

## **Cross- Cultural Study of Nepalese and Indian Optimism**

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The phenomenological approach to a person's own awareness is capable of revealing the contents of his experiential world without the limitations inherent in the use of projective method (1)\*. As a rating scale Cantril's self-anchoring scale (2)\* is a useful device for revealing the subjective world of one's experience. With its remarkable simplicity it can provide data of considerable value in cross-cultural research. Like a barometer it can portray the perceived stage of the social and political development of a people and provide for comparisons across national and cultural boundaries (3)\*.

### Problem

The present paper reports the findings of a study of samples of the Nepalese and Indian attitude towards self and nation, and their hopes and expectations. Discrepancies of the past and future ratings from the present anchor, a comparison between the two national groups investigated and with Cantril's study of concern over the national situation in 13 countries have been studied (3)\*.

Four incidental samples comprising 935 respondents were studied. The first three were drawn from Nepal and the fourth from India. Of the Nepalese sample university students and teachers from the various campuses of Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu contributed the first sample. The second sample of Gurungs was drawn from the Kaski district. Gurungs belong to the upper northern reaches of the Himalayas, at the foot hills of Annapurna, Lamjung Himal Chuli, of Gandaki zone. They belong to Tibeto-Burmese stock, of Mongoloid race, known for their ethnic cohesion and live in remote and relatively inaccessible areas. Tharus of Southern Nepal Terai, originally of Rajasthan stock (Indo-Aryan) and with affinity with the Tharus of

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North-eastern India but who settled down long ago contribute the third sample. Thus the Nepalese samples though not fully representative of the country include respondents from the northern, central and southern regions. Both males and females, literate and illiterate, educated and urban as well as uneducated and preliterate respondents from rural and remote areas are included. The Indian sample was drawn from Central India, and comprised students from University of Saugar.

Table 1

Sample	Sample N
<u>Nepalese</u>	835
1. <u>Urban</u>	635
2. <u>Gurungs</u>	100
3. <u>Tharus</u>	100
<u>Indian</u>	
<u>Urban</u>	100
Total	N = 935

### Procedure

All the respondents were administered the self-anchoring scale as per directions given to indicate their own position and of their country as of the present, five years ago and five years, hence on an 11 point scale, the extreme ends of which represented the best and worst possible life respectively. The respondents were questioned in their own language (Nepalese, Gurung language, Tharuvani and in Hindi). The illiterate indicated their response with their index finger on a ladder scale.

### Results and Discussions

Some outstanding features of the findings may now be noted. This can be best accomplished if comparisons between various sub-samples are made for the modal responses of the respondents.

Perception of the Self

Both the Nepalese and the Indian exhibit the same self-anchoring ratings (5)\* in the present, the past being seen somewhat worse than the present by the Nepalese (3)\* as compared to the Indians (4)\*. The Nepalese Tharus look at the past and the present in the same way as the urban Nepalese from central Nepal. Interestingly, however the future is perceived as much brighter (9)\* as compared to the Indians (8)\* and also as compared with own present and the past (3)\* by the Nepalese on the whole, with the exception of the Tharus who exhibit greater realism (7)\* than the rest of the Nepalese.

The Nepalese Gurungs, show a very low present anchorage (1)\* the past is perceived as somewhat better (2)\* than the present. Nevertheless it is seen as poor as that by Cubans in Cantril's study. The future is seen as exceptionally bright (8)\*.

As for the Indians, comparing the present findings with those of Cantril's study made nearly two decades ago, the ratings for the present appear near about the same (4/5)\*. The past is perceived as poor (2/3)\*. There was less hope for the future (5)\* in Cantril, the expectations are much higher today (8)\*.

Perception of the Nation

A comparison of the Nepalese urban sample with its Indian counterpart about their perception of the state of nation reveals that there is a marked degree of pessimism in the former. The present is anchored low (2)\*, the past was poor (1)\* and the future holds very little hopes (3)\*. The contrasts rather sharply with the Indian scene where the past was rated at 3, the present is seen in the middle (5)\* and the future is seen as promising (8)\*. These ratings for the Indian show marked correspondence with those obtained by Cantril about a couple of decades ago.

What do these findings imply? The optimism about self in the central urban Nepal, which is somewhat moderated in the Tharus of the Southern Nepal, but exaggerated in the northern Gurungs may be attributed to several factors. The Tharus being in close proximity to the north Indian population seem to be more realistically oriented to the future expectations. The educated urbanite of the central Nepal somewhat isolated from his southern brethren by the south Himalayan ranges is not affected by the moderating influence to which the latter is exposed. He looks hopefully to a brighter future. The economically disadvantaged Gurungs, generally illiterate with poor awareness due to isolation caused by inaccessibility appear highly unrealistic about future prospects in pitching their optimism very high. Their institution

of 'fictive relationship' which guarantees social security seems to reinforce this optimism not found in a competitive industrial society. It appears, therefore, that it is for different reasons that this optimism in isolated Gurungs and the urban Nepalese is unduly high. It also seems that optimism increases directly with geographical and communication remoteness. In the case of India while the self image anchor is the same as for the Nepalese a more modest and realistic appraisal of the future is observed. Perhaps exposure to socio-economic developments, a moderate degree of success in the past achievements as in the case of the neighbouring countries like India and China tend to tone down such optimism to moderate levels in the Tharus of Southern Nepal.

Looking at the national images the picture appears somewhat different. Comparing the Nepalese picture with that obtaining for the Indians of a comparable group, which has substantially remained the same for nearly two decades (Cantril), the national image looks somewhat grim. In the Nepalese samples the picture looks somewhat bleak marked by a feeling of pessimism, even hopelessness. Relatively poor economic growth, a certain measure of isolation, the nature of socio-political developments, frustrations, even the inevitable sense of unfavourable contrast with developments in neighbouring countries at least in the Nepalese urbanites may be some of the factors responsible for such a perception. On the other hand the future is perceived brighter by Indians today than what Cantril found about two decades ago. Socio-economic and technological growth and the relative stability of political systems till recently may have aroused higher hopes and aspirations.

The magnitude of discrepancy between the past, present and future anchorings also seems to vary inversely with the level of the development of the country. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for greater discrepancy in the ratings for the three time periods in the Nepalese sample as compared to what is observed in the Indian sample.

What, however, appears somewhat intriguing is the lack of congruence between the self and national images among the Nepalese. This discrepancy may be the consequence of two different frames of reference the respondents may be employing to rate themselves and the nation. Being educated urbanites, they expect for themselves prospects of growth and achievements ordinarily limited to such group in a developing society. At the same time being educated and thus exposed to broader information and more sensitive to socio-economic and political developments in their country and abroad, they are conscious of the constraints and the limitations in the development of their country: This schismogenesis between the two systems the self-system and the social

institutional system is thus found co-existing as if in isolation of each other. And this may be one of the characteristics of a developing society.

In sum based upon some rating scale data, from 2 countries, Nepal and India, the paper attempts to raise some hypotheses for further investigation.

Note: \*Indicates Cantril's ladder number.

#### REFERENCES

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APPENDIX (i)Table 2: Nepalese urban group (University Students, n=635)

Self Development	Past	Present	Future
Modal Point Frequency	20%	25%	22%
Ladder Step Number	3	5	9

Table 3: Gurungs' Group (n = 100)

Self Development	Past	Present	Future
Modal Point Frequency	23%	23%	24%
Ladder Step Number	2	1	8

Table 4: Tharus' Group (n = 100)

Self Development	Past	Present	Future
Modal Point Frequency	15%	41%	23%
Ladder Step Number	3	5	7

Table 5: Indian Urbans from Saugar University (n=100)

Self Development	Past	Present	Future
Modal Point Frequency	23%	26%	26%
Ladder Step Number	4	5	8

Table 6: Modal points for National Development  
(Nepalese urbans, n = 186)

National Development	Past	Present	Future
Modal Point Frequency	35%	24.6%	19%
Ladder Step Number	1	2	3

Table 7: Modal points for National Development  
(Indian urbans n = 100)

National Development	Past	Present	Future
Modal Point Frequency	24%	34%	25%
Ladder Step Number	3	5	8

Table 8: National Ladder Distribution Percent  
(Nepalese urbans n = 186)

Ladder Step	Present	Past	Future
10			4.2
9		.5	4
8			8
7	.5		5.3
6	.5	1.6	12
5	11.5	2.1	10.2
4	13.9	4	8
3	23	16.7	19
2	24.6	23	12.3
1	20.5	35	6.4
0	5.5	16.6	9.6
Below 0		.5	1

	Median Ladder Step
Present	2
Past	1
Future	4

Table 9: Personal Ladder Distribution Percent  
(Nepalese urbans n = 635)

Ladder Step	Present	Past	Future
10	2	3	17
9	3	3	22
8	7	5	16
7	14	5	14
6	15	6	12
5	25	15	5
4	14	15	4
3	9.5	20	3
2	5	15	2
1	4	9	2
0	1.5	4	3

	Median Ladder Step
Present	5
Past	4
Future	8



Table 10: Personal Ladder Distribution Percent  
(Gurungs n = 100)

Ladder Step	Present	Past	Future
10			1
9		2	7
8	1		24
7	2	3	10
6	15	8	7
5	18	20	12
4	11	14	9
3	5	20	15
2	16	23	9
1	23	8	3
0	9	2	3

	Present	Past	Future
Median Ladder Step	3	3	5

Table 11: Personal Ladder Distribution Percent  
(Tharus' n = 100)

Ladder Step	Present	Past	Future
10	4	1	7
9	2	5	11
8	2	5	17
7	8	13	23
6	5	13	11
5	41	12	7
4	10	12	12
3	14	15	4
2	6	12	2
1	1	10	3
0	7	2	3

Median Ladder Step	Present	Past	Future
	5	4	7

Table 12: National Ladder Distribution Percent  
(Indian urbans n = 100)

Ladder Step	Present	Past	Future
10	1	1	9
9		1	8
8	2	4	25
7	12	9	17
6	17	11	8
5	34	15	14
4	20	17	4
3	6	24	4
2	5	12	7
1	2	3	2
0	1	3	2

	Present	Past	Future
Median Ladder Step	5	4	7

Table 13: Personal Ladder Distribution Percent  
(Indian urbans n = 100)

Ladder Step	Present	Past	Future
10	1	4	17
9	2	2	18
8	5	5	26
7	10	6	19
6	25	12	12
5	26	16	4
4	17	23	1
3	5	19	
2	5	7	3
1	3	5	
0	1	1	

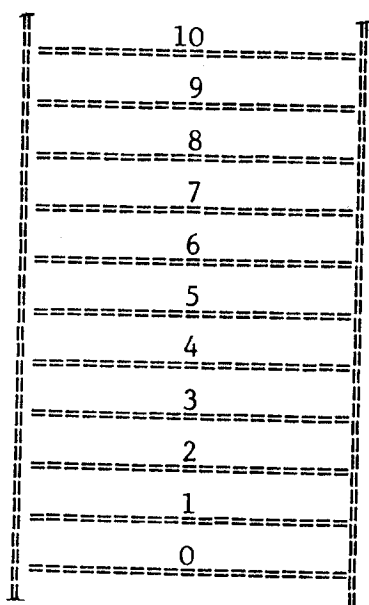
Median Ladder Step	Present	Past	Future
	5	4	8

APPENDIX (ii)

Short and explicit description of some psychological terms used in this paper is given below:

1 (a) Cantril's self-anchoring scale.

Cantril used this scale in the context of an interview on personal worries, fears, hopes, and aspirations; the international situation; and concerns over the national situation in 13 countries (United States, Cuba, India, and Dominican republic etc).



The self-anchoring scale technique is particularly appropriate for investigating attitudes toward self, group, and institutions as well as nations that involves expectations and aspirations for the future. This technique is usually regarded as wholly idiographic procedure. It does, however, yield important nomothetic data. There are ethnic, occupational, and national differences in the depressed or hopeful outlooks of members of such groups.

Figure of Stimulus (Ladder) for self-anchoring scale

- (b) Anchor: This term indicates individual's own position as an anchor in judging his self-concept.
- (c) Ladder: It is a stimulus for self-anchoring scale (a 11 point scale), subject is asked to consider top of the ladder as best possible life for him and the bottom the worst possible. Then he locates his position, at present, where he was 5 years ago and where he will be 5 years from now. This stimulus can be used for personal ladder distribution and national ladder distribution depending on frame of reference.

- (d) Model point frequency: It indicates an attitude as a range with a modal point (latitude of acceptance). It also indicates highest number of choices for a particular ladder step.
  - (e) Ladder Step Number: Generally, Cantril's self-anchoring scale consists of a 11 steps ladder ranging from 0 to 10.
  - (f) Median ladder step: This is computed by locating 50% distribution of ladder choices starting from 0 ladder step to upstairs. Median scores also serve the purpose of explaining optimism by ladder number point but Cantril preferred modes for past, present, and future.
  - (g) The scale's international applicability: Cantril has used this scale for the comparison of personal and national ladder distributions of 13 countries' (Cantril, 1965). The United States sample revealed more optimism for personal future than for one's country. Cuban sample reported a bad past being replaced by a hopeful future.
2. This study delimits its scope by only focussing optimism with respect to 'national development' for Nepali and Indian urban groups because the Gurung and Tharu samples showed a lower sensitivity in reporting national progress as there is high illiteracy among them.

Urban Nepalis distinctly observe the discrepancy between the existing state of their nation and their own self-concept. The optimistic Nepalis change their frame of reference when they view optimism vis-a-vis the nation.

Optimism of Gurungs is also rooted in their ethnicity and temperament which needs further enquiry. Their pessimism is based on the hardship of hill ecology. Tharus are agrarian and reality-oriented whereas Gurungs are mostly militant in nature showing more moodiness and humor in their way of life.