definition of reflexive mode is not as clear as other modes of documentary. Bill Nichols attempts to include the process of making a documentary, for example, preparation for filming, rather than what is being filmed. Therefore, reflexive mode “calls attention to the assumptions and conventions of documentary that govern documentary filmmaking. Increases our awareness of the constructedness of the film’s representation of reality” (Nichols 2001: 33). Instead of seeing through documentaries to the world beyond them, reflexive documentaries ask us to see documentaries for what they are: a construct or representation. In essence, reflexive documentaries show the view how the documentary is constructed in terms of editing and portrayal of the truth and the film maker is a part of the documentary and provides its narrative structure.

Nichols suggests Dziga Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) as an example of the reflexive mode of documentary which he suggests “adopts a poetic but also reflexive, analytic voice to examine the transformative power of the coordinated masses as they go about the business of producing a new, post-revolutionary Soviet society” (Nichols 2001: 90).

The study shows that this mode is rarely used in contemporary documentary unless the filmmaker wants to make the viewer aware of the filmmaking process. Natusch and Hawkins, in their microanalysis of Nichols’ mode find less than 14% of the reflexive mode used in *Ai Weiwei* and *Helvetica*. This includes the footage of *Ai Weiwei* being prepared for filming and Massimo Vignelli, in *Helvetica* asking the filmmaker, “How should I talk? You want me to say something?”

In the *Way of the Gurkha*, I have not included the footage of preliminary preparation and the process of postproduction in order to make the documentary as short as possible. However, here are some examples from raw footage from *The Way of the Gurkha*:

Table 3.7. Sample Scenes in The Way of the Gurkhas as Reflexive Mode category

Reflexive Mode Subcategories	Illustration	Corresponding Frame
Production process (shooting)	Researcher captures the scene of his village Chautara in 2012	
Production Process (recording song)	Researcher at Studio directing the song used the in documentary	
Post-production process (Editing)	Researcher editing the documentary	

3.10 Conclusion

According to Pink (2012: 4) visual methodologies are a set of approaches to working with the visual in research and representation that are constantly in progress and development. For some scholars, the methodology is a tool through which to achieve

research findings. Yet for others, it is something that should be critically reflected on as a crucial component in the processes through which we produce knowledge.

The audiovisual methodology that I have adopted in this academic research serves both “to archive research findings” and for “producing knowledge”, as the documentary provides the evidence (data) while also informing audiences about crucial components of the Gurkha’s hierarchical position in the British Army and their complex relationship with the British.

Due to the nature of this project being a research documentary about myself from childhood to retirement, military organisation, my ethnic community, there are some critical issues such as security, sensitivity and ethics which have been addressed rather tactically and steadily, taking almost 10 years (including write-up) rather than a spontaneous and swift production in terms of capacity of time frame and finance.

One of the things that has made this tactical element possible is the use of lightweight video equipment, particularly in remote as well as sensitive locations such as military installations and training. Asch and Asch (1995: 335). also suggest:

For most ethnographic research, digital video is preferable because it can be used in any situation without additional lighting, and can be viewed immediately, both to check the quality of the recording and to share with people filmed. Immediate feedback allows one to become technically proficient fairly quickly and it can involve participants in the research.

In fact, playing back footage to the participants was one of the most satisfying experiences for me during filming. When I played back the video for the people I filmed, particularly in the remote villages, they were very excited to see themselves moving and talking on the little screen. This capability of digital technology also helps to build ethical relationships and mutual trust between documentary filmmaker and film subjects. Not only that, the facility of instant playback provided me the opportunity to see if I captured the footage I wanted. This sophisticated technology allowed me to travel from place to place on my own with a few pieces of extra memory cards, often asking passers-by to help film me when I needed to be in front of the camera rather than behind it.

The important aspect of this documentary is its instigator, protagonist and subject being what Paul Whitinui (2013: 461) terms a “full insider” by virtue of being a “native” rather than an outsider with vested interest in preserving the hegemonic/hierarchical status quo. Therefore, with the notion of ‘self’, in the documentary I have attempted to discover, explore, construct and narrate the journey of the Nepalese youths from hillboys to retired Gurkha soldiers focusing on exposing a hidden ‘self’ that is moved by various experiences and therefore expressing certain emotions. The documentary reveals that both, the traditional *Lahure* culture and the poverty I grew up in have played roles in building both a physical and mental *habitus* for joining the British Army.

Additionally, the documentary archives a series of emotional accounts of Gurkha war veterans’ widows who struggle to make their living in the hills and are being looked after by the Gurkha Welfare Trust (which is not associated with the MoD).

As for Nichols’ documentary mode, *The Way of The Gurkha* adopts the hybrid approach which as Gabara suggested earlier, is a common practice in contemporary art. However, the expository mode is predominant (44.75%) throughout as the audience is guided by voice-over commentary. During this study, this mode emerges as one of the most effective modes, particularly if a wide range of information needs to be included in the feature-length documentary, particularly as opposed to observational mode. For example, *Who Will be a Gurkha* (2012) has astonishing images of Gurkha potential recruits vying for the British Army in Pokhara Camp. This 75-minute long documentary successfully covers every nuance of the 3-week selection process from the day the candidates enter the camp to the final result, but leaves inquisitive audiences uninformed about how those who fail the selection feel about it and what happened to those who failed the selection at Pokhara.

The participatory mode was the second most important mode in my film (25.97%) after the expository one, as there are a cross-section of Nepalese and British soldier and civilians’ interviews including serving and retired Gurkha soldiers, British officers, my family members and British Army candidates in the documentary which provides a new vantage point from which to understand the Gurkhas, not only from a historical contact but also from an analytical and academic perspective.

In the next chapter, I shall analyse the documentary in order to address the remaining research questions.

Chapter 4: ANALYSIS OF THE WAY OF THE GURKHA

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed documentary as the methodology of the research project, and the theoretical and structural framework of the documentary filmmaking practice while also answering one of the specific research questions relating to the methodology. This chapter is broken down into three parts: Firstly, an academic analysis of the thematic content of the documentary will be carried out to determine the Gurkha position in the British Army based on the evidence presented in the documentary incorporating my personal experience and a theoretical framework provided by Michel Foucault. An analysis follows of the Gurkha Justice Campaign and the contemporary British-Gurkha relationships.

Secondly, I examine the folk memory and emotional accounts of the Gurkhas and whether the folk memories and emotional accounts including Gurkha myths have roles to play in the continuation of the Gurkhas' service in the British Army. This is an alternative and novel approach to analysing the Gurkhas, distinct from conventional ways which mostly use contemporary theories and critiques such as martial race and foreign military labour. Nevertheless, Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1993) has helped us to understand the Gurkhas from mythical perspectives.

Finally, I discuss the technology that made this project possible. The combination of all three parts ultimately culminate in generating, representing and validating the knowledge attained through personal experience and theoretical studies.

4.2 Thematic Content of *The Way of the Gurkha*: Gurkha Discipline, Training and Their Hierarchical Position in the British Army

The analysis of thematic content is one of the commonly used approaches and "is seen as a fundamental method" in data analysis of practice-based qualitative research (Braun and Clarke 2006: 4) what Boyatzis (1998: vi) terms, the, "process

for encoding qualitative information” without which any findings and conclusions are impossible.

The literature review in Chapter Two of this thesis analysed Antonio Gramsci’s concept of subaltern and Edward Said’s orientalism and mapped their compatibility with the Gurkhas’ hierarchical and historic position in the British Army. The reviews provide the strong theoretical foundation that the Gurkhas hierarchical and historical position in the British Army is subaltern. Here, I attempt to delve further into the core essence of subaltern in two ways: (1) from the experiential perspective and (2) theoretical perspective. In other words, I endeavour to explain what it feels like to be a subaltern in the British Army. I examine my personal and other Gurkha soldiers’ experience who often felt different from their British counterparts to see if those experiences have any relation to subalternity. There is a distinct difference between the British and Gurkha soldiers in terms of discipline. It is widely accepted that Gurkhas are more disciplined soldiers than their British counterparts. I argue, in this chapter that the Gurkhas’ discipline is also one of the qualities of subalternity employing Michael Foucault’s concept of discipline and power. I then examine the Gurkha Justice Campaign which is central to the second part of the *The Way of the Gurkha* and finally, I analyse the historical relationship between the British and the Gurkhas while the campaign continues.

4.2.1 Gurkhas’ Position as Subaltern: From a Historical and Experiential Point of View

The Anglo-Nepalese war in the early nineteenth century was a war between the British, who once colonised almost half of the world primarily by using tactics and shrewdness, and the Nepalese who expanded their territory through conquest and attrition rather than using tactics and guile. In other words, the Anglo-Nepalese war was between civilised, foresighted, prudent and astute occidentals and the simpleton Orientals, who as Cromer puts it are: “exactly the opposite of Europeans... devoid of energy and initiative cannot walk on either a road or a pavement... their disordered minds fail to understand what the clever European grasps immediately, that roads and pavements are made for walking” (Cited in Said 1995: 38-39). But not everybody sees Orientals as merely bad; rather it is a mix of both good and bad. For instance, Roy Porter notes that orientalism is “highly fluid’ involving a complex mix of

admiration, contempt, praise, disgust, fascination and confusion. As Gerd Baumann and Andre Gingrich argue:

Orientalization constitutes self and other by negative mirror imaging: 'what is good in us is lacking in them', but also adds a subordinate reversal: 'what is lacking in us is (still) present in them.' It thus entails a possibility of desire for the other and even, sometimes, a potential for self critical relativism' (Porter 2009: 23; 2004: x cited in Dyvik: 2013: 182).

Baumann and Gingrich explain how what is considered positive in the 'Occident' finds its counterpart in the 'orient' and vice versa. Said dismisses all opinions grounded in the West arguing that the Oriental lived in their own world and enjoyed their own culture. He considers the "classification of the East as different and inferior legitimized Western intervention and rule" (Lewis 1996 cited in Azam 2014: 424) suggesting that, "the Orientals lived in a different but thoroughly organised world of his own, a world with its own national, cultural, and epistemological boundaries and principles of internal coherence" (Said 1978: 48).

While I agree with Said, I must mention my observation that Orientals are "different" in terms of behaviour and customs particularly in the Gurkha context. For example, Gurkhas sat on the floor and ate their meals with their hands; Europeans ate at the dinner table with forks and spoons. Gurkhas worshipped the moon (some still do) while Europeans tried to explore it. Gurkhas mostly are ruled by the heart; Europeans are generally ruled by the head which is one of the distinct differences between them and the British. Gurkhas often talk about cultural and other differences between themselves and the British. For example, looking after their families and extended families, which are generally not found in British culture. However, when it comes to charity, British people seem to be more proactive in helping people in need. In contrast to this, some retired Gurkhas and their families have the experience of being a low priority in the job market. Some have even been told by employers that priority goes to the British first, then European, then Commonwealth then the rest. Those Gurkha wives who have mentioned this to me whom I personally know, I guessed their lack of skill in speaking English might have led them to make the judgment nevertheless that might not entirely be the case as The Guardian has also revealed that black medics in the NHS are paid thousands less

than white medics. It wrote, “black doctors on average earn £9,492 a year less than white ones” (The Guardian 2018)⁵⁸.

The documentary *The Way of the Gurkha* clearly demonstrates that it took a long time for the Gurkhas even to be recognised as *Sepoy*, a title given in the Indian Army and “the British did not validate the Gurkha recruitment till 1886” (Rai 2009: 1). The promotion system within the Gurkha regiments was that of what the civil sector terms ‘colour bar’ which bars migrant workers from supervisory roles. All command and supervisory posts within the Battalion were held by the British; at least until the New Gurkhas’ Terms and Condition of Service (GTACOS) was revised in 2007. Lieutenant Colonel (British) used to be the Commanding Officer (CO) of the Battalion. Then a Major (British) would be Second in Command (2IC). Each company of the Gurkha infantry battalions had a British Officer Commanding (OC). The highest rank Gurkhas could ever achieve was that of Major, and he would be appointed as the Gurkha Major of the Battalion and he would be responsible for the welfare of the Gurkha personnel rather than commanding men. Gould (1999: 294) admits that “the British soldiers would not take kindly to service under coloured officers and discipline would be undermined”. Let alone in those days, even today I have vivid experiences since I have been assigned to the British units that the British soldiers do not seem to be as disciplined under Gurkha superiors as they are under British ones. A retired Gurkha Officer, Bishnu Sing, who served with the British Regiment as a warrant officer shares his experience, that although he was a warrant officer, the men under him would tend to ignore his orders. Similarly, a Gurkha sergeant, Krishna Kumar Rai, shares his experience of being profoundly underestimated by his co-workers - senior non-commissioned officers (SNCOs) and junior non-commissioned officers (JNCOs) - when he first took over his post. Not until he proved to his senior commanders that he was one of the most capable SNCOs within the department did he feel comfortable dealing with his British counterparts.

⁵⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/sep/27/black-medics-in-nhs-paid-thousands-less-than-white-medics>

One of the Gurkha officers who used to be an orderly for Field Marshall Lord Bramall in the 1980s, said that the Field Marshall liked Gurkhas to visit his home, and liked to see them sit on his carpeted floor and eat their food with their hands. This example paints a picture of the attitude of British officers who would like to see the Gurkhas as they were in the early nineteenth century, behaving in the way their ancestors behaved. Frantz Fanon writes about this phenomenon in *Black Skin White Masks (Peau noire, masques blancs)*, and states that it is an inherent element of colonial domination. Fanon also points out that within a white society, where particular cultural, social and racial norms had been established, a person who has black skin could have their identity viewed as complex and inferior. Fanon narrates his experiences:

What? While I was forgetting, forgiving, and wanting only to love, my message was flung back in my face like a slap. The white world, the only honourable one, barred me from all participation. A man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man or at least like a nigger. I shouted a greeting to the world and the world slashed away my joy. I was told to stay within bounds, to go back where I belonged (Fanon 1986: 114).

Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* is considered to be a powerful and lasting indictment of western civilization that "reverberates in the self-righteous rhetoric of 'resistance' whenever the English left gathers, in its narrow church or its Trotskyist camps, to deplore the immiseration of the colonized world" (Bhabha 1952: XXI). Here, I shall not delve further into the Fanonian paradigm because "Fanon", as Anthony Faramelli observes, tends "to focus on his work as a militant intellectual of anti-colonial and black liberation or else they attempt to 'Lacanize' his work in order to make it a better fit within the canon of postcolonial theory" (Faremeli 2017: 115) whereas this thesis concentrates on the Gurkhas' historical and contemporary position in the British Army through the theory of Orientalism, subalternism and disciplinary power.

Therefore, to continue with the thematic content, as I have mentioned in the documentary (00:57:30), I have not met any British officers in my 24-year military career who disliked Gurkhas except for a few isolated cases. However, the British officers expected the Gurkhas to behave like "a black man or at least like a nigger".

The Colonel of the Brigade of Gurkhas, David Hayes CBE, during his presentation to the Gurkha Company Sandhurst in the summer of 2007 said: “You Gurkhas must remember where you have come from”. It sounds like a philosophical dictum but its meaning in that particular time and context was just the opposite. It means that they should behave how they had behaved in the early 19th century when they were taken into the British Army; pretty much like what Tuan (1984) terms as “cherished ‘pets’” (Cited in Caplan 2005: 4). Tuan is not the only person to define the Gurkhas’ position in this way, but Candler (1919: 9) also has a similar view that the Gurkhas’ fidelity and devotion to his British officers are both: “human and dog-like at the same time” (Cited in Gould 1999: 127). Some, particularly those who vehemently deny that Gurkhas are mercenary, might find quite offensive the idea of the relationship between the Gurkhas and the British being “dog-like”. However, Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) Jai Dura accepts the fact that Gurkhas live a “pet-like” life in the British Army; saying: “just like we love our pet, but at the same time can easily give him a mild kick anytime we like without any hesitation”. British officers’ perception of Gurkhas, in terms of their cognitive skill, is also disapproving. Caplan, agrees that: “virtually within all groups comprising of Gurkhas they were depicted as slow to learn”. He finds that some British officers have been brutally honest in expressing their views:

Gurkhas needed a firm hand because they were, in effect, regarded as simpletons. A British Resident (Captain H. Ramsay) towards the end of last century, described them as an ‘...ignorant, stupid, roving race of men... possessing very small aptitude for intellectual employment, which they invariably regard with the greatest dislike’ (Quoted in Husain 1970: 237).

On the same note, “The average ‘Gurk’ is ‘not as a rule quick on the uptake... [he] sees what he sees, and his visual range is his mental range” (Candler 1919: 15). Masters (1956: 92) for his part, suggests that Gurkha skulls are round and ‘thick’, and relates a story about a mule who kicks a Gurkha and ‘goes dead lame’. According to Caplan (2005: 145), Farewell (1984) also retells another story of a British officer who is killed when a bullet ricochets off a Gurkha’s head. These derogatory remarks, often not heard by the public, stand in contrast to what the Gurkhas were renowned for and lead to confusion, as Caplan suggests:

On the one hand, as we have seen, the Gurkhas are portrayed as an ethnic category whose natural qualities render them dependent on, and so inferior to, their western officers. On the other hand, they are seen as endowed with the essential characteristics of those very officers (Caplan 1991: 590).

These depictions of the Gurkhas suggest that the British officers regarded them, as Candler (1919: 15-16) suggests, as “not having a very high estimate of the value of life” which serves as evidence that the Gurkhas’ position in the British Army sat below that of other soldiers and remained suppressed until the promulgation of the new Gurkhas’ Terms and Conditions of Service in 2007. The need here is to investigate how the British successfully suppressed the Gurkhas’ position through the administration of controlled discipline. For this investigation, I will use Michael Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power as my key theoretical framework.

4.2.2 Subaltern Gurkhas Within Michael Foucault’s Theory of Disciplinary Power.

Foucault’s theories chiefly address the relationship between power and knowledge, and how they are used as a form of social control through societal institutions. He criticized the power of modern bourgeois capitalism and interpreted power relations differently to how power was generally understood; the Marxists’ understanding, in particular, which regarded “power as the plain operation of the powerless by the powerful” (Bălan 2017: 01). For Foucault, power is more a strategy than a possession which coexists with resistance or power inherits the resistance; where there is power, there is a resistance. For Foucault, two types of power deal with resistance - sovereign power which is associated with monarchy and corporal punishment, imprisonment and torture. This form of power gets exposed to the public. Another power is disciplinary power which is essentially a modern prison which will be carefully supervised and remains anonymous to the public. The prisoners’ time would be organized in an extremely effective manner. Punishment is no longer about crushing, dismembering and overpowering the body and modern punishment dealing with resistance to power is all about training, exercise and supervision.

Here, I am less concerned with sovereign power but disciplinary power is the key to understanding how the Gurkhas are trained, exercised and supervised in order to maintain Gurkha discipline what Gurkhas term “*Gurkha Kaida*” which generally refers to being an extraordinarily disciplined soldier or, in simple term, subservient to the British officers. For this purpose, I attempt to employ the elements (instruments) of Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power to the Gurkhas’ military training camp and the training itself. Foucault suggests:

The chief function of the disciplinary power is to train, rather than to select and to levy; or, no doubt, to train in order to levy and select all the more....and the success of disciplinary power derives from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination (Foucault 1977: 170).

I shall discuss those elements after a brief analysis of the corporal punishment seen in the documentary *The Way of the Gurkha*.

The documentary instantiates one of the many disciplinary aspects of the Gurkhas exhibiting evidence of the corporal punishment which my cohorts and I experienced during our training in Hong Kong (See 00:42:30). In those days, corporal punishment was common to the Gurkha training establishments and it was accepted as a legacy from the nineteenth century’s *Gurkha Kaida*. However, the crucial aspect of it to be understood is the disciplinary structure of power, for those who awarded brutal punishment verging on cruelty, were Gurkha instructors (inmates, in Foucault’s term), not the British (supervisors). The Gurkhas were self-disciplined rather than controlled by external force. This is where Foucault’s concept of “panoptic prison” (1991: 195) comes into play. The example of panoptic prison, in the Gurkhas’ context, for some, may sound inappropriate for they are a so-called “integral part” of the British Army. However, as Sheridan argues, “the panopticon has moved beyond prisons and workplaces and now encapsulates society as a whole, it is important to view society through a more panoptic lens” (2016: 01). Erick Ketelaar also suggests, “entire societies may be imprisoned in Foucauldian panopticism, where power rests on supervision and examination and that entails a knowledge of those who are supervised” (Ketelaar 2001: 221). Likewise, Simon Purdy suggests, without knowledge of the individual over whom one has power, the power relationship may

not exist (Purdy 2015: 4). It means in this context, with the evidence that I have presented in the preceding topic, the British had sufficient knowledge of their men (Gurkhas) to control them. Lieutenant Colonel J. P. Cross, for example, who commanded the Gurkhas for 37 years, knew the Gurkhas inside-out. He even surrendered British citizenship for a Nepalese one. The British Officers knew exactly how to train Gurkhas so that the Gurkhas were kept “controlled” and “disciplined”.

In *Discipline and Punish*, while Foucault examines the rise of disciplinary power from the eighteenth century to the present, he suggests that ‘correct training’ is central to the maintenance of disciplinary power, and its success, in Foucault’s word, “derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination” (Foucault 1975: 170). I attempt to use these three elements to examine how the Gurkhas have become the subject of disciplinary power through the basic infantry training at the training company and in their respective regiments.

Hierarchical Observation: Foucault’s concept of hierarchical observation is the ability of one of higher status to see the actions of the individual. Foucault drew upon Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, the structural model for an ideal prison (see figure below) to conceptualize surveillance in modern societies. The Panopticon is a structural design that makes all individual cells observable from a central watchtower, but makes the watchtower itself unobservable from the cells. Essentially what the panopticon structure does is that the inmates never know if they are being observed. As a result, the person is forced to behave as if someone is permanently watching, even if this is not necessarily the case. Thus, disciplinary power produces subjected and practiced bodies; “docile” bodies in which “power as a penetrating force transforms the individual into a docile being...” (Beheshti 2016: 2052). The individual in the panopticon is forced to internalize the disciplinary “gaze” (le regard) so that “[s/]he who is subjected to a field of visibility and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; [s/]he makes them play spontaneously upon [her/]himself; [s/]he inscribes in [her/]himself the power relation in which [s/]he simultaneously plays both roles; [s/]he becomes the principle of [her/]his own subjection” (Foucault 1991: 25 cited in Balan 2017: 5).

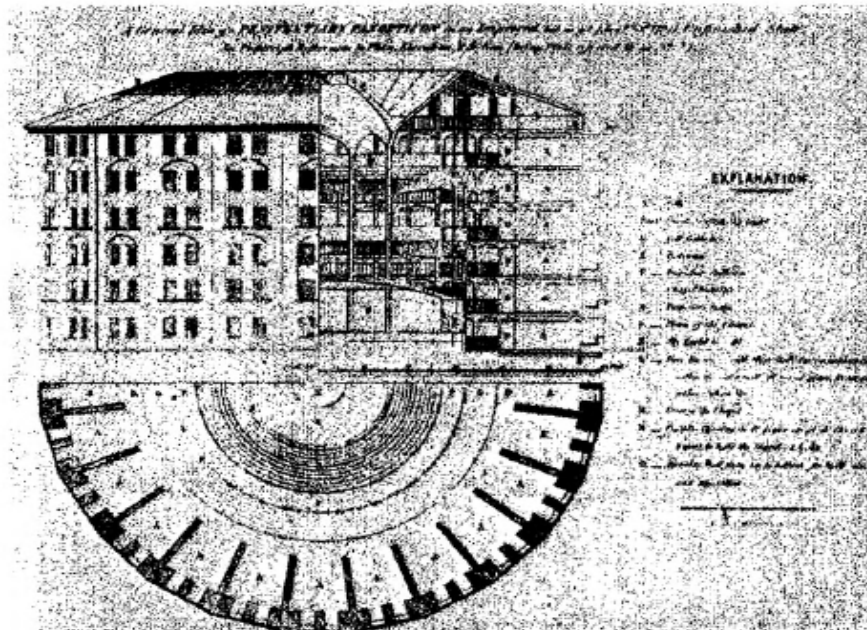


Figure 4.1. *Building Bentham's Panopticon, 1843 (Foucault 1975: 170)*

In a similar way, the Gurkhas' training camp is operated through panopticon observation. A British full colonel remains at the top of the command structure as the commander of the Brigade of Gurkhas. Under the Brigade of Gurkhas, there are currently two Infantry Gurkha Regiments (1st Royal Gurkhas Rifles) and three Corps Units (Queen's Gurkha Signals, Queen's Gurkha Engineers, and Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment). The Commanding Officer (CO) of the Regiment will also always be a British officer⁵⁹ in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col). Although, the CO does not physically involve himself in the micromanagement level of the companies and departments, such as supervising recruit training, his panoptic position remains pervasive throughout the hierarchical structures. At all levels, from the Officer Commanding⁶⁰ of Company (OCs, normally British Major) and Gurkha

⁵⁹ Exception - Lieutenant Colonel Bijaya Kumar Rawat, who commanded the 1st Battalion the Royal Gurkha Rifles in 1995 was the only Gurkha Commanding Officer of the Infantry Regiment. However, he was the Direct Commissioning (DE) Officer; not Regular Commissioned Officer. Subsequently he was transferred to the British Regiment; not as part of the Gurkha Regiment.

⁶⁰ Officer Commanding (OC) will be a Major(Maj) and Commanding Officer (CO) will be a Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col)

Major (GM, mainly responsible for welfare) through Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM, responsible for Discipline) down to Gurkha Corporal, training instructors have one mission to execute and that is the commanding officer's intent.

The Gurkha training companies enforce three things in the trainees to mold and shape the young recruits into the consummate Gurkhas who will behave in the way that the British officers want throughout their service in the British Army and beyond. Firstly, basic infantry training – over a nine-month period of basic infantry training the trainees will learn primarily how to accomplish the commanders' intent during battles. Secondly, the trainees will learn values and standards; the faculty of which we broadly discussed in the first chapter of this thesis under the term 'Gurkha virtue' which are loyalty, courage, selfless commitment, discipline and integrity; and thirdly, exclusively for Gurkha recruits, the Gurkhas officers and instructors both formally and informally educate their students how to maintain Gurkha discipline (*Kaida*), the quality that distinguishes the Gurkhas from the British, while serving in the British Army. The Gurkha recruits will be consistently reminded that how their ancestors achieved name and fame in the past. It was not only because of their performance in the battle zone but their good behaviour in the barracks too. The recruits will be taught the etiquette of eating, talking, walking, dressing and respecting seniors during the training. In one instance, Vron Ware notices that:

There is no mistaking the young Nepalese recruits in Catterick, especially in the evenings when they are dressed like inmates of a strict boarding school with crisp white shirts and grey v-neck jumpers. They are physically segregated, and not only are there few counterparts in the grounds of the garrison, they are also actively discouraged from mingling with them (Ware 2012: 121).

From Foucault's perspective, these Gurkha recruits are "docile bodies" manufactured by "disciplinary power"; the docile bodies who "could be recognized from afar bore certain signs: natural signs of his strength..." (1975: 135). The disciplinary power in this instance is the British officers watching constantly from the vantage point which in Foucault terms "a disciplinary apparatus" which "make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly" (ibid: 173).

Normalizing Judgement: For Foucault 'the normalizing judgment' is the second essential part of the system of discipline. It refers to the enforcement of established

or desired norms of behaviour through specific techniques designed to correct transgressions and minimize deviations from behavioral norms for institutional residents (Foucault 1977: 177 cited in Welch 2009-10). The authoritative or the hierarchal gaze becomes necessary to ensure that individuals are conforming to the ideal of how a soldier, a pupil, a prisoner or a factory worker should behave. Foucault suggests “It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected, or as an optimum toward which one must move” (Foucault 1975: 182-183).

Normalizing judgment essentially is a penal system what Foucault terms “infra-penalty” (ibid: 214) which is applied in case of departure from the correct behaviour. The recruits are awarded punishments when they deviate from the specific disciplinary course designed for purpose during the training. Corporal Chandra Subba Gurung, one of the instructors at training company suggests in *The Way of the Gurkha* (00:43:23) that punishment will be applied in order to maintain discipline however the disciplinary punishment is completely modernized nowadays. Even harsh words are not allowed to be used on the recruits, let alone physical punishment. The modernisation of the penal system, what Foucault terms a “gentle way of punishment” has proved to be even more effective in normalizing judgement. Foucault does not suggest only disciplinary punishment to prevent the deviation from normalization, but disciplinary rewards can also be as effective as disciplinary punishment. He suggests:

Discipline rewards simply by the play of awards, thus making it possible to attain higher ranks and places; it punishes by reversing this process. Rank in itself serves as a reward or punishment. At the ficole Militaire, a complex system of ‘honorary’ classification was developed; this classification was visible to all in the form of slight variations in uniform and more or less noble or ignoble punishments were associated, as a mark of privilege or infamy, with the ranks thus distributed (ibid: 181).

It is a key to understand that once the trainee riflemen are assigned to their respective units, discipline punishments get reduced to a minimum and discipline rewards take over. Timely promotions for career-oriented soldiers and incentives

such as overseas allowances for serving abroad, medals and knighthood for fighting in battles contribute to maintaining soldierly attitudes throughout the service. Even after retirement, Gurkhas (exclusively) are granted honorary ranks on the basis of their performance while in service. “The ultimate goal” of the initiatives as Michael Welch suggests, “is to transform the prisoner (Gurkhas in this context) into an individual who is docile, obedient, and useful. The primary disciplinary technology minimizes its use of blunt force and maximizes forms of correction that are economical and subtle, including, for example, incremental rewards” (Welch 2009: 11).

Examination: Michel Foucault suggests, “the examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement...It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them” (Foucault 1975: 184). He cites the example of a hospital patient, where the most obvious form of examination was observation by paying regular visits: the “ritual of the visit” (ibid: 185). Similarly, soldiers’ performance in battle or in other assigned tasks can be examined through observation, however, for Foucault, other methods such as administrative apparatus can also be applied. For example, progress reports are even more effective for examining the subject. This particular technique of producing progress reports is a regular practice in a military organization. Every soldier has their report, in military terms, confidential reports (CR) every year which allow the board members to decide if he is eligible for further promotion or even for continuation of service. Therefore, examination, as Foucault suggests, “is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification” (ibid: 187).

To summarize all three elements of the disciplinary power, the following diagram illustrates how disciplinary power is maintained within the Gurkha regiment. The commanding officer (British), from the panoptican position observes the Gurkha officers and soldiers; this is a “hierarchical observation”. The highest standards of discipline (the desire norms) are maintained through the techniques of promotion, salary increase and medals and awards’ incentives which are “normalising judgements”. And finally, they will be “examined” through observing their

performance physically and producing confidential reports annually. Additionally, the diagram also demonstrates that the Gurkha recruits are exclusively trained for Gurkha discipline (*Kaida*) at the Training Company.

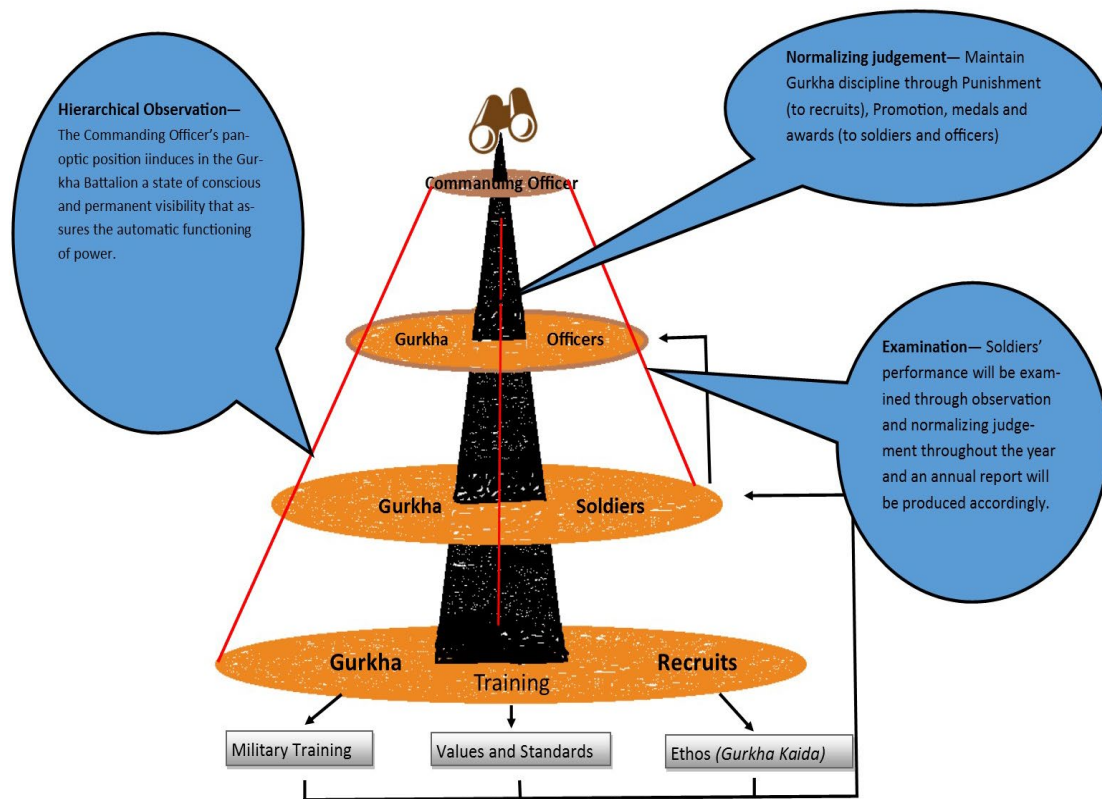


Figure 4.2. Power structure in the Gurkha Regiment

4.2.3 Gurkha Justice Campaign – Resistance to Power from Subaltern Position

Gurkhas are shaped and moulded to exceptionally disciplined soldiers (docile bodies) through correct training which is delivered applying the instruments (observation, normalization and examination) of disciplinary power within the military organization. Following retirement, Gurkhas' focus shifts completely from the professional to the family and social domain. They have both time and freedom to contemplate, assess and discuss their own pasts. They assess what they contributed to the British and what they gained in return, compared to their British counterparts. They find some anomalies and feel short changed in terms of give and take. As a result, the Gurkha Justice Campaign came into existence as a “resistance to the power” or a “counter hegemony” which is part of the “socio-political transformation” in the language of subaltern study (Smith 2010: 45). Therefore, in

this topic I attempt to analyze through the documentary *The Way of the Gurkha* why and how the situation arose that the docile bodies have to rise for “power resistance”. When using the term “power resistance” with “docile bodies” I have taken the argument made by Nancy Fraser into account. Fraser finds Foucault’s conception of modern power problematic because docile bodies shaped by power will have no resist to power...that “power always generates resistance incoherent”.⁶¹ However in the Gurkhas context, after the retirement, the Gurkhas shift from the confinement of disciplinary power to sovereign power but retain the rights to resist to it.

The interviews with the war veterans and the retired Gurkhas in the documentary suggest that the Gurkhas have been treated unfairly throughout their service in the British Army despite that the British regard them as “friends”. Not only that, the Gurkhas, as Gyanraj Rai suggests in the documentary, regarded Great Britain as their “second country”. He says, “we have shed blood, sweat and tears for Great Britain...we regard the British monarch like our own... Gurkhas have the British King and Queen’s portraits displayed along with the Nepalese King and Queen in their houses’ wall... My grandpa had...and we still have...[so] this is not fair” (00:57:10).

The genesis of the campaign resembles that of the “Satyagraha” movement for Indian Independence which “began after Gandhi being physically ejected by white officials from a first-class compartment on a train from Durban to Pretoria in May 1883. This was Gandhi’s first experience of being degraded ‘to the level of a raw Kaffir’” (Stone II 1990: 723). The leader of the Gurkha Justice Campaign, Lance Corporal Padam Bahadur Gurung, had a similar experience when he was serving in Malaysia. He recalls:

In Johor Bahru Camp, Malaysia, we had to trim the lawn around our camp in uniform. We were not allowed to wear a PT vest. One day I was tempted to take off my shirt and wore a PT vest as it was boiling hot, maybe around 48°C. Unfortunately, the company commander Captain Skinner appeared from nowhere. He summoned me

⁶¹ <https://www.iep.utm.edu/foucfem/>

with hand gesture. I went in front of him and brought myself to attention position. He said, "You son of a bitch. Have you not read the standing instruction that it is not allowed to wear a PT vest? Remember, we have brought you here paying royalty to your government. If you want to work, work according to rule; otherwise you may leave." Then, off he went. I was so incensed with the remarks that I seriously contemplated whether I was really sold like an object by my Government.⁶²

Keeping this disparaging remark by a British officer in mind, Lance Corporal Gurung returned to Nepal on redundancy and formally launched the Gurkhas Justice Campaign in 1990 which "stirred and united a nation" and "put right a historical wrong" (Carroll 2012: xiii). Although the primary demand of the campaign was an equal pension for retired Gurkhas and compensation for the war veterans who were made redundant after the great wars, other acts of discrimination against the Brigade of Gurkhas over many years were also revealed. Mary Des Chene notes:

Their promotional structure differs from that of British soldiers. They are rented out to the Sultan of Brunei. During 'redundancies' Gurkhas have been cut proportionately more than British units. These and other differences look more like signs of a segregated army, or the 'Foreign Legion' within the army that Auchinleck envisioned in the 1940s, [rather] than a situation in which Gurkhas are treated on 'the same footing' as British nationals" (Des Chene 1997: 20).

Dr Yubaraj Sangraula, one of the advocates for the Gurkha Justice Campaign argues that Great Britain has repeatedly misused the Gurkha soldiers. They were used in the Malay emergency in 1952. The Malaysian Government paid \$400.00 each month for each British soldier, but Great Britain paid only \$82.00 to the Gurkhas and kept the remainder for itself. 17,000 Gurkhas were used in this way for 11 years. Only 11,000 returned home with £300.00 as a gratuity. During the Second

⁶² Interview with Gurung, May 2012. Raw footage is available.

World War, 6,000 Gurkha soldiers went missing. Great Britain never informed Nepal about these soldiers, and what had happened to them (Sangraula, 2015)⁶³.

During my research, the most often repeated example of discrimination in the treatment of British and Gurkha soldiers, and one that every retired Gurkha mentioned, was the quality of their accommodation in Hong Kong. The Gurkha soldiers lived in the barracks without air conditioning whereas the British lived just a few yards away in the next building with 24-hour air conditioning. Yet, there were no complaints whatsoever. As Cross said there was “no grumbling...”. KC (2002: 3) rightly suggests that the Gurkha did not take advantage of their mutual understanding with the British but the British “took Gurkhas’ loyalty for granted”. So much so that “they did not bother to keep a proper record of those who died in the battles, because they would have to go through all the rigmarole of the process of compensation if they did”.

Although the list of discrimination was long, the principal demand of the campaign organised by the GAESO (Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen Organisation), chaired by Padam Bahadur Gurung, was equal pay and pension. In the documentary, Padam Bahadur clearly states that he received MYR 42.00 (Malaysian currency) compared to MYR 600.00 which was given to his British counterparts. Gyanraj Rai recalls that he, as a warrant officer would receive less than a Philippine maid in Hong Kong (see documentary 00:57:12).

⁶³ Sangraula interview with www.onlikekhabar.com on 16 Dec 2015

Table 4.1. *Gap between the British and Gurkha pension*

Rank	British pension per annum	Gurkha pension per annum	Difference (%)
WOI	£5,269	£498	958%
Captain	£6,348	£606	948%

Source: House of Commons (1989). *The Defence Committee's First Report on the Future of the Brigade of Gurkhas.*

The campaign was initially limited to within Nepal as no Gurkhas were allowed to return to the UK after their retirement, which most British people were not aware of. Peter Carroll recalls that “immense feeling of shock, not at hearing that all retired Gurkhas were expected to go back to Nepal, but that they would then not be able to return to the UK to settle” (Carroll 2012: 10). Despite GAESO’s relentless pressure on the Nepalese government and the British Embassy in Kathmandu in organising awareness-raising events and writing to politicians and bringing discrimination claims before the Nepalese courts, the result was far from the desired one.

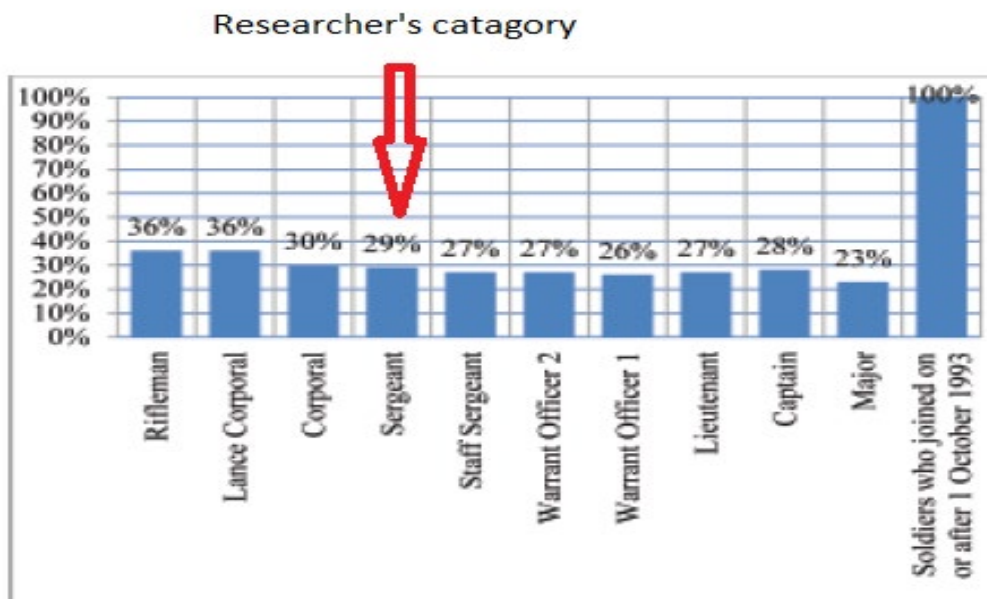
This documentary presents the evidence that the closure of Britain's doors to Gurkhas, could not stop all retired Gurkhas. Some gambled their lives by throwing themselves into containers coming from France and Germany, some managed to fool the immigration officials by providing fake British Army identity cards while others successfully achieved settlement rights by establishing British marital status. Hence, the number of Gurkhas in the UK grew enough to form another organisation called the British Gurkhas Welfare Society (BGWS) in 2003, chaired by Lt (Retired) Nabin Gauchan, which was taken over by Maj (retired) Tikendradal Dewan the following year.

A combined force of both GAESO from Nepal and BGWS in the UK, although their demands were slightly different and they were rather less co-ordinated with each other, managed to make some progress in drawing the attention of the UK government. But still the move was too feeble to influence the UK government, at least until Peter Carroll, a Liberal Democrat political party member whom Joanna Lumley calls a “driving energy” (Carroll 2012: xi), actor Joanna Lumley herself and

the Liberal Democrats' Leader Nick Clegg drove full pelt towards the UK government.

In September 2004, the UK government responded for the first time ever to the Gurkhas' issues by announcing their decision to grant Gurkhas indefinite leave to remain in the UK upon completion of four years of service, and the opportunity to eventually apply for British citizenship. In addition, the MOD also announced in January 2005 that it would undertake a comprehensive review of Gurkha terms and conditions of service. The conclusions and recommendations of that review were published in March 2007. Gurkhas who retired on or after 1 July 1997 were offered a scheme called GOTT (Gurkha Offer to Transfer) from the GPS (Gurkha Pension Scheme) to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS). While this brought the Gurkha's pension into par with their British counterparts, the policy divided Gurkhas into two groups and, as a result, those who enlisted in the British Army before 1 October 1993 do not get an equal pension for their service before 1997 (for example, only 29% of my service from 1993 - 1997 (in Hong Kong) has been counted as qualifying service, bringing my total 22 years of service down to 18 years and 335 days.

Table 4.2. *Gurkhas recognizable service chart – Pre 1 October 1993*



Source: (CNSUK 2012: 23)

The Ministry of Defence suggests that the reason behind the 1997 cut-off date was that “up until 30 June 1997, the Brigade was regarded as an overseas force with its home base being the Far East (prior to Hong Kong, it had been Singapore and Malaysia). On 1 July 1997, the UK became the home base for the Brigade of Gurkhas and revised terms and condition of service were introduced.” (Thurley, Standard Note 2014: 2-3). But the campaigners argue that they were serving the Queen just like their British counterparts serving with them in the Far East.

While pension issues remained unresolved, the campaign, particularly with Joanna Lumley’s relentless pressure on the British government, marked a huge turn in the Gurkha resettlement history. The Labour government finally announced its verdict:

At the end of an Opposition Day debate on Gurkha Settlement Rights on 29 April 2009 the Government suffered what was widely perceived as a “defeat”. The Home Secretary subsequently announced a change of policy: all Gurkhas who retired before 1 July 1997 and completed four years’ service will now have an unconditional right to apply to settle in the United Kingdom with their spouses and dependent children (Thorp & Woodhouse, 2009).

After the announcement of settlement rights for the Gurkhas, *The Guardian* wrote that “the move comes as a major victory for The Sun’s crusade for Gurkha justice’ (29/04/2009)” and it was celebrated by Gurkhas across the community in the UK and Nepal. Although in the long term, the 1997 threshold in the settlement rights policy – “which prohibited those veterans who retired from British service before 1997 from settling in Britain – gave rise to ‘irrational and unlawful’ restrictions” (Rand 2011: 2) in the immediate term it was a huge success for the Gurkhas and perhaps came unexpectedly for many, hence the celebration continued. Joanna Lumley thereafter became not only “a white daughter of a British Gurkha officer” (BBC News 2009), but also was deified as a goddess by the grateful and beholden ex-Gurkhas and their families. She visited Nepal after the campaign in July 2009. A journalist for the British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) Nepali section in Kathmandu remarked that he had never seen such a massive crowd welcoming someone at the Tribhuvan International Airport, in his life. *The Daily Mirror* (27 Jul 2009) wrote that, “...thousands of Gurkhas, their families and friends flocked to greet the star who,

along with *The Mirror*, won a campaign for their right to live in Britain as she touched down at Kathmandu airport. It was a grand welcome only reserved for a head of state. In fact, Joanna is held in even higher regard than that – she was hailed a goddess.”

While the series of announcements by the British government in regards to the Gurkhas’ issues was finally made, it is worth noting from the perspective of academic research, that the *Gurkha Justice Campaign* which began in 1990 produced no desired results until the British “masters” (Joanna Lumley in this context) represented the campaign. While her passion and dedication to this issue are beyond question, her perception in public discourse conceivably carries a degree of colonial baggage. In particular, the fact that her father was a white British Army major who served with the 6th Gurkha Rifles in British India during the second world war, along with her “quintessentially upper-class English accent and colonial upbringing, risks reinforcing patronizing notions of colonial benevolence towards the Gurkhas” (Kochhar-George 2010: 49).

The progress that the BGWS made in the UK was also not unmediated. Peter Carrol and his associates, and the national newspaper *The Sun*, in particular, put pressure on the government to act accordingly. This further substantiates the argument that I made in the preceding chapter that the Gurkhas are “pure” Orientals who “cannot represent themselves but must be represented” (Said 1978: i) and remain as “subaltern” (low rank) “subordinated consciousness of non-elite group from the cultural hegemony exercised by the ruling class” (Louai 2012: 5). But the question follows how are these subalterns considered as integral to the British Army? Or what is the relationship between them?

4.2.4 Contemporary relationship between the Subaltern Gurkhas and the British Colonials

The relationship can be seen as a sharply bipolar division of the Orient (Gurkhas) and Occident (British) a “unique bond” (Bold 1999: 127) between persons of unequal class and rank. This happened when the British quickly learnt and understood the loyalty and honesty of the Gurkhas, who highly regarded the praise and medals for good and loyal service awarded by their masters, thereby accepting the “hegemony”

of the “elite ruling classes” because hegemony is, according to Gramsci, “to rule not only by force but also by ideas” (Bates 1975: 315).

From the non-scholarly perspective, the British-Gurkha relationship is as the Colonel of the Brigade of Gurkhas, David Hays (2011:49) describes “bound together in a unique bond of mutual trust, honour and true friendship”. My effort here is to examine the dynamics of the ongoing “complex” British-Gurkhas relationship particularly in the face of “power resistance” (Gurkha Justice Campaign) and changes in immigration policy as a result of the campaign.

The accounts of the retired Gurkhas, war veterans and campaign leaders included in the documentary *The Way of the Gurkha* clearly demonstrate that their campaign was to demand justice against “institutionalised discrimination” (Kochhar–George 2010: 50, Dewan, 2012⁶⁴), most of which has now been addressed by the British government. On one hand the Gurkhas have enjoyed settlement rights in the UK (except for married children above the age of 18), on the other hand, their migration into the UK has brought a degree of agitation within the British community.

When I served in the Brigade of Gurkha Headquarters based in Netheravon (now relocated to Sandhurst), as an assistant editor of the Brigade of Gurkhas magazine *Parbate*, I had the opportunity to work directly under the then-Colonel of the Brigade of Gurkhas (Col BG), William Shuttlewood. He often expressed his discontent with the campaign, arguing that it could affect the Gurkhas’ ethos. A prolific writer, Lt Col (retired) John Cross, author of around 12 books about Gurkhas, and only the British citizen to surrender his British citizenship and take on a Nepalese one in order to live and die in Nepal, also suggests that the Gurkhas’ pursuit of equality with the British has put their ethos and even identity at stake. He argues that the main part of the Gurkha’s identity is their difference from the British.⁶⁵ The president of one of the campaign groups, a retired Warrant Officer Gyanraj Rai, agrees with the

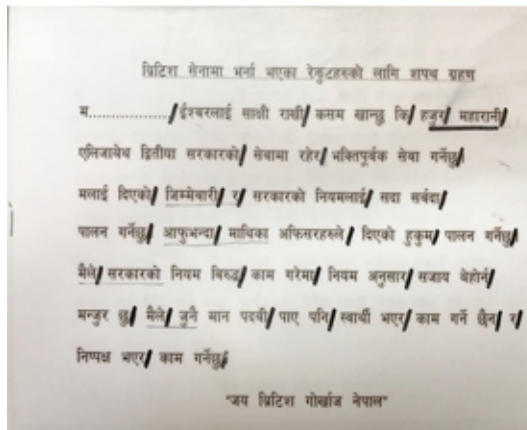
⁶⁴ Interview (see documentary 01:27:43)

⁶⁵ Interview with the researcher on 01 December 2012, Pokhara Nepal

“differences” but not in pay and pension. “We must be socially and culturally different and we have to be different in the battle zone, performing better”, he suggests.⁶⁶

The new GTACOS and GOTT subsequently replaced the Brigade of Gurkhas Standing Instructions (BGSi) and Record Officer Instruction for Gurkhas (ROIG), which used to be a separate policy for the Brigade of Gurkhas, thereby bringing Gurkhas’ policy into line with the rest of the British Army. Therefore, the cordiality in relationship between them is more essential now than ever before. However, the British officers serving in the Gurkha regiments did not seem to have celebrated the announcement for they remained silent on the announcement. Many Gurkhas expected their British commanders to share the joy. At the same time, some Gurkhas expressed their view that the British were not altogether wrong to claim that they had done nothing wrong. One of my cohorts, Colour Sergeant Khusiram Gurung openly disagrees with many of the demands of the ex-Gurkhas, due to the fact that we have voluntarily joined the British Army taking the oath that we obey the orders, whatever they would be, from the seniors as well as signing the contract paper which is basically a “blank cheque” to the British Ministry of Defence that they would serve until a certain period of time.

⁶⁶ Interview with the researcher 11 Nov 2014, Reading UK.



**OATH TAKING FOR BRITISH ARMY RE-
CRUITS**

I...hereby swear by almighty god that I shall serve Her Majesty the Queen with my complete devotion. I shall discharge my duty and obey the rule of the Government. I shall respect the rules of Government and obey the orders given by my senior officers. I am ready to bear punishment if I do anything against the rule of Government. I shall never misuse my rank and position and be always dispassionate in executing my responsibility.

Figure 4.3. Literal translation of the oath which a Hindu pundit reads out and the verse which successful recruits repeat while touching the British flag at the British Gurkhas Pokhara

In the Gurkhas' case, the initial contract was for four years. On completion of the initial four-year contract, soldiers had to sign additional contracts of three, three, and two years to make a total of 12 years' service. After 12 years, Gurkha soldiers had to sign a further three years' re-engagement contract in order to continue making the total service 15 years to qualify for the GPS (Gurkha Pension Scheme). Some argue that although it was our choice to join the British Army, we were not aware of what Kochhar-George (2010: 44) terms: "deep rooted issues of inequality", which need to be considered as "the UK Government's obligations to the fundamental human right of 'equal pay for equal jobs or jobs of equal value" (CNSUK 13: 4). I agree with the argument that we did not know the British had different terms and condition of service.

Following the announcement of the Gurkhas' new immigration policy, a large exodus of retired Gurkhas migrated to the UK and most of them settled in Aldershot, Hampshire, simply because Aldershot is the most familiar location for the Gurkhas in the UK. A Gurkha regiment used to be stationed from 1970 until the barracks were moved to Shorncliffe, Kent in 2000. Almost all of them have settled in Aldershot for a simple reason; they feel a sense of belonging in the organized Nepali diaspora community there.



Figure 4.4. Ex-Gurkhas learn the culture and language in Catterick, North Yorkshire – Still from *The Way of the Gurkha*

Some British and Gurkha volunteers, including the British Gurkha Welfare Society, were heavily involved in educating the veterans about British culture and basic language. Despite their efforts, the veterans found some of their run-of-the-mill routines *such as* sauntering down the street, hanging around the parks and popping into shops without buying (see documentary 01:13:05) hard to abandon mainly because they did not have anything at home to occupy their mind, English television channels were not particularly entertaining for them. The locals began to see something unusual in their surroundings. They had probably never seen groups of elderly people spending hours in the parks and strolling about, so they raised their concern with authorities. The local MP Sir Gerald Howarth was even prompted to comment (See Documentary 01:13:29):

I was walking around in Aldershot on Saturday and everywhere I went there were Nepalese just basically sitting out in the open ... sitting out on the park benches... You may find this bizarre, but some of my constituents say: 'if I go into town, I haven't got a park bench to sit on because they are all taken by the Nepalese'.

The Gurkhas, as Gyanraj Rai puts it, unlike in the past, have now been able to tread on the soil of their “second home” but at a huge emotional cost. Tika Bahadur Pun, for example, says “our MP has made some bad comments to us, but he has to allow us to sit on the park benches because the Prime Minister has given us the permission to do so”. His benighted soul so innocently takes the ownership of the relation between the MP and the Nepalese community by saying “‘Our’ MP” (see documentary 01:13:50). The Chairman of the British Gurkhas Welfare Society, Major (Retired) Tikendradal Dewan argues that “the elderly Gurkhas, just like in Nepal, walk about and use the benches to sit and the benches are there for sitting. But, as far as the MP’s comment is concerned, it is because of misunderstanding, that is why dialogue between the two parties is very important. We have to educate our veterans about the local culture as well as Gurkha culture to the locals.” (See 01:15:20). Sir Gerald Howarth, in reply to my request for authentication of the above comments wrote to me:

Dear Mr Rai,

Thank you for your email.

Whilst it is indeed the case that I made the remarks included in your email (I cannot read the attachment so cannot authenticate what is contained in it) I caution you against simply attributing that one remark to me because it would completely misrepresent my position, albeit that it was true and compounded by complaints by constituents that when visiting local surgeries there were no seats because they too were all taken up by elderly Nepalese. I have a major problem in my constituency with some 10,000 Nepalese suddenly arriving there since 2009; most of them are elderly, speak no English, do not understand our customs and are seen wandering around our towns. It is not fair on my constituents and it’s not fair on the elderly Nepalese many of whom were encouraged to come here by people who made money out of them. As a result of this sudden wave of migration, there was – and continues to be – huge pressure placed on our local services. For example, one GP surgery had 3,000 Nepalese on their list and you will appreciate the additional significant pressure placed upon those doctors who had to spend more time on patients who spoke no English. I had a meeting with the Prime Minister in 2011 to explain the serious challenges we faced and requested additional assistance to help us cope. Following that meeting I secured an additional £1.5 million which has

helped. Strenuous efforts have been made to assist social cohesion as a result of which some of the inter-racial flare ups we experienced early on have reduced; indeed, I am not aware that there have been any in recent times. I have a close association with the local ex-Gurkha group based in Farnborough and led by Major Tikendra Dewan, and try to strike a balance between the needs of the new arrivals and the concerns of my constituents, many of whom have also served in the British Army. It is important that you understand that the concerns of my constituents do not relate to the current, recently retired Gurkha community who speak excellent English, understand our customs and are very entrepreneurial. The difficulty arises from the large numbers of elderly and those relatives who have no connection with the British Army.

I hope this helps you, but I repeat that simply to quote my remark about park benches would do me a disservice.

Best wishes,

Sir Gerald Howarth MP, *Member of Parliament for Aldershot* (MP's letter to researcher dated 15 August 2014)

There is no doubt that the elderly Gurkhas have better facilities, medical in particular, than in Nepal since they receive weekly pension benefits and some other privileges such as transport and a winter fuel allowance which may well be enough to keep their body warm but not their soul or uphold their dignity. In Aldershot, some elderly Gurkhas said to me that they sometimes encounter disparaging remarks by foul-mouthed individuals. A friend of mine Vicky Jakob, a British-Filipino, living in the nearby town, wrote to me asking if I could implore the elderly Gurkhas not to haggle when buying things as she saw them being castigated in a haberdashery when they tried to haggle, and she felt sorry for them. Yet the elderly Gurkhas bear no malice, nor do they express any indignation towards those individuals. At best, they begin to think of leaving the UK when the situation permits. Gyanraj Rai proudly mentions: "We are maintaining our status as dignified Gurkhas. We are not economic migrants, nor are we here in pursuit of better life. We are here to enjoy our rights, as it is our second country, so we have to be allowed to live wherever we wanted". A veteran Dhyhan Bahadur Rai, now staying in Reading, says if he gets a pension in Nepal, he would go back to Nepal to stay with his extended family (see documentary 01:17:50).

One of my friend's elderly parents came to the UK in 2012 and they live in Swindon. They say the UK did not turn out to be what they had expected. The husband told me that the neighbour's children knocked down the fence of his back garden. When he spoke to their parents they had no comments, nor did they show any remorse for what their children had done.

The influx of Gurkhas has certainly caused some animosity amongst the locals in Hampshire, particularly due to the language and cultural differences. Dewan admits that the gap between the locals and the Gurkhas would not have been that wide had they been able to communicate with each other and share their feelings.

I have closely observed both parties in on and off-duty scenarios. There seems to be no difference in their normal business, especially when it comes to the operational effectiveness. In fact, the celebration of Gurkha 200⁶⁷ has elevated the relationship between British and Gurkha regiments to a higher level. The entire British Army united to make the celebrations successful. With their combined efforts, millions of pounds were raised for the Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT). The charity events were observed by the British armed forces and public with a profound appreciation of the Gurkha's "extraordinary martial qualities, temperament, and loyalty and selflessness and his supreme courage in battle" (GWT, 2015). The Queen was presented with the Queen's Truncheon by members of the Royal Gurkha Rifles. On that occasion, Prince Harry's priceless comments illuminated the atmosphere which reverberated for several weeks and months in the British and Asian press - "I always wanted to be a Gurkha, but the opportunity never arose. Physically, I bow down to these guys. They are incredible".⁶⁸

⁶⁷ On 24 April 2015, the Gurkhas 200 years' service to the British crown was marked with a high-profile celebration.

⁶⁸ Many newspapers and tabloids including *Mid-day* 10 Jun 2015, *Daily hunt* 10 Jun 2015, *Game Day* 11 June 2015, *News India* 10 Jun 2015 quoted as the Prince, speaking to guests at a reception in London when celebrating the *Gurkha 200*.

There is no question at all in terms of the closeness of the relationship between the Gurkhas and the British, as Sleigh⁶⁹ suggests: “Everyone talks about America or France but there are no closer allies than the soldiers of Nepal who fought for the British Army”. But the question is, despite the closeness of the relationship, why did the Gurkhas who have given glorious military service and unparalleled loyalty to the British, have to campaign for justice? Or, in other words, what was the root of these problems?

This study finds two principal reasons: firstly, it was the result of the British attitude of “taking the Gurkhas’ loyalty for granted”, the British tending to remain under the impression that the separate set of terms and conditions promulgated for the Gurkhas was at all times agreeable to the Gurkhas. The British Ministry of Defence defended their policy, arguing that they have been both “fair” and “legal” (MOD 2009). Laksamba, “to some extent” agrees that Gurkhas have been treated fairly but he argues that the Gurkhas deserve not “fairness” but “equality”, so “we demand equality”. He defines fairness and equality in layman’s terms: that “fair” means we are fed; not kept hungry” but “equality” means “we are fed the same food they eat” (Loksamba, 2017)⁷⁰. That is what our fight is for.

The campaigners argue that: “The Gurkhas served under the Queen’s Regulations (QRs) like the rest of the British Army. When a Gurkha was found guilty of any misdoings he was punished in accordance with the standard Manual of Military Law (MML), but when it came to pay, pension and facilities the MOD followed a separate set of TACOS made for the Gurkhas. Why did the MoD practice such a double standard? Why did the MoD not have a separate MML and QRs for the Gurkha Brigade?” (UBGEA⁷¹ 2006: 6).

Secondly, as the documentary clearly illustrates (see 01:07:01), most Gurkhas retired at the age of around 35; a relatively young age to retire. Most of them had small children to bring up while some were yet to have their first child when they

⁶⁹ *London Evening Standard*, 2015

⁷⁰ Interview with the researcher, 11 Apr 2017

⁷¹ United British Gurkha Ex Servicemen Association

retired. Almost all Gurkhas, some exceptions aside, relocated to the cities from the villages where their pension was too little to bring up their children and send them to good schools. Since they had spent 15 years in the British Army, getting decent jobs in Nepal with their qualifications would be not only difficult but outright impossible. They had been left with no other option than to go abroad for jobs. The irony was that the only country they loved, knew and had served was Great Britain, where they were not allowed to live. This British policy towards their so-called “friends” whom the British epitomised as the “bravest of the brave” (UBGEA, 2006) throughout the ages is “inhuman” (Gyanraj, 2012). Gyanraj posed the questions: “is this how we deserve to be treated by someone for whom we shed our blood, sweat and tears? ... Is this the result of why our fathers and forefathers portrayed Queen Elizabeth’s photo along with our Kings and Queens on the wall of our homes?” He further asserts: “This colonial attitude cannot go on forever. Even if we do not make it stop now, someone will later”.

In summary, the Nepalese hillmen are produced to make exemplary soldiers (in Foucault’s term, “reduced to docile bodies”), applying the apparatus of disciplinary power in the Training Company. Foucault considers that power is essential in maintaining a society and so is in maintaining the hierarchical chain of command within a military organization, but at the same time looking after the soldiers operating on the ground is all the more imperative in order to strengthen the power. This is where the British authorities seem to have failed. Hence, the discriminatory treatment of the Gurkhas continued for nearly two centuries but the Gurkhas served, as Lt Col (Retired) Cross recounts in the documentary, with “no grumbling, no illness” (see documentary 00:59:12), but the time came when the Gurkhas felt that they had tolerated enough. As a result, the Gurkha Justice Campaign was created. The campaign achieved some success, of course not unmediated; the assistance of Joanna Lumley, a colonial figure, played a pivotal role during the campaign, but the success, particularly in terms of the Gurkhas’ settlement rights in the UK, has also triggered a deep cultural division between local and freshly migrated veterans thereby drawing the British-Gurkhas relationship to its utmost complexity.

4.3 Gurkhas' Folk Memories and Emotional Accounts

The research has found that there is very little literature that exists at present that has discussed folk memories and emotional accounts of the Gurkhas, at least within the domain of academia. Since my childhood, I have heard hair-raising and mesmerizing folktales about Gurkha warriors and the study shows that those folktales have been appropriated in the colonial propaganda wars and WW2. Therefore, on this topic we examine how the Gurkhas' myths, folk-memories and legends have contributed to the fact that the Gurkhas are still fighting for the foreign power with the same spirit and loyalty that they had in the 19th century when they were illiterate, docile and tame, and thus had little or no knowledge of what serving in a foreign land as an army was really meant. We shall then make an academic analysis of whether we can find any satisfactory synthesis between folk memories, emotional accounts and technology in order to provide a meaningful archival document of the Gurkha experience, which is one of the auxiliary research questions to be addressed.

Over the period, Gurkhas have been through countless odysseys in the course of serving the British Empire which did not get properly recorded in the annals of both British and Nepalese history. So much so that accurate figures of how many Gurkhas died and how many remained unaccounted for in the service of the British Empire were never presented to the victims. However, the stories of the Gurkhas have been passed from generation to generation as verbal accounts and those stories live on today as folk memories and legends which have not just been bedtime stories, but have been an important part of the Gurkhas continuing their ethos, culture and tradition. Therefore, I attempt to examine folk memory and emotional accounts respectively.

4.3.1 Folk Memory

Before examining how folk memories are associated with the Gurkhas' emotional accounts and ultimately play an important role in maintaining Gurkha culture and traditions as well as their modus operandi, it is essential to analyze exactly what a 'folk-memory' is. George E. Lanford (1980) in *Pleistocene Animals in Folk Memory* explains folk-memory at length by giving the example of the Native American

legends of “mammoths and mankind living together”. Botley (1960: 256) also brings folk-memory into context through the Palestinian Battle of Hattin in 1187, when Saladin utterly defeated the army of the King of Jerusalem. The “Heaven of Blood” overhung the countryside on the day of battle. Not only that, a ray of celestial light shone over the unburied bodies of the martyrs for three days.

Botley’s notion of folk memory in this context is to do with the godly cosmic energy – “Heaven of Blood” and “celestial ray of light” - whereas Binall (1945) discusses folk memory in a slightly different direction. He gives an example: a newcomer in Lincolnshire asks a yokel farmer the directions to Eastville church. The farmer tells him that he cannot miss it as it is built the “wrong way on” (i.e. north-south) and adds, “the man who built it, committed suicide afterward”. Binall suggests that “there should be an unconscious link with the belief expressed by the liturgical scholar Bellotte, that whosoever built a church in any other direction than looking towards the east was guilty of mortal sin”.

The above examples lead us to a binary conclusion: firstly, folk memory, as Macculloch (1993: 30) notes, is a fiction allied to ones’ tradition, belief, customs and culture. Secondly, it is primarily to do with mythical divinity, which Campbell (1993: 290) describes through mythological adventure as a “monomyth”⁷². In both instances, folk memory is not separated from myth, folk tale and legend. Campbell, in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* claims that it: “uncovers the truth disguised for us under the figure of religion and mythology”. It contains several folk stories in which an “old man” creates the earth, plants, water, animals and human beings and one in which the Buddha descends from heaven to his mother’s womb in the shape of a milk-white elephant. The book also contains several folk religious texts from various religions, from different nationalities, creeds and cultures. All of them say that nothing is the Demiurge but God. Whatever and however these mythologies are, they, Campbell (1993: 293) suggests, “yield dual effects – good and evil” or as Hindus famously say: “God vs evil” or “True vs False”.

⁷² The work *monomyth* is from James Joyce, *Finnegan’s Wake* (New York: Viking Press, inc, 1939), p. 581 (Campbell 1993: 30)

In prehistoric society, folk tales and folk religious texts played a pivotal part in introducing the social strata and maintaining law and order in society. In the Hindu religion, Lord Ram, the King of Ayodhya (now India) destroyed Rawana, the King of Lanka (now Sri Lanka) with the 11 heads who had terrorised the whole of the universe. Lord Ram is regarded as an example of human perfection for the whole of humanity. The Hindu festival Dashain is based on this story and in remembrance of this occasion, senior family members at home and senior Gurkhas in Camp offer the Tika to their juniors chanting the blessing “Satrukshya Raghawe” – “destroy the enemy like ram did”.



Figure 4.5. Warrant Officer Class 2 Khadak Chhetri offers Tika to his fellow Gurkha junior soldiers at Camp Bastian, Afghanistan, 2013

Therefore, the heroes of folk tales live in modern society in different shapes and forms. Campbell (1993: 4) also suggests that “Freud, Jung, and their followers have demonstrated irrefutably that the logic, the heroes, and the deeds of myth survive into modern time”.

As a Hindu Gurkha soldier, I find folk tales and folk religious texts linked to Hindu religion are also just as effective. In *Mahabharata*, for example, the 18-day epic battle of *Kurukshetra* between the two groups of cousins - Pandavas’ five brothers and Kauravas’ one hundred brothers, takes place when Karuravas dishonestly defeat Pandavas in a dice game, taking everything including their polyandrous wife Draupati and exiling them to the forest. Later, it is revealed that they are defeated by

subterfuge, hence Kauravas' victory is false. Lord Krishna advises Arjun, one of the Pandavas' brothers, that they must fight Kauravas for justice but Arjuna, who is loyal to his cousins, refuses to take up weapons against them in the name of justice. Lord Krishna then gives a sermon to Arjuna saying that the battle is not only necessary for the immediate return of their kingdom from the hands of the devious Kauravas, but also it is important to maintain the universal truths that "justice must defeat injustice", or "tolerating injustice is tantamount to committing a crime" (Srimad Bhagavatam 2.7.38.). Today, this particular sermon has become a formulaic expression to everybody including the *Gurkha Justice Campaigners* who believe that they are fighting for justice. These mythical folk tales have been adopted by Hindus to educate their society. Hence, these folk tales have become the folk religious texts and the characters in the texts, such as Ram and Krishna have become spiritual idols and totems to be worshipped as "Gods".

Some folk memories about Gurkhas that are sung today could well be based on true stories. I remember from my childhood that in the village festive gatherings and wedding ceremonies, old men would talk about wars; often concerning the actions of the British and Germans soldiers. Sometimes World War 2 veterans would tell their stories with great panache, other times they would also find some new stories, like the one that told of how the British had special undetectable equipment which they used in wars, which helped them succeed in conquering half of the planet. At the time, I believed the story was fact. As I grew older, I took it merely as a folk tale but in the course of this research, I came to understand that the story must have been associated with the story of Bhakti Gurung which translates as:

The most formidable powers in the world, Germany, Italy and Japan joined together to destroy the British and Americans. The Second World War began in 1939. Propaganda was widely used by all sides. Part of Hitler's propaganda drive was a film showing planes across the sky, ships everywhere in the sea, and tanks all over the land. The British had tactics of their own. They shaved the heads of Gurkhas keeping some hair in the crown and they propagated the lie that the British had special troops who had a wireless device fitted on their heads, and that they killed their enemies and ate them. The Germans in turn dropped leaflets from aeroplanes saying to Gurkhas 'Your body is worth 16 Rupees'. Rather join us and enjoy life (Thapa & Mainali 2003: 20).

Although, the propaganda from the British side, as opposed to the German, sounds rather preposterous, it does have the strength to remain a folk-story for generations to come. We also must not forget that Gurkhas had been the right forces in the right time to be used as a propaganda tool, which seems to have worked well in terms of demoralising the enemy. Thomas Bell writes in the *Daily Telegraph on 1 October 2008*:

Such tales of valour have spawned a whole genre of military histories, often written by retired British officers. They have also been used as propaganda: during the Falklands War, a photo of Gurkhas queuing at a grindstone to sharpen their khukuris was released to the Chilean media. As hoped, it found its way to Argentina.

One of the vibrant examples of how propaganda had been effective in demoralising the enemy in the Falklands war according to Tony Gould (2000: 371), is that, the British government even had to step in to deny the “accusation of cruelty and savage acts committed by its Gurkha soldier” and insisted that these were “pure fairy tales inspired by black propaganda” following an Argentinian account, in which a soldier returned from the war was reported as saying:

The Gurkhas seemed completely drugged. They even killed one another. They advanced screaming without even protecting themselves. It was not difficult to kill them but there were too many. Sometimes you killed one or two but the next would then kill you. They were like robots: one Gurkha trod on a mine and went flying through the air, but the one following him didn't show the slightest concern he ran over the same area without changing course and also went flying almost as if not at all expecting it. They seemed to have no survival instinct. Nothing interested them, not even their own lives. The British who came behind the Gurkhas had it very easy: they found the path practically cleared.

These stories of Gurkhas will go down in the recollections of both Argentineans and Nepalese generations in the form of a folk memory. The stories of our ancestors, whether myth, partial truth, fabricated or complete truth, have always been and will always be a moral catalyst for the generations. Those folk stories have pervaded our culture, tradition, way of life and even art and literature. In the days of the Second World War, just like “RAF pilots’ average life was four weeks” (Klein 2010), a

Gurkha's departure from home would be more or less a one-way journey. Most of them would not return.

Major Bharati Gurung from Lamjung district recounts:

At the time of war there used to be a serious talk amongst the friends that if we all die, we die but if anyone survives he must go to everybody's house no matter how far it is, and console our families. We were three friends, Harkabahadur Thapa from Gorkha district, Shankardev Thapa from Palpa and I to make that conversation. In the end, I survived; both of them died in Greece. As promised, I went to Harkabahadur's house in Gorkha district. He had wife, children and old mother. As soon as I delivered the message, the mother ran everywhere wailing and sobbing to herself. I did my best to placate her. Then I deeply felt that we needed a welfare programme to handle such cases" (Thapa and Mainali 2003: 28).

In those days, it was hard to find a household which would not have lost at least one family member in the war. It had become a part of their lives. Hence, they cherished those poignant memories through songs and music. The ganes (crooner), one of the so-called 'lower castes', who make their living from singing songs door-to-door from village to village, mostly sing lachrymal songs of wars that make listeners emotional.

4.3.2 Emotional Accounts

From the Gurkha's enlistment into the British Army and their involvement in wars beginning from the Pandaree War in 1817 through the two great wars to the present day's peacekeeping missions, the number of Gurkha lives lost comes to more than 45,000 (Parker 1999: xiv). Particularly in the great wars, any strange person approaching one's house in the village would be assumed to be bringing some bad news to the family.

My mother was also one of the family members to experience such an ordeal. She lost her brother Prithilal Rai in the Malaya emergency in 1950 when she was in her mid-teens. The news was delivered on the very day of the Dashain festival while the whole family were preparing the feast for the festival. She said it would have been easier to come to terms with the fact if the news had been received at a time other than on the Dashain day. She would recall that devastating memory on every Dashain and for that reason she would never encourage my two brothers and myself

to join the British Army, despite it being a traditional occupation. The widow of Prithilal returned from Malaysia with her one-year-old daughter Deshu Rai after burying her husband. During the course of my research, I visited Deshu Rai and asked if she knew anything about the loss of her father. She said her mother had said to her that her father had died instantly from a single bullet penetrating through his chest, but one of his friends behind him was riddled with bullets. He had asked to see her daughter as he took his last breath at the battle zone. Deshu mentioned what her mother had to go through in order to raise her. The widow of Subedar⁷³ Netra Bahadur Thapa, had also encountered a similar fate. She returned to Nepal from Malaysia following the death of Subedar Thapa in action. Thapa was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery.



Figure 4.6. *The widow of VC Netrabadur Thapa and her daughter receive posthumous VC - Still from The Way of the Gurkha*

These are but a few examples from the documentary *The Way of the Gurkha*. It contains several emotional accounts by Gurkhas; from the beginning of Gurkha history to the present day. Shanta Maya Limbu, living in Darjeeling, says that her husband Baburaj had been called forward by his regiment within a couple of days of their wedding ceremony. He never returned nor had she heard anything about him

⁷³ Indian Army rank equivalent to Captain in the British Army

for years. She would go to the local British Welfare Centre every week in the hope of any news coming from Baburaj's regiment. She said not knowing anything about the missing ones was much harder to live with than knowing they were dead. She would cast her eyes every morning and evening in the direction her husband would have come before giving up. Only after nine years did she carry out her husband's final ritual rites presuming him to be dead.

The dead are gone, and families left behind suffer the most. One of my close relatives, nephew Corporal Deshbir Rai drowned while undertaking river crossing training in Brunei in 2004. He was not only my relative and a neighbour in Brunei but also a convivial and close friend from childhood. It took some time for me to come to terms with the loss, let alone for his widow Krishnaa and nine-year-old son Dipu. I could not imagine how his elderly parents might have coped with the situation. His body was repatriated to Nepal for final burial service⁷⁴.

Another distant relative of mine, a young rifleman called Reman Rai also lost his life on operation in Afghanistan in 2010. His widow Sophy says the couple had been together for just about a year after they got married. The deceased's parents were called from Nepal to perform their son's final rituals. The mother lamented whether there was any mother in the world as ill-fated as she was. I consoled her saying that there are thousands of mothers who lose their sons while serving in the British Army; some had even lost their only sons. At least she had another son to give her comfort. But I was unaware that the other son was disabled with a chronic illness. Later the father said to me that mention of the son was even more painful. It is not difficult to gauge how many members of the Brigade of Gurkhas have stories of tragedy, since I alone have lost three relatives including close ones. I have spoken to at least 50 war veterans from the Second World War's Parshu Ram Rai to present-day combat soldier Rifleman Kushal Limbu - who has lost both his legs while operating in Afghanistan.

⁷⁴ Short footage from the service filmed by a hand-held camera has been used in *The Way of the Gurkha* (see 00:12:30).

Their accounts, not only of losing comrades and being lucky to survive, but also of being away from their loved ones for at least three years before getting to see the family on a five-to-six-month furlough are equally poignant. In my own case, I was on duty at the Guard Room in 7 Parachute Regiment when I heard the news that my wife gave birth to my daughter in 1999, but I had to wait a further two years before getting to see her as no policy existed for giving paternity leave to the married unaccompanied Gurkhas then.

Service in the British Army means so much for the Gurkhas but at a cost which includes not only the sacrifice of lives, but also the occasional suffering of emotional predicaments including occasional misunderstandings between the British and the Gurkhas – this tends to conjure up memories from colonial British and medieval Gurkha eras.

To summarize this topic, emotions affect one's state of consciousness, feelings and sentiment leading to both good and bad results. Gurkhas' emotional accounts accumulated over the centuries can be found to have come from different times, situations and circumstances; both in war and peace times during their service in the British Army. Many of them are poignant and lachrymal, while some are pleasant and joyful.

4.4 Gurkha Monomyth – “The Hero with a Thousand Faces”

Here, I attempt to explore the mythical dimension which adds the clarity to Gurkha occupational tradition for which mythologist Joseph Campbell's idea of the nuclear unit of monomyth suggested in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1994), helps to identify a common cycle driving myths forward across Gurkha cultures and eras: the hero's journey or the monomyth. Campbell breaks the journey down into three stages: departure (separation), initiation and return. He suggests Buddha's journey as an example to elucidate the notion of a nuclear unit of *monomyth*. A widely-known story of Buddha is that one night, he leaves the palace renouncing everything including his wife Yashodhara and son Rahul in search of the answer to life's great question – why are we born, and why do we get old and die? After years of meditation, he finally achieves complete knowledge of universal truth, so-called “enlightenment” or “Nirvana”. He then imparts this knowledge to all mankind on

earth. The essence of the story is that the chosen characters have special power and authority for the salvation of their state and society and that character, for Campbell, is “the composite hero of the monomyth is honoured by his society” (Campbell 1993: 37). For Campbell, Buddha’s leaving of his palace is a ‘departure’, searching and attaining enlightenment is ‘initiation’ and imparting knowledge of *Dharma* is a ‘return’.

In a similar way, a Nepali hillman in his teens leaves his family and the country and, in Campbell’s words, “sets out for a mythological journey – call to adventure that signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown” (ibid: 53). In that “unknown zone”, the hillman performs heroic deeds which Campbell terms as “initiation” in which stage, “he (the hero) moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials” (ibid: 89). Indeed, it is “a succession of trial” phase of the Gurkhas where they are tested on their heroic deeds, loyalty, selflessness and ultimate soldierly discipline.

When the quest has been accomplished, according to Campbell’s mythology, “the hero returns with his life-transmuting trophy.... the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds” (ibid: 179). This (return) is an exciting phase for the Gurkhas as they return with higher status. They will be welcomed as a hero for what they have achieved – rank, medals, commendations and so on. Accordingly, the fellow villagers expect the Gurkhas to respond to their respect with tangible benefits to society. Defeating of enemies alone will not make them a hero in the society, but the contribution they make to their society matters as well. This is a difference between the British and the Gurkhas. A British soldier, who defeats enemies in the battlefield, will be hailed a hero in Great Britain, which is the way it should be, but a Gurkha will not be hailed a hero in Nepal for defeating the enemies of Great Britain. Therefore, the study shows that joining the British Army and earning medals and rank alone will not suffice to make them heroes in the villages in the hills unless they make some contribution to their society which is only possible when there is money. As projected in *The Way of the Gurkha* (00:12:10), when I went

home in 2012, 84-year-old Jakte Darjee came to welcome me home. The villagers of all ages came to meet and greet me as a response to my contribution towards the village health and education.



Figure 4.7. 84-year-old Jakte Darjee greets me on my arrival at the village - Still from *The Way of the Gurkha*

I have set up a small trust for Simha Kali Secondary School, where I used to be a teacher before joining the British Army, in the name of my mother. The school gives an award to the best student from its interest every year. Our family has donated a large chunk of land to the local Jaleshwari Primary School, as seen in the documentary *The Way of the Gurkha* (00:04:25), to build its annexes and playground. I have personally paid for an extra qualified maths and English teacher's salary for a year as an effort to improve the (teaching) quality in those subjects. One of my neighbours, a student for whom I provided financial support, has just completed his PhD in computer engineering, having studied in the U.S.A., and has subsequently expressed his gratitude for my contribution in his dissertation paper. I have been supporting many other fellow citizens with their health and education which would not have been possible had I not been in the British Army.

In summary, despite the Gurkha's poignant folk memory, bleak emotional account and above all, unfair treatment by the British, the Gurkhas continuously serve the

British Queen and the country because of both mythical and mythological factors besides “push-pull”: economic, politico-religious and socio-cultural factors that summon the Gurkhas into, in Campbell’s term, a “mythical journey – call to adventure” which begins from “departure” and ends in “return”, completing a nuclear units of monomyth.

4.5 The Role of Technology in the Production of the Archival Document of Gurkha Experience

An academic analysis of technology that I have employed in this research project is just as important in addressing one of the research questions: whether we find any synthesis between folk memory and emotional academic analysis and technology in order to provide a meaningful archival document of the Gurkhas’ experience.

Therefore, I aim to identify the significance of the technology that helped to produce the entire research project in digital audio-visual format which will be an archival document to be referred to by future researchers.

As technology continues to become an integral part of human civilization, its definition varies from discipline to discipline; as object - tools and machines; as process – production of food, as knowledge – finding information on the internet and as power – cyber warfare. Whoever uses the technology and however it is used, it ultimately has “power”. As Freud suggests, “technology is power or vice versa” (cited in Rochilin 1974: 7) and technology, in the context of power, refers to a tool that helps to gain control over anything from nation to nature. But the fundamental purpose of technology is, as Mohammad Bani Younes and Samer Al-Zoubi suggest, “to facilitate the solution of its practical problems and to provide the necessary needs for the community” (Younes & Al-Zoubi 2015: 1). Therefore, here I refrain from exploring advanced and sophisticated scientific technology and focus on the rudimentary, digital and photographic technology which facilitated the solution of practical problems during the research project.

Practice-based research relies heavily on equipment relevant to fields of research such as art, music, dance and film. The common practice in qualitative research is data analysis. Perhaps the earliest use of technology in qualitative research was when researchers first used tape recorders in their field studies to record interview

sessions or nineteenth century replica vintage still cameras for capturing pictures. Whatever kind of equipment they might be, they were after all, an aspect technology and their impact on every field of research in terms of collecting data, manipulating and archiving was significant.

For my research, the Gurkha museums located in Winchester, U.K. and Pokhara Nepal, were the primary sources of information. Both museums house a large range of archived material, including rare items of individual sentimental value and vital information for institutional (Gurkha regiments) research.



Figure 4.8. One of the pictures exhibited at the Gurkha Memorial Museum, Pokhara

This archival material is crucial to my documentary project as it is tangible evidence in support of historical facts, thus *The Way of the Gurkha* communicates far more powerfully than one can in the form of text. For example, a picture of my uncle

Prithilal Rai (below) taken a few years before his death in 1950, is the only item that his daughter Deshu Rai now has to remember her father by. She says that she did not know about the picture until she found it in a stash after her mother's death in the 1990s. Until then, she could only depend on what her mother said about her father.



Figure 4.9. Deshu Rai's husband, who died in the Burma Campaign in 1950. Still from the documentary

This picture is used in *The Way of the Gurkha* as both data and evidence of archival image of an emotional account when the expository mode is applied to the documentary.

As far as the entire range of technology used in the documentary is concerned, I have used a voice recorder, digital video and a still camera, as well as a smart mobile phone for gathering footage (data) and a computer for editing (manipulating data) and DVDs (digital versatile disk) and USB (universal serial bus) sticks for transferring/playing/exhibiting the documentary. In short, the research project in terms of both methodology and content would not have been possible without technology which plays the biggest role in bringing the Gurkhas to audiences and readers.

4.6 Summary

The documentary *The Way of the Gurkha* demonstrates that the relationship between the British and Gurkhas is a “unique bond” of two completely different

groups of people in terms of colour, cast, religion, culture, geo-politics and socio-economic background. At the same time the relationship is rather complex. On the one hand, the British continuously eulogise the Gurkhas as their “most faithful friend” (Turner: 1931). On the other, as the study suggests, the way the Gurkhas have been treated throughout their service with the British is not the way “the most faithful friend” deserves. In the meantime, it is worth noting that the Gurkhas also never seem to have regarded their British officers as their friends in the literal term. In the Gurkha regiments, the British served only as officers, hence Gurkhas regarded their officers more as their “big brothers” (whom they, as Lt Col Cross suggests, “cannot lie to”) than friends. This complex relationship appeared to be central to some academic studies in recent times, particularly following the emergence of the Gurkha Justice Campaign for equal pay and pension in the early 1990s.

Xiaoyu Wu and Kui Zhu have in *The Gurkhas and Great Inequalities in Their Lives* suggested there are two reasons for inequality- 1) racial discrimination and 2) colonial logic. Although their study focuses on the private security market (PSM), the logic applies to other areas of discrimination all the same. They suggest that the Gurkhas being categorised as a ‘martial race’ placed the Gurkhas in a lower position within the hierarchy, so they only deserve lower payment. They have not elaborated on this statement further, as to how their status as a ‘martial race’ places the Gurkhas in a lower position, however it is understood that the colonials used the martial race theory, as discussed in Chapter 2, as a tool of imperial power and governance in the Raj era. Whomever the Raj categorised as a martial race, they must have been loyal to the Raj, hence the martial race was in a lower position. According to Vron Ware, Paul Gilroy also suggests that the hierarchical position is determined by the individual’s race and colour, and sometimes even religion, cast and creed. “The ‘race’ idea is powerful ‘precisely because it supplies a foundational understanding of natural hierarchy, on which a host of other supplementary social and political conflicts have come to rely’. ‘Race’, he argues, ‘remains the self-evident force of nature in society’” (Gilroy 2005: 8, cited in Ware 2010: 7).

Wo’s and Zhu’s second reason for inequality is “colonial logic” for which, they suggest, Gurkhas themselves are partly responsible, because “they have acknowledged the dominant role of the white soldiers [in the private security

industry], despite the fact that they have experienced more in international society and have gained rich communication skills” (Wu and Zhu 2017: 122). In fact, an example of a historical account supports this very argument. When Lieutenant Frederick Young (later General) was captured by the Gurkhas in the Anglo-Nepal war. He was asked why he did not flee while his men did. Lt. Yong replied, “I have not come so far in order to run away”. His bearing impressed the Gurkhas, who said, “We could serve under men like you” (*The New York Times*, 1964)⁷⁵. In other words, Gurkhas accepted the subaltern position the moment they proposed to “serve under men like you [Lieutenant Young]”. By saying this, I do not contradict two logics – acceptance of subalternity and Gurkha Justice Campaign because subalterns do resist power (Smith 2010: 45). Ever since, the Gurkhas have become the subject of colonial power, which we have looked at through Foucault’s concept of “power relations”.

Foucault’s notion of power is not the traditional repressive way of controlling people but it is far more subtle and less visible. Repressive power forces people to do what they do not want to do but in Foucault’s concept of power, power makes people do what they have to anyway. So, this concept perfectly fits with the colonial power over Gurkhas. Their service in the British Army appears to be voluntary, not only to the outside world but for the Gurkhas themselves too. But the “apparatus” that is employed to make it so unnoticeably subtle is “correct training”, which includes “hierarchical observation”, “normalizing judgement” and “examination”. The Gurkhas training company not only delivers the basic infantry training needed to qualify as a British soldier who can be deployed in war, but the training company shapes and moulds hillmen into a more disciplined Gurkha soldier and that discipline is maintained through promotions, rewards, assignments and annual reports which will be observed by the British officers, dwelling in the hierarchy of the Brigade of Gurkhas, which Foucault terms the “panoptic position”. This chapter has also examined the Gurkhas’ service in the British Army from a thus far undetected,

⁷⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/10/18/archives/ayo-gorkhali-the-gurkhas-are-upon-you-is-the-battle-cry-of-one-of.html>

mythical perspective. In myths, Gurkhas always dwell in the Heroic domain completing a “cycle of nuclear monomyth” – Departure, Initiation and Return.

They are hailed heroes in the hills based on the promotion, medals and contribution they make to their fellow villagers. Finally, technology has made it possible to piece together the evidence and bring it to the audience as an academic research project which will be archived for posterity.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This research primarily stems from my personal experience of being a hillboy born to parents who often struggled to feed their children. I was deprived of a privileged education and technology but surrounded by neighbours who had at least one family member in the British Army (Lahure) and living better lives than my family which subsequently led me also to dream of becoming like one of them which eventually came true in 1993. Like every Gurkha, I have been through a nine-month extremely arduous infantry training in Hong Kong, served in a combat zone in Afghanistan and witnessed the periodic changes of the British Army in terms of tactics and strategy and quantity. Changes also came about in the terms and condition of service and immigration policies as a result of the Gurkha Justice Campaign. But the campaign was not triggered by sudden mishaps like the Sepoy Mutiny (discussed in Chapter 1) in 1857; it was a culmination of continuous discriminatory treatment given by the British throughout the century. Lionel Caplan identifies that one of the principles which distanced and subordinated the Gurkhas was textual device. The device combined affection and miniaturisation to produce the 'pet', ever loyal and obedient (Caplan 1995: 204), which, for Foucault, is represented by "docile bodies" fostered by the "correct training" within the principle of disciplinary power. The relationship between these docile bodies (Gurkhas) and the trainer (British officers), in Oriental literatures, was depicted as a natural bond, but the actuality of their courtship could not allow for any dealing on equal terms, and the rhetoric confirmed the Gurkha subalternity which is central to this research.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The literature review indicates that the creators of the existing discourse see the Gurkhas as the descendants of the fighting men who conquered the valley and created the modern Nepal. They apply the term "Gurkha" to those sections of the population whom they regard as suitable for military service or those who possess martial quality, but no effort seems to have been made to examine the insight of the Gurkhas themselves. As a serving soldier in the British Army for 24 years I have

come around the corner to discover unexpected outcomes in relation to the research questions, and the overarching research problem which has been reviewed in the following findings of all four research questions:

5.2.1 Finding of The Research Question 1 (Main Research Question)

What is the hierarchical position and historic role occupied by the Gurkha regiment within the institution of the British Army? How has periodic military reform acted to rebalance the relationship with the Gurkha regiment and how is the contemporary relationship viewed by the British Ministry of Defence?

It is also important to note that the Gurkhas have not forgotten, will not forget and must not forget that they are enjoying better lives and able to afford better education for their children because of their service in the British Army although at the cost of physical, emotional and cultural sacrifice however the emphasis given in this thesis is where the Gurkhas have been placed in terms of their hierarchical position in the British Army.

My experience in the British Army since 1993 includes witnessing the withdrawal of the Gurkhas regiment from colonial duty in the far east Asia. This withdrawal took place after the British Army's Option for Change was announced in 1990, "in response to the changing strategic environment in the post-Cold War era" (Taylor 2010)⁷⁶, which was a global opportunity to 'reap the peace dividend' and take the economic benefit. As a result, four Gurkha infantry battalions merged into two, reducing the number from 8,000 in 1972 to 3,500 in 1995. Over the span of 24 years, my service saw periodic reform of the British Army including the Gurkhas regiments. However, the hierarchical position of the Gurkhas in the British Army from the beginning till this date remained at the lowest level.

It is evident in the documentary that the Gurkhas were not recognised as "sepoy"- a title given to the East India Company's Army until 1857 let alone enjoying promotion and commissioning within the hierarchy. With periodic changes in the British military institution came a gradual demise of colonial power in South East Asia, the number

⁷⁶ A Brief Guide to Previous British Defence Reviews, SN/IA/5714, Claire Taylor 19 October 2010,

of Gurkha regiments shrank to two infantry battalions from more than ten during the world wars, and the dismissal of thousands of Gurkhas who had served less than 15 years without any pension and gratuity. My personal experience has been reflected in the documentary, where I witnessed widows and war veterans living with a meagre charity pension, as they did not get to complete the 15 years of service required to qualify for a pension. For instance, Sergeant Indra Bahadur Rai, who received a gunshot wound in the Monte Cassino battle, was sent home without any financial arrangement.

Therefore, this thesis has argued that the position of the Gurkhas in the British Army has never been as that of “friend” nor been regarded as an integral part of the British army in practice. According to the tripartite agreement (TPA) signed by Great Britain, India and Nepal (TPA 1947, Annexure III, Section G, Article 1), Gurkhas would not be serving in the British Army as mercenaries, however the Gurkhas were used as nothing more than mere mercenaries by being treated differently both during and after service, despite the British Officers continuously reiterating the stereotyped image of the Gurkhas, about their blind bravery and utmost loyalty. This thesis has analysed the discrimination from the prism of Said’s Orientalism and Gramsci’s concept of subaltern. The concept later explicated by deconstructivists who defined themselves as subaltern studies group including prominent post-colonial critic Gayatri Spivak.

According to Said’s Orientalism, the West regards the Orientals as “other”; exactly the opposite of the West. The Orientals lack the energy and initiative to represent themselves but they must be represented and require Western attention. Orientals are too lazy and feeble to govern themselves. Therefore, the West tends to justify the colonization of the East as a salvation from depravity and barbarism. This is exactly what the British colonials claimed when they interdicted the Sati system in India in 1829 which the colonials branded as a situation where “white men save brown women from brown men” (Cooke 2002: 1). The Englishmen as colonizers are collectively represented as the protector and the savior of Indian women from an oppressively patriarchal Hindu society. However, Spivak then presents the other side to the Sati abolition argument, whereby ‘the women actually wanted to die’. “If this argument is rephrased to the more universally applicable: ‘brown women do not

need saving', then these two polemics may serve as posts against or between which the representations of British dealings with India can be positioned" (Thompson 2011-2012: 143).

A similar argument is made by the British for paying the Gurkhas lower salaries and pensions. They argue the Gurkhas are paid well above their living standard in Nepal, hence they are liberated from poverty. Although *The Way of the Gurkha* suggests that there are many Gurkha veterans such as Indrabahadur Rai, Darjeeling, Tilok Sing Rai, Bhojpur and many others in the hills of Nepal who struggle merely for survival. I agree that the service in the British Army has indeed improved the Gurkhas' socio-economic condition. However the central argument of this thesis is not the changes in economic conditions as a result of service in the British army, but the rationale behind the treatment the Gurkhas have received from the British Ministry of Defence, this thesis argues that the Gurkhas are placed in the position of subaltern which, according to Gramsci, refers to a person of low rank or a group of people in a particular society suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class who rule "not only by force but also by ideas" (Bates 1975: 351).

5.2.2 Finding of The Research Question 2

Is there a disjuncture between the values that underpin British military training and the cultural values of Gurkha families whose members submit to the discipline of the army?

Like most Gurkhas, I am the third generation of my family to serve in the British Army⁷⁷, which makes me inquisitive as to what makes the Gurkhas continue to submit themselves to the discipline of the British Army for generations. The answer is firstly, it is not because of one's sudden desire to go abroad and see new places, gaining new experiences while enjoying the economic benefits, but that it is a gradual process of both physical and mental development from a person's childhood resulting in having a body fully capable of going through the arduous military training. The study suggests that the desire of becoming a Lahure which I developed was as

⁷⁷ My father did not serve but my grandfather and two uncles (my father's two brothers) served in the British Army.

a result of my social environment, which Bourdieu terms a “habitus”. Both social environment and background play a pivotal role in developing the thoughts (concepts) as well as the body of an individual, or, in other words, the social background becomes internalised; the way of thinking, moving and talking becomes the part of the habitus. Therefore, the hillboy habitus that supports the hillboys’ aptitude for joining the British Army for economic assurance, ultimately develops into virtues which we termed in this thesis as the British Army’s values and standards. Therefore, Bourdieu’s habitus enables the Nepalese hillmen to be suitable to the British Army.

Secondly, after joining the British Army Foucault’s theory of discipline comes into play. The “correct training” at the training company shapes and moulds the young Nepalese hillmen into what Foucault terms “docile bodies”, or in other words, subservient soldiers of the Gurkha discipline. Foucault suggests, there are three elements involved in the “correct training”- hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and examination. The British commander dwelling on the panopticon position observes the Gurkhas down below. The discipline is maintained through promotion and awards’ incentives and it is examined through periodic report writing. Therefore, while the British produce the “docile bodies” through modern way of training in the training companies, Gurkhas’ cultural values which bind the Gurkhas and their families together at all times are also the key which enable Gurkhas to continue their service when far away from their home. Particularly before the new terms and conditions of the Gurkha service, when Gurkhas were allowed to go on leave only once in every 3-4 years, celebrations of Hindu festivals such as Dashain, and organising sports and messings provided the opportunity for sharing joy and sorrow both in war and peace, enabling Gurkhas to bond with each other. Their families back home faithfully supported what their husbands, sons and fathers were doing on the other side of the world. Therefore, at least until my generation there is no disjuncture between the Gurkha values and the cultural values for both of them ultimately support the Gurkhas to submit to the discipline of the British Army. However, from the next (my daughter’s) generation it will not be the case for the Gurkhas can bring their family after four years of service and can apply for settlement in the UK after their service.

5.2.3 Finding of The Research Question 3

Can an informed programme of documentary filmmaking reveal the complexities of the relationship between Gurkhas and British people?

During the process of making the documentary my travel involved a two-week trek to the hill districts of both east and west of Nepal including the Solukhumbu, Khotang, Sankhuwasabha, Bhojpur, Sunsari and Kaski districts, where retired Gurkhas and veterans reside. We shared our experiences of serving in the British Army. Most of the retired and redundant Gurkhas served for less than 15 years while a few officers served up to 22 years.

Almost 90 hours of raw footage have been filmed over the span of a six-year research project from which only the best and most appropriate footage has been selected for the final product of the documentary - bringing it down to a total length of one hour and 33 minutes. Hence, the final product is compact and a composite version of the film that contains multidimensional relationships between me and the rest of the participants, as well as the relationships between practical and theoretical film making and the Gurkhas' experience.

The documentary is largely informed by Bill Nichols' documentary theory, adapting a hybrid approach of principally expository (44.75%) and participatory (25.97%) modes that has proved that it can go beyond conventional uses of documentary making for commercial and educational purpose, and it can function as an integral part of the academic research programme. The documentary *The Way of the Gurkha* provides sufficient information to examine the relationships between the Gurkhas and the British soldiers. The examination has been carried out in two stages: firstly – historic relations between the two states of Nepal and the UK, and secondly relations between the Gurkhas and the British within the Ministry of Defence.

Even though the relationship between the two countries has always been glorified, it is not difficult to understand that there was a reciprocal understanding between the Rana government who wanted to hold their power within Nepal, and who had to please the British, and the British who drew a reliable fighting force from Nepal to expand their colonial power had to please the Ranas. Following the collapse of both the Rana dynasty and British colonial power, the relations between the two states

have still been maintained at a certain level, for both states have continued to support each other for their own interest. The relationship between Gurkhas and the British officers and soldiers, according to the experience of the retired and war veteran Gurkhas, has remained strong as ever, as I have expressed through my experience in the documentary. However, the relationship between the two became complicated, at least within the political dimension, when Gurkhas formally launched the Gurkha Justice Campaign in 1990 which has been revealed in detail in the documentary.

5.2.4 Finding of The Research Question 4

Can a satisfactory synthesis be found between folk memory and emotional account, academic analysis and technology in order to provide a meaningful archival document of Gurkha experience?

My first-hand experience alone by no means governs the entire phenomenology of this research; hence the sharing of experiences between me and other serving and retired Gurkhas has been common practice in dealing with the emotional and psychological phenomena. Therefore, in the course of nine years of research, I have travelled to many parts of Nepal with portable filming equipment provided by Kingston University, London, to gather footage and learn about the insight of the war veterans, retired Gurkhas, widows, and their relatives. Meeting and talking to them in person was the only option for me to gauge their emotions and listen to their folk memories. This research has identified that the Gurkhas' emotional accounts are generally found in the form of separation and tragedy. Whereas their folk memories have been more like legendary epics of bravery and heroic actions in battles. Emotional accounts are still being added to the present-day chapter of the Gurkhas' history, but folk memories exist only as verbal accounts that have been passed down from generation to generation. This research fills up the lacuna between folk memories, emotional account and archival document with the theoretical provision of Campbell's notion of "monomyth" (discussed in Chapter 4) where he suggests folk memory "uncovers the truth disguised for us under the figure of religion and mythology" (Campbell 1993: 290). The Gurkhas, whom their families regard as mythical hero lord Rama; the epitome of humanity, complete the "nuclear unit of monomyth as that of Lord Buddha's – departure (leaving the palace), initiation

(attaining the enlightenment) and return (imparting the knowledge of wisdom)” by the time they retire from the British Army. A Gurkha leaves as a hillboy, earns money, returns to his village and helps others”. Both the analysis of folk memories and emotional accounts of the Gurkhas in this thesis and the documentary will make a rich archival document. But it is important to note that, this one version of the documentary cannot represent anything after it has been made (completed). The documentary is of a specific time and date but the experiences of Gurkhas will change and evolve with time. Since the documentary was completed in 2015, it has become historical already.

5.3 Corollary Findings

Alongside the main findings, the study has also come across some other corollary findings. During the course of the research, a cross-section of the Nepalese including war veterans, serving and retired Gurkhas, trainer and trainee Gurkhas, officers and other ranks, historians, teachers and students have been interviewed. Each group had been asked questions appropriate to their groups. The majority of opinions suggest that the reason(s) for joining the British Army is economic while some also suggest that joining the British Army is the traditional occupation to be followed which are termed in this academic research as pull-push strategy and sociocultural factor respectively. Additionally, the research locates one more factor to make the hillmen join the British Army – politico-religious factor which functions alongside the “push” factor rather than independently. As discussed in Chapter 2, according to Hindu religion society is hierarchically classified into four castes – Brahmin, Kshetri, Vaishya and Sudra. Former two castes are responsible for knowledge (education) and power (ruling the nation) respectively. The next two casts are responsible for farming and business and serving the higher casts respectively. Therefore, as the society operates within the religious context, the Vaishya and Sudras have less access to the nation’s politics, bureaucracy and administration. As a result, they are pushed out of the country merely to find the space in the rich and developed nation that can easily accommodate them in the labour market.

As far as the Gurkhas’ motto “It is better to die than live a coward” is concerned, war veterans’ experience suggests that Gurkhas have suffered defeat and been taken prisoner by their enemies, however, in the military battle suffering of defeat is an

institutional matter rather than group or individual, therefore, it is not necessarily interpreted as being a coward. During a physical survey given to new recruits, 50 per cent of recruits in three consecutive years (2012, 2013, 2014) agreed with the motto. 30 per cent believed the situation dictates whether they surrender or die and 20 per cent do not agree that surrender is evidence of cowardice. Furthermore, according to the citation of the Gurkha VC winners, as well as a recent interview with CGC winner Sergeant Dip Prakash Pun (The Way of the Gurkha 01:05:25), they chose to continue fighting to the death in battle rather than surrendering and seizing the chance of survival. This evidence determines that the Gurkhas still live by the motto “better to die than live as a coward”.

The study also discovered that the reason for the emergence of the Gurkha Justice Campaign is not only because of the discriminatory policy of the Ministry of Defence but also immigration policy which prevented the Gurkhas coming to the UK for a job after retirement which was unacceptable, not only for the Gurkhas but the majority of British people as 250,000 British signed the petition for the campaign in 2008⁷⁸. This (immigration) issue eventually resulted in unanimous support for the Gurkhas justice campaign groups such as GAESO (Gurkha Army Ex-servicemen Association), GWS (Gurkha Welfare Service) and UBGAE (United British Gurkha Army Ex-servicemen).

5.4 Conclusion, Limitations and Further Research

5.4.1 Conclusion

The war between the British East India Company and the Nepalese in 1814 culminated in friendship, and as Gould (1999: Intro) notes “they have been friends ever since”. But the friendship between the British and the Gurkhas, particularly in the case of the military hierarchy, is not a friendship of equals, rather the relationship was often described as “Boys and Masters” (Ibid:127) or “Servant and Master” (KC 2005: 402) or even to that of master and “pet” (Caplan 2005: 04). Following the

⁷⁸ *The Telegraph*, Saturday, 9 November 2009

analysis, I suggest that the Gurkhas' position both as servant and pet are the colonial language referring to an inferior or a subaltern.

In my essay, published in a renowned journal, *Literacy Studies*, published by the Literacy Association of Nepal (LAN), I have suggested the Gurkhas' identity as "Consumers" from the perspective of de Certeau's Tactics and Strategy outlined in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. The Gurkhas are "merely a member of the forces to support with strategies and tactics planned and operated by the higher level of the chain of command" (Rai 2017: 105). In this study, the identity of the Gurkhas as 'consumers' is consistent with the Gramscian theory of the subaltern which fundamentally refers to a "low rank suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class" (Louai 2012: 5). Superficially, the British have consistently praised Gurkhas as loyal and brave fighters but at the same time they are also expected to remain loyal despite different pay and pension to their British counterparts, suggesting that their pay scale was designed according to their living standards in Nepal. The study discovers, firstly, that it was not the case with those Gurkhas who had been commissioned directly from Sandhurst and lived in Nepal, who received the standard British pension, and secondly it was against the notion of the tripartite agreement where it clearly states:

In all matters of promotion, welfare and other facilities the Gurkha troops should be treated on the same footing as other units in the parent army so that the stigma of 'mercenary troops' may for all time be wiped out (TPA 1947, Annexure III, Section G, Article 1).

The research has also critically confronted the notion that the sacrifice of over 40,000 Gurkhas whilst in service to the British is not because: "They do not have a high estimate of the value of life" (Campbell, 2009). It has also provided both primary and secondary evidence that the Gurkhas' sacrifice is the result of a combination of courage, selfless commitment, friendship, loyalty to the British and a sense of soldierly duty.

This thesis has discussed film documentary making as the research methodology which has provided the first systematic account of my own experiences as a serving Gurkha soldier incorporating the other fellow Gurkha soldiers', families', widows' and retired war veterans' accounts. Most importantly, the documentary has established a

platform for me to speak to the audience directly in order to explain my life as a hillboy and as a serving Gurkha soldier.

In terms of the application of the generic principle of documentary making, the experiment confirms that the expository mode is one of the most effective ways of encapsulating a huge amount of data into an appropriate length. Therefore, I have used mostly the expository mode addressing the spectators directly as either an on-screen commentator or through a voice-over track (a narration by someone we don't see that's laid over the images). During the screening of the documentary in the Nepalese community in Aldershot in June 2017, the new generation were particularly interested in learning that there was so much discrimination towards the Gurkhas in the past, while the old generations were clearly in awe to learn that there have been so many changes including training, dress and discipline within the Brigade of Gurkhas.

To conclude this whole thesis, despite being a serving member of the British Army as a Gurkha soldier for over 24 years, I had never critically reflected on my position until I undertook this PhD research. This research has offered a full understanding of the Gurkhas' position in the British Army and has explored the complex relation between the British and the Gurkhas which thus far remained undetected.

5.4.2 Limitations

The nature of the research questions extend from the Gurkhas' position in the British Army to the synthesis of folk memories, emotional account, academic analysis and technology requiring sociological, autobiographical, and technological approaches to answer, hence the research took longer and produced a larger thesis in terms of content than standard practice-based qualitative research. Even so, my current position as a serving Gurkha soldier provides ample time and space to conduct research without any compromise. With regards to the research method, this is the first documentary where a serving Gurkha soldier has completed the whole project from pre- to post-production single-handedly. This has not been because of experimental considerations, but rather, budgetary limitations. Hiring a professional camera operator and using a proper lighting system would have produced better images than operating the camera myself, whilst also interviewing or asking

bystanders to hold the camera, set on auto mode. However, this is not a commercial documentary, but a research one, for which detailed information matters more than pristine images. Therefore, I would put forward the view that the budgetary limitations have not adversely affected the research yet it is a limitation which does not remain unnoticed.

5.4.3 Future Research

“Gurkhas for fighting not writing” (Gould 2000: 04) is no longer the case now. In a fast-changing world, the British Army has changed in its entirety, and so have the Gurkhas. This Ph.D. thesis and the documentary *The Way of the Gurkha* are per se strong evidence that the Gurkhas have changed over the period. No one would have even imagined that someday Gurkhas would be writing and conducting research about their forebears and learning about their family history nor had anyone envisaged that someday the Gurkhas would break the silence over equal rights. Over the last two centuries, Gurkhas have “invested a lot of blood, sweat and tears” for the British Empire. Many British people have honoured the Gurkhas’ sacrifice while a few have different views. The new policies for the Gurkhas’ terms and conditions of service and immigration came into force over the last decade or so. As a result, Gurkhas can choose to serve with any unit within the British Army after four years of service in the Gurkha regiment. This privilege, on one hand, provides the opportunity to experience British culture and etiquette within the wider army but on the other, Gurkhas not only miss the luxury of practicing Gurkha cultures and customs with their brothers in the Gurkhas Regiment but also it is highly likely that they could experience the strong sense of “otherness” within themselves while a colonial attitude still pervades the psyche of the “home team”. Whilst many of my cohorts (*numbaries*)⁷⁹ were made redundant after their 18 years in the Gurkha regiments, I have been lucky to have full extended service and serve with the British units when I had the opportunity to explore the colonial attitude in depth and examine the Gurkhas actual position in the British Army.

⁷⁹ Gurkhas address their friends who have enlisted in the British Army at the same time as *Numbari*

With this summarising note, I leave the following questions for future research:

a) Every year, thousands of Nepalese youth compete for a limited number of vacancies in the British Army, often postponing their studies for private training in order to secure success. Some even sustain a lifetime injury during the training. Will their lives be the same again? What happens to those who do not succeed?

b) With the implementation of a new immigration policy for the Gurkhas, many retired Gurkhas have come to the UK and serving Gurkhas are less likely to return to Nepal. Will the tradition of looking after friends and family continue? In the broader context, how has this policy affected the national GDP of Nepal?

c) The Gurkhas' presence in the UK is increasing every day, thereby engendering two completely different generations of Gurkhas in the region - the veterans who do not understand English, and their grandchildren who do not understand Nepali. The current generation who are in the middle, now have the challenge of bridging the gap while also maintaining the Gurkha ethos within the Gurkha regiments. How would they tackle this challenge?

d) For the new generation of Gurkha soldiers who have been born, raised and educated in the UK (my daughter Smreeti, for example), Nepali language and culture is difficult to learn and embrace - do they experience any traces of "colonial attitude" in British people as well as "otherness" in themselves?

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