

# Cross Cultural Relationship

**Paper Prepared by:** Indra Adhikari

With inputs by Dal (Dinesh) Khadka and other participants at the Second Australian Bhutanese Conference.

Ours is a closed society. We come from a segregated society based on ancestry or traditional professions. As we move to live in a multicultural community and open society, there are challenges and hesitations to change our habits and behaviours. Not everyone has same capability to adopt with the changing circumstances. Not everyone has grown up with same mental and emotional ability to accept the changes quickly. Some are quick to adapt, others are reluctant and require more time and social support.

Our experiences show, older generation generally, are hesitant to change their behaviour and accept the new reality compared to the newer generation. While we cannot force the older generation, as they have the right, to change the way they believe, and they live, we must find ways ensure they are ready to intermingle with the wider Australian community and let their children accept the changing need of the time.

Saying so, there is much to do for the younger generation to ensure they bring in better, productive and creative personality from their engagement with the other communities. We must work to ensure the younger generation also freely engage and learn from their peers of other communities and cultures.

## ***1. Building relationship with other communities***

Australia is possibly the country with biggest diversity in terms of ethnicity and nationalities. And this diversity has existed peacefully and respectfully for years. The reason behind is the close relations this diversity maintains and respect it provides.

We are far ahead. We have made achievements but there are lot for us to do. Building relationship with other community, for young, adults and seniors, means fostering friendship, cohesion and fraternity. This is a peace building process. This is an educational process for us to understand the values, practices, beliefs, way of life and other ethos from the spectrum of so many communities existing in Australia. Bonding relation not only educate us but also helps us propagate our culture and values, stand tall as a distinct community and take leadership in ensuring harmony, friendship and connection.

We make common mistakes of assuming about other culture and defend ours. These assumptions make us think other cultures weird or scary. Cultural stereotypes are a source of misunderstanding and often kill a discussion even before it even started.

We must learn to respect other cultures, lifestyle, beliefs, habits and opinions. We must learn to understand where they are coming from and respect that not everyone has the same opinion and lifestyle as we do.

The association shall work towards helping community members explore other culture, understand, respect and accept the fact that we can live harmoniously in a very diverse social environment.

The association shall, in consultation and agreement with its member organisations, roll our programs and activities that will build our relation other communities. In the process to connect with other communities, the association shall build relations with other multicultural advocacy groups such as FECCA.

## ***2. Australian history lessons***

We are new to Australia. As we become citizen of this country, it's our responsibility to learn the history of Australia. Migration to Australia is new phenomenon. However, Australia has one of the longest histories of human civilisation. The mode and process of this civilisation varies which gives us to learn the innumerable human history in one country. The north and south, east and west, all have different history, distinct identity.

Post colonisation, Australia's path to modernisation is the quickest in history. From an unknown country, Australia landed in the category of a developed nation within two centuries while many countries across the world continue to face challenges and obstacles to economic, social and political modernisation.

We must create environment whereby all members of the community will have opportunity to learn the history of this country. Learning history and its culture builds respect, adherence and sense of contribution towards the country.

The Association shall come up with programs, to be implemented through it's member organisations in states, to provide opportunities for our community members learn about Australia history, it's characteristics and values.

## ***3. Cross cultural engagements***

We all know we live in a country that promotes multiculturalism and multi-nationalism. There are as many cultures as the heads of the people in Australia. There are innumerable cultural festivals. South Australia's identity is popular as the festival state.

We already have multicultural history. Within the smaller group, we have multiple cultures. However, our multiculturalism is limited by the more similarities than dissimilarities. Unlike, Australia contains array of so many cultures which isolates our mini-multiculturalism into a single identity.

It's time we become part of these wider Australian cultural festivals, share our joy, our heritage and learn from others'. Cultural engagement not only gives us opportunity to share our cultural traits and history with the wider Australian community but also provides platform for us to learn other cultural traits. Exchange of cultural values enriches us, makes us more humane and tolerant, which in turn makes our community more resilient and peaceful.

Cross cultural engagement gives us chances to learn about programs and projects being implemented by other community addressing similar problems we are facing. We would benefit from learning from these programs and project which could be replicated to address conditions in our community.

#### **4. Cultural communication**

Cultures are some sometimes barriers but in other times they are opportunities. Our culture provides us opportunities to communicate about us to others. The association shall endeavour to find ways to communicate our culture to others. It shall also work communicate other cultures to our community members.

We remain disengaged to many opportunities due to lack of cultural communication. We assume all services we receive must come from the person who is culturally closer to us. This may not be possible in all circumstances.

Cross-cultural communication is imperative and strategically important for organisations and groups to thrive in multicultural environment. This type of communication involves an understanding of how people from different cultures speak, communicate, and perceive the world around them.

Cross-cultural communication in an organization deals with understanding different business customs, beliefs and communication strategies. Language differences, high-context vs. low-context cultures, nonverbal differences, and power distance are major factors that can affect cross-cultural communication. The concept of high-

and low-context culture relates to how an employee's thoughts, opinions, feelings, and upbringing affect how they act within a given culture. We are from high context culture – are collectivists and focus on interpersonal relationship whereas the North America and Eastern European communities have low context cultures. Australia is mixture of all such cultural types and inter-community communication is more complex and paramount.

### **5. *Intra-cultural relations***

We come from the community where diversity already exists. We have several distinct cultural values, norms, beliefs, faith and customs. As we march towards broader diversity and push for cross cultural harmony, it is utmost important to maintain a sustainable unison, harmony and equality within the community.

We are aware of the communal differences traditionally been practiced. But we are also cognizant of the community unity and harmony our ancestors have maintained despite differences. Many of the traditional beliefs we have may not befit the changing circumstances while others are vital.

The association shall engage with community members to pick the best practices that we have and work towards ending gender and ethnic differences. While it won't be appropriate to force the older generation to change their beliefs, it is important to educate them of our new social status. The association shall work to engage members of the younger generation to educate themselves about the social stereotypes and not to carry the practice into their life.

The association shall work to keep alive our vibrant cultural and traditional legacies of diversity and peaceful co-existence while respecting others' cultural, practices, belief, faith and social values. The association shall also engage in diffusing the differences to build a stronger and unified community. The intellectuals and community leaders shall engage community members to understand that diversity we have is not a line for segregation or division but strength of unity in diversity.

The association shall pursue the teaching of universal brotherhood.