

# Spring Festivals, Around the Corner

COMPILED BY BIBHUTI KHATIWADA



## *Fagu Purnima, Holi*

Holi is an important festival to Hindus. It is celebrated at the end of the winter season on the last full moon day of the lunar month - Falgun, which usually falls in March or late February. This year Holi is on March 5 & 6, 2015. That is on Falgun 21 and 22, 2071 in Bikram Sambat Calendar (Lunar Calendar). Holi is welcoming of spring followed by summer. It is also observed to get blessings of God for coming harvests and fertility of the land. This festival is celebrated in most of South Asian countries. Actually Holi is the night of Falgun Krishna Chaturdasi but celebration starts from the very next day on Purnima (Full moon day). Holi is the festival of color, friendship and love.

There is a famous Hindu mythology to explain why Holi is celebrated as color fest. The word "Holi" originates from "Holika", the demoness sister of demon king Hiranyakashipu. King Hiranyakashipu had earned a boon that made him virtually indestructible. The special power blinded him, he grew arrogant, considered himself as God, and demanded that everyone worship him only. Hiranyakashipu's own son, Prahlada, however, disagreed. He

was and remained devoted to Vishnu (Hindu God). This infuriated Hiranyakashipu. He subjected Prahlada to cruel punishments, none of which affected the boy or his resolve to do what he thought was right. Finally, Holika - Prahlada's evil aunt - tricked him into sitting on a pyre with her. Holika was wearing a cloak (shawl) that made her immune to injury from fire, while Prahlada was not. As the fire roared, the cloak flew from Holika and encased Prahlada. Holika burned, Prahlada survived. Vishnu appeared and killed Hiranyakashipu. The bonfire is a reminder of the symbolic victory of good over evil, of Prahlada over Hiranyakashipu, of fire that burned Holika. The day after Holika bonfire is now celebrated as Holi.



*Nepalese in Iowa celebrating Holi.*

## Nepalese Cultural Etiquettes

1. The form of greeting in Nepal is "Namaste" performing by joining both palms together. It literally means "the divine in me salutes the divine in you".
2. As a mark of respect Nepalis usually take their shoes off before entering someone's house or place of worship.
3. Food or material that has been touched by another person's mouth is considered impure or "jutho" and, therefore, is not accepted unless among close friends or family.
4. Touching something with feet or using the left hand to give or take may not be considered auspicious.
5. Walking around temples or stupas is traditionally done clockwise.
6. Nodding of head means "Yes" while shaking of head means a "No". A slight dangling of head from left to right means "OK".

Source: [welcomenepal.com](http://welcomenepal.com)

## *Ghode Jatra*

Ghode Jatra, the Horse Racing Day falls on the month of March/April. This year Ghode-Jatra is on March 20, 2015. That is on Chaitra 6, 2071 in Bikram Sambat Calendar (Lunar Calendar). A grand horse parade takes place at Tundikhel, Kathmandu, the central point of the city reputed to have been in the former days the largest parade ground in Asia. It is said that in the olden days the Kings of Kathmandu used to go to worship the Bhadrakali temple in a courtly cavalcade following the Living Goddess Kumari. This visit could have been modified into the parade of horses and finally the horse athletics and racing contest as it is today,

held by the national army. Legend reveals that this festival was held to celebrate the victory over a demon named Tundi who presided over the meadow, today known as Tundikhel. Tundi was a terror, so when he met with his death people rejoiced by dancing on his body with horses. So it's believed that the clamor of horses' hooves on Ghode Jatra at Tundikhel keeps the demon's spirit at bay as it still threatens to ruin the city. It's said, the faster the horses run, the quicker Tundi's spirit is dispelled. The swift running of the horses on this day is also considered to be a good omen for the Nepalese people.

Sources: [weallnepali.com](http://weallnepali.com), [nepalhomepage.com](http://nepalhomepage.com), [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)



# Events and Updates

IOWA NEPALESE ASSOCIATION

## *New Year Social*

INA hosted a potluck social event on the occasion of New Year 2015. It was held on 10th January at Glynn Village Clubhouse, Waukee. Apart from the socialization of community, INA also published the first issue of its bi-monthly newsletter "nilgiri" during the occasion. There was good participation from Nepalese living around greater Des Moines area. The highlights of the night were launching of the e-newsletter, performances from kids and fun games for the kids and adults. Also INA board provided updates on the financial statements.



## *Kick-off meeting for CelebrAsian*

A kick-off meeting for CelebrAsian was held on February 8 at Glynn Village Clubhouse, Waukee. During the meeting, Mr. Roshan Pradhan, president of INA, notified everyone about the changes and updates for this year. The community members who participated in the kick-off meeting, selected Mr. Bikal Adhikari as a Village leader for this year. During the meeting, sub-committee leaders were also selected to spearhead the various activities for the CelebrAsian 2015 event. The event is going to be held during memorial day weekend at Western Gateway Park, Downtown Des Moines.



## *Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPI) Community*

The Office of Asian American and Pacific Islander Affairs – part of Iowa Department of Human Rights - hosted a first of its kind community roundtable engagement event on Feb 5th 2015 at the Sakari Sushi Lodge, downtown Des Moines.

It was a packed room with representatives from Philippines, Laos, Vietnam, Korea, China along with representatives from the Iowa Nepalese Association (INA). Some of the key-note attendees included Dave Hung - the regional Advisor for the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Ben Jung – the local commissioner, and a local representative from USCIS office. Sanjita Pradhan - who works for the local AAPI office - was one of the main facilitators in the event.

Most of the concerns were around the education and social integration of the refugees, especially from Burma and Bhutan. There were good discussions on immigration, health and social security issues for immigrants.

This was the first time we had this meeting and would like to continue with these type of discussions and determine some action-items that all community members can undertake and volunteer for the general upliftment and awareness of our communities.

As potential next steps, INA would also like to initiate an open forum for the Nepalese community where a representative from USCIS can answer questions on common immigration and citizenship concerns.

If anyone has any additional questions or thoughts on their involvement with the community engagement event, please feel free to reach out to any INA Board members or email at [info@iowanepalese-association.org](mailto:info@iowanepalese-association.org)



## Editorial

Namaste!

INA along with the Nilgiri editorial team is privileged and happy to present the second issue of our regular newsletter. We try to live up to the expectation that every issue of Nilgiri brings warmth to your heart and is visually engaging, through the articles that our very own members have contributed. With every upcoming issues, we have planned to include various stories from Nepal, mostly related to tourism and culture. As we know, Nepal is very rich in culture and heritage, with great ethnic diversity and equally impressive natural beauty, we are optimistic, our readers would be interested to know more about it.

Nilgiri also provides a platform to express and share the experiences of our Nepali community living in Iowa. As much as we would like to hear from our adult members, we highly encourage our younger generations (teenagers) to participate and contribute. They are in a unique position to highlight and share their perspective of what it means to be living in Iowa. As a result, this issue brings articles from 2 such young talented authors.

In addition, we would like to express our extreme gratitude for all the ideas and constructive feedback we have received from our readers. Our journey will never be easy without our reader's kind support and encouragements.

Furthermore, our Nilgiri team would like to wish 'Happy Celebrations' with zeal and enthusiasm, for all upcoming spring festivals - Holi, Ghodejatra and Chaitya Dashain.

Pheri Bhetaula !!



# Maintaining my Nepalese Identity

UNNATI KAYASTHA

Nepal, locating it in the globe is like finding a small hut among big skyscrapers. And yet it is a universe within itself with richness in nature as well as culture. And this is where I come from. I am Unnati Kayastha, living in Des Moines, Iowa. I was only two years old when I moved to America, and now I realize how difficult it would have been for me to maintain my Nepalese identity now, if my parents hadn't encouraged it from the beginning.

Nepal has always been projected to me as a spiritual country with spiritual ways of life. I have been taught the art of greeting people is by putting two palms together and saying, "Namaste". When we bow down and greet each other with Namaste, we are respecting each other's souls, vowing for the humanity and divinity that exists within our hearts, letting go of our ego and respecting each other's existence. And it will be one of the first things I would like to pass to my next generation. Nepal has many holidays and festivals even though it is such a small country. There are many traditions, rituals, and celebrations I plan to pass down to future generations as my parents have passed down to me, Dashain being one of them. In Nepal it is the longest and most auspicious holiday and there are huge celebrations throughout the whole country. It has a great significance because it is the celebration of the victory of good over evil. According to the stories I have heard, Dashain is celebrated as a tribute to Goddess Durga, who fought with a terrible demon, called Mahisasura and finally destroyed him saving everybody from terror. I remember being younger and celebrating the holiday. We would have big parties with singing and dancing. Everyone had a great time. Another tradition I've partaken in my entire life is Pujas. Ever since I was little I remember doing Pujas to celebrate birthdays, holidays or any other big event. My parents would usually tell me what to do and how to do it, like putting on Tika. I plan to pass this down as well as many other customs. What I love the most about all these traditions and customs is that each of them has a different and interesting story behind it. I always want to

**“ The Nepalese community in Iowa has been participating in the CelebrAsian festival for many years. Since I was seven, I have been dancing in the festival to various Nepalese songs. This festival has been very important for youth to understand their culture ”**

know more about these stories and about its origin. It makes me sad that although the culture and traditions are still intact, the significance they carry is little known today.

Another way I am maintaining my Nepalese identity is through a Nepali language class. I attend class weekly with other Nepalese teenagers and we are taught how to read and write in Nepali. I've learned so much from the class and I understand the language much better now. I am slowly getting better at reading and writing Nepali. My comprehension is improving as well. Even though learning is difficult at times, I know that it will benefit me in the future, especially when I visit Nepal. Nepali class helps us discover more about Nepal and what the students there learn in school. It's a very interesting educational experience.

I have been promoting my culture in my community at home. In Iowa, we have an annual festival called the Asian Heritage Festival also known as CelebrAsian. At this festival many communities come together and represent their country by showcasing the countries food, art, history, and culture. The Nepalese community in Iowa has been participating in the festival for many years. Since I was seven, I have been dancing in the festival to various Nepalese songs. This festival has been very important for youth to understand their culture. I've learned so much from performing the dances. Sometimes I even help

sell Mo:Mo: and explain to visitors about Nepalese culture and traditions. It's fun and it has helped me understand Nepal in a better way.

One of the biggest events that have impacted my heritage is the annual ANMA/NASeA joint convention. I've been going to this convention since I was 3 years old. I participated in the convention, in 2004, at the age of five. It took place in Columbus, Ohio. I sang the song "Ankha Chopi Narou Bhane" by Naryan Gopal accompanied by my dad on harmonium. I had never performed in front of people on a big stage before. I was very nervous. We performed in the cultural program and I still remember it to this day. After that year I've been to several joint conventions where I've performed each time. The most recent being last year in Indianapolis when I not only sang in the cultural program, but also danced and sang a solo song in the talent show for the youth program. I'd like to continue going to these conventions because they bring the joy of celebrating our culture beautifully.

Now that I am living in the US, Nepalese culture seems more distant and difficult to follow. We are slowly getting disconnected with our roots, so maintaining traditions is the only way we can stay connected. What we must learn and teach the future generation is that love of a country should not stop at the border, and no matter where we are we will always be known as Nepalese. It is the country which made our parents be able to study and progress at such great levels. It is our duty to pass its values to the coming generation. Passing traditions down may be difficult but I'm determined to do it.

It is often said that we have to get lost in order to find the precious things in life. Someday I would like to get lost in wonderful festivals and culture. One of the biggest ways to reconnect with your heritage is visiting your country, and so I hope to visit Nepal soon and learn even more about the culture than I know now.



*Unnati Kayastha lives in West Des Moines, Iowa. She studies in 10th grade (Sophomore) at Waukee High School. Unnati wrote and presented this Essay at ANMA/NaSea Joint convention, South Carolina in 2013. She was studying in 8th grade then.*

## Mark your Calendar

### CelebrAsian 2015: 13th Annual Asian Heritage Festival

Friday May 22, 2015 - 2pm to 9pm

Saturday May 23, 2015 - 11am to 10pm

Western Gateway Park - Downtown Des Moines, IA

Let us team up and lead Nepalese Village to success.

# A Talk with Dr. Anil Regmi

**GUFF-GAFF**

**Dr. Regmi has been practicing veterinary medicine for 23 years in Des Moines Area. In 2000, he opened his own practice, the Urban Pet Hospital. This clinic offers daycare, boarding rooms that include TV's and webcams, water therapy, weight loss programs, grooming and dog training using positive reinforcement.**

**When did you first arrive to USA? How did you end up living here in Des Moines?**

Soon after my graduation in Veterinary Medicine from Bangladesh, I passed the Nepalese National Public Service Exam (Lok Sewa) after returning to Nepal in 1990. But being young and eager, I wanted to explore, work and experience life abroad. So, I landed in Alaska in 1991 to work as a veterinary specialist where I found the weather cold and the daylight pattern hard to adapt. After few months, I returned home and got married.

Getting employed in Nepal was proving to be difficult than I had anticipated. I reached out to my brother who was studying Bio-Chemistry at North Dakota State University. So, I applied there and was enrolled in a 5 year post graduate program in Veterinary Entomology. While at the university, my advisor suggested me to get the license and opt for a professional career.

So I left the university for Des Moines, IA which was the closest exam center then. I got an accommodation at Windsor Heights through my family acquaintance. In those initial days, there were a lot of struggles and funny experiences that I still fondly remember today. Well, that was a brief summary of my journey to Des Moines and rest is history.



**Can you share your story on how you established your business, Urban Pet Hospital and Resort?**

First of all, I give a lot of credit to my supervisor in Alaska. He was a specialist surgeon who shared his knowledge and working under him helped me hone my skills in those early days of my career.

After coming to Des Moines, I started my career as a technician in a pet

clinic called Spay Clinic.

I later went to Purdue University to do my residency which was expensive and cost me around \$50K. I completed my residency by mid-1995 and came back to Des Moines as one of my associates wanted me to help him establish a pet hospital called 'Afford-A-Care Pet Hospital'. Besides capital investment, I was managing everything there. Finally, in May 2000, I started my own clinic called 'Urban Pet Hospital' in a 1000 sq. ft space on a strip mall located across from the QuikTrip store on the 100th and Douglas Ave. Then in 2006, I bought a 10,400 sq ft facility where the current clinic is located. Today, it gives me immense pride and satisfaction on my achievement.

**What were the challenges that you faced during the start-up of your business?**

Lack of funding was the major setback that I faced. Back then, I was not a green card holder. Therefore, securing business loans or line of credit was difficult. I had two staffs, one full-time and the other was a part-timer. I usually maxed out all of my credit cards to meet my business expenses. In addition, I used to work part-time in other places while my wife worked at JC Penny to cover our expenses. These experiences has made me realize that US is indeed a place where you can achieve what you dare, but only if you work hard for it.

**Did you face a tough time marketing for your business? How did you approach it?**

When I started my business back then, everything was different. I don't want to sound too old though. There was no social media and use of

emails and internet was very limited and expensive. I got my newer clients mainly by virtue of word of mouth; my old clients and contacts helped me grow my customer base. I listed my business in the local telephone directories and yellow pages, which were in wide usage then, and it really helped my business grow. Marketing has always been tough, be it now or then. Currently, the market here is pretty much saturated or even over saturated for my kind of business and penetrating the market has been always a big challenge.

**Would you like to share some of the features of your hospital and it's overall achievements?**

Urban Pet Hospital and Resort is the only veterinary clinic in Iowa with private pet swimming pool. It is a pioneer hospital which provides underwater treadmill facility to it's patients. It is also the only place in Iowa which serves its customers with multiple webcams so that they can observe their pets from anywhere in the world via online streaming videos of different sections of the hospital. Iowa Asian Alliance has awarded us for "Outstanding Asian Business in Iowa" in 2006. The Urbandale Register quoted me "He's the Best!" on October 26, 2006 issue. All local media including TV channels - KCCI, WHO-TV, WOI-TV have covered us and we were also featured in national TV channel, CNN.

**Besides your professional jobs, how do you spend your leisure time?**

I used to write blogs for the Des Moines register which I felt was demanding. I needed to prepare 3 posts per week that kept me very busy, so I had to back-off. But on the hind sight, I can say it helped me gain many new clients. I was also involved in few civic services like Urbandale zoning commission and Human rights commission. I later left all these activities as I needed to focus on my hospital business.

During summers, I go motorbiking. Whenever time permits, I try to maintain active lifestyle with lots of exercises and workouts. I don't work on Thursdays and don't take after hours client calls.

**You mentioned about your intentions to expand your business. Can you share your business expansion plan ?**

I am looking forward to launching of our e-commerce website [www.urbanpetssupply.com](http://www.urbanpetssupply.com). It is mainly catered to marketing and selling of "Churpi", a product from Nepal, which is a kind of doggy chew. This new product will not only benefit our clients but will also benefit the people of the Himalayan region of Nepal, who makes them. My vision is to help them establish a cooperative funds for their business of manufacturing Churpi for export and also help them sell directly to my clients here.





**The Nepalese community in Des Moines is ever-growing. We have noticed more Nepalese are coming to live in Des Moines area. It's been few years that we have started Iowa Nepalese Association, how do you see this growth?**

Our presence in Iowa have made lots of lowans and my clients in particular, aware of Nepal. Many of them come to me asking if there are any 'momo' restaurants in the city. Also, I see a lot of Nepali speaking people in stores these days where most of them are Bhutanese refugees. In early days, festivals and gatherings used to be with a small group of people and confined within a house. Nowadays, we have big gatherings, picnics, parties and celebrations. It is really nice to see Nepalese doing good and living a happy and prosperous life. I also believe INA is doing a good job. It was indeed a positive initiation. All the INA activities should be done in harmony, they should all be transparent and well documented

**Have you read our first Issue of Nilgiri?**

I was in Nepal, when the first issue was published. Due to very busy schedule, I still have not found the opportunity to read it in details. But I believe it must be good as I hear many good feedbacks.

**Finally, there may be many aspiring entrepreneurs in our community who are looking forward to start up a business. Do you have any suggestions for them?**

Well, as I have mentioned earlier, this is a land of opportunities. If you have a desire and want to do something, go ahead. You need to develop confidence in yourself and work hard. If you work hard then God will help you on your each and every step. Just remember, where there's a will there's always always a way. Thank you.

## Interview Tips for a Job Seeker

**NAMRATA PRADHAN**

- Be prompt in responding to an invitation for interviews.
  - Any types of interview whether it is with Recruiter or hiring managers, be prepared for any **behavioral**, **situational** or **technical** questions.
  - Always back your answers with a **compelling example** of your work experience.
  - Only answer what is being asked. "**Off the topic**" answers can annoy the interviewers as they have limited time to complete all the remaining questions.
  - **English** is our second language so practice your answers thoroughly. **Communication skill** is critical for any jobs in this competitive market.
  - Interviewers can feel the honesty in your voice so **be genuine**. Don't ever use slangs or try to sound Americanized by saying words like "that sucks", "oh boy" as this can give a negative impression on your attitude.
  - Always ask intelligent and valid questions at the end of the interview to demonstrate your knowledge about the job and your desire to learn more about this position. **Never say**, "I have no questions" it proves lack of interest and dumb attitude.
  - Always send "**Thank You**" letter to the interviewer and reiterate how your skills can benefit the organization.
- If you ever need advice or help in preparation of interviews or resume writing please do not hesitate to contact Namrata Pradhan at [p\\_namrata@yahoo.com](mailto:p_namrata@yahoo.com)***

## There is no good reason to pointlessly waste life like this - Buckle Up

**ASHISH JHA**

When people do not wear seat belts in the event of a car collision, they are 55% more likely to suffer injury or even death. It is simple fact: People who wear seat belts are more likely to survive collisions, period. So why don't they? Bill Cooper, an expert who works for Washington state's Traffic Safety Commission, states "Most people who die (in collisions) aren't wearing seat belts. So many of them could have survived. It's really tragic" (Reiner).

If the government just stepped in and required everybody to buckle up, then it would save lives, simple as that. There really is no reason to pointlessly waste life like this. Buckle up, it's for your own good.



***Ashish Jha is from West Des Moines, Iowa and studies in 9th grade at Prairieview School. Ashish wrote and presented this as an argument essay, meant to convince people to stay safe by wearing seatbelts at all times***

## Au Revoir

We would like to thank **Ashok**, our ex-editorial board member and his talented wife **Bina** for their time, expertise and dedication to our community. We would like to specially mention that their contribution has been valuable in making Iowa Nepalese Association a strong organization.

We would also like to wish them the very best for their future endeavors. You shall be always welcomed here in our community.

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