

TRIVANI

ANTA Newsletter

Volume - 3

Issue- 2

June, 2018

President's Message



Dear ANTA Members and Friends:

I am delighted to release the second issue of Trivani. At the outset, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the ANTA publication committee who worked tirelessly to bring our mouthpiece in this form. In this issue, you will find many important information on various

ANTA activities.

It gives me a great sense of satisfaction when I say ANTA has expanded its footprint in its mission of promotion of madheshi culture. We have now seven full functioning ANTA chapters across the United States. Many madheshi immigrants have joined us through respective chapters. I would also like to appeal to all madheshi living in this great nation to join hand and cooperate us in taking this organization to another level.

In past months, ANTA organized various cultural activities across the United States. Our chapters in California, DC, Kansas-Missouri, Kentucky-Ohio, Mid-West, Greater New York and Houston successfully organized Vijaya Dashami, Chhath, Holi etc. Not only madheshi but entire Nepali community participated enthusiastically in these events. Some of our chapter organized cultural events in association with local or other national level Nepali organization in line with ANTA mission. ANTA has proudly initiated new scholarship programs for high school graduates. Many more scholarships are in the offing. I would like to assure my ANTA friend that we are committed to organize many more events in the days to come.

Finally, I would like to request all the ANTA well-wisher and friends to send article, kudos, congratulations, appreciations etc. to our publication committee to publish them in our next issue of Trivani.

Sincerely

Vijay Kumar Singh

President, ANTA

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Editorial

Dear ANTA Family, Friends and Well Wishers!

ANTA is delighted to publish the second issue of Our Trivani for the year 2018 . This newsletter highlights the formation of local chapters of ANTA after the 4th ANTA Convention and ANTA's activities and contributions towards the welfare of our society and its cultural preservation.

Congratulations to those who have achieved milestones in their profession, social, and family lives. Please enjoy reading this newsletter and help us to improve the quality of TRIVANI by providing your candid comments, criticisms, and suggestions.

On behalf of ANTA's editorial board, I truly appreciate your generous contribution with articles, event activities and associated pictures towards the successful publication of this newsletter. I truly believe that your contributions are instrumental in making Trivani a great publication. We look forward to our next issue in the next quarter and would like to take this opportunity to cordially invite you for your contributions in upcoming publication. Please notify us of your articles, celebrations, and activities over the next few months for inclusion in the next issue of this newsletter.

Last but not least, I would like to thank members of editorial board 2017-2019 Executive Committee for their dedication in successful publication of TRIVANI. My special thanks goes to our editor Mrs. Aprajita Jha, executive editor Mr. Dhiraj Chaudhary, and guest editor Kaushal Jha for their dynamic support in successful publication of this issue of TRIVANI.

Thank You All!

Best Regards,

Jitendra Thakur, Ph.D., P.E.

Editor-in-chief, Trivani

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Disclaimer

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**Association
of
Nepali Teraians
in
America**

NEWLY FORMED LOCAL CHAPTERS of ANTA

We are pleased to announce the formation of six new ANTA chapters all across the United States since the new ANTA Executive Committee has taken the charge under the dynamic leadership of Mr. Vijay Singh. We congratulate all the new teams and their family members on their great milestone and wish them all the best in their endeavors to provide a fulfilling and inclusive forum for all Teraians living all over the country. The list of members of the executive bodies and respective advisors from the new chapters formed during 2017 - 2018 is as below:

Mid West-West

Executives:

1. Mr. Shrawan Jha, MN - President
2. Dr. Amit Kumar Chaudhary, NE - Vice-President
3. Mr. Amit Ranjan, IA - General Secretary
4. Mrs. Anamika Jha, NE - Treasurer
5. Mrs. Indira Karn, IA - Member
6. Mr. Dipak Yadav, NE - Member
7. Mr. Ishwar Chaudhary, NE - Member
8. Mr. Saurav Kushwaha, NE - Member
9. Mr. Naveen Chaudhary, NE - Member
10. Mr. Shivam Ashirbadam, NE - Member

Advisors

1. Dhiraj Chaudhary, NE
2. Arbind Karn, IA
3. Dev Narayan Yadav, NE
4. Lalit Jha, NE

Greater Houston

Executives:

1. Dr. Kaushal Jha - President
2. Mr. Jay Ram Mandal - Vice President
3. Mr. Arun Chaudhary - General Secretary
4. Mr. Bishwa Bandhu Lal Karna - Treasurer
5. Mr. Amilal Yadav
6. Mr. Dhan Bahadur Mahto
7. Mr. Dhananjay Sharma
8. Mrs. Mamta Karn Sharma
9. Mr Pramod Jha
10. Dr. Raj Yadav
11. Mr Rajan Adhikari
12. Mr. Sudhir Jha
13. Mrs. Usha Jha
14. Mr. Vishal Singh

Advisors:

1. Mr. Ratan Jha
2. Dr. Rupak Rauniyar
3. Dr. Mamta Singh
4. Dr. Ram Lakhan Ray
5. Dr. Vijay K Jha

Greater Kentucky-Ohio

Executives:

1. Mr. Laxmi Mandal, KY - President
2. Mrs. Kumari Indrakanta (Jha), KY - Vice-President

NEWLY FORMED LOCAL CHAPTERS of ANTA

5. Mr. Niraj Thakur, OH - General Secretary
6. Mr. Bhabesh Kumar Raut, KY - Joint Secretary
7. Mrs. Anita Mandal, KY - Treasurer
8. Mrs. Rekha Kantha, OH - Member
9. Dr. Amit Kumar Yadav, KY - Member
10. Mr. Jay Sah, KY - Member
11. Mrs. Sharla Panday, OH - Member
12. Mr. Bijay Sah, KY - Member
13. Mr. Bipul Singh, KY - Member

Advisors:

1. Dr. Pramod Kantha, OH
2. Dr. Amit Kumar Jha, KY
3. Mrs. Yashwanta Thakur, KY
4. Mrs. Adrinne Thakur, KY
5. Mr. Janardhan Sah, KY
6. Dr. Sunil Karna, KY
7. Mrs. Anita Kumari, KY.
8. Mr. Mukesh Singh, OH
9. Mr. Kusheshwor Mandal, KY
10. Mr. Rajesh Sah, OH
11. Dr. Indra D. Sahu, OH

Missouri-Kansas

Executives:

1. Amit Mishra, Kansas City - President
2. Rakesh K Yadav, Kansas City - Vice President
3. Anshuman Chaudhary, St Louis - Vice President
4. Dendra Sharma, Kansas City - Vice President
5. Khusnandan Thakur, Kansas City - Secretary

6. Amit Lal Karna, St. Louis - Joint Secretary
7. Sumant Kumar Sharma - Treasurer
8. Pramod K Yadav - Member
9. Suraj K Sharma - Member
10. Makeswar Ray - Member
11. Basant Chaudhary - Member
12. Shambhu Sah - Member
13. Rachel Yadav - Member
14. Pravin Jha, St Louis - Member
15. Manisha Chaudhary, St. Louis - Member

Advisors:

1. Robin Mishra
2. Raja Babu Ray
3. Dr. Santosh Mahto
4. Dharmendra Thakur, Virginia
5. Lalit Jha, NE

Greater New York

Executives:

1. Mrs. Nilu Jha Khatiwada - President
2. Mr. Santosh Sah – Senior Vice President
3. Mr. Mukesh Yadav – Vice President
4. Mr. Surendra Thakur – Vice President
5. Mr. Biplav Jha – Vice President
6. Mr. Manish Singh – General Secretary
7. Mr. Nilesh Karna – Joint Secretary
8. Mr. Bindeshwar Sah - Treasurer
9. Mrs. Ganga Basnet Drysdale

NEWLY FORMED LOCAL CHAPTERS of ANTA

10. Mrs. Sangita Sah

11. Mr. Rajeev Kumar Mehta

12. Mr. Suraj Jha

5. Mr. Sujit Singh

6. Mr. Sitanshu Kumar

7. Mr. Jay P Mandal

Advisors:

1. Dr. Hariom Sharma

2. Mrs. Rekha Karna

3. Dr. Akhilesh Singh

4. Mrs. Aprajita Jha

California

Executives:

1. Mr. Dhruw Kumar Jha - President

2. Mr. Ranjeet Babu Prasad - Senior Vice President

3. Mr. Raj Yadav - Vice President

4. Ms. Priyanka Das - General Secretary

5. Ms. Madhuri Kumari - Joint Secretary

6. Ms. Smita Dutta Suman - Treasurer

7. Mr. Sikendra Thakur - Spokesperson

8. Ms. Sangeeta Dev - Member

9. Ms. Aditi Thakur - Member

10. Ms. Yamini Kumar - Member

11. Ms. Aradhana Sah - Member

12. Mr. Rohit Mishra - Member

13. Mr. Navin Mahto - Member

Advisors:

1. Dr. Archana Kayastha

2. Dr. Om Prakash Sharma

3. Dr. Sandeep Suman

4. Dr. Preeti Nane

DASHAMI, DEEPAWALL, AND CHHATH CELEBRATION

Council Bluffs, IA

Dashami gathering was organized by Mr. Lalit Jha, former President of ANTA and his wife Mrs. Anita Jha. The gathering event took place at Lake Manawa, Council Bluffs, Iowa (IA) and was well attended by Madheshis/Teraians from Nebraska, Iowa, & Minnesota. The event showcased rich cultural and culinary heritage of Terai from the participating families. During the event, ANTA was pleased to announce the formation of Mid-West ANTA Chapter under the leadership of Mr. Shrawan Kumar Jha. Mr Dev Narayan Yadav was honored as the most senior attendee to the event. In addition, ANTA had a huge success in gathering many life members through its ongoing membership drive.



Princeton, NJ

ANTA Spokesperson and artist, Mrs. Aprajita Jha, with her three beautiful artistic daughters and most chivalrous husband, Mr. Arbind Jha, hosted celebration of Vijaydashmi at their residence on September 30, 2017. The gathering was a tremendous success. Everyone enjoyed varieties of delicious food, drinks and entertainment for eight hours (4pm to midnight).

Skilled Henna artist Mrs. Pallavi Parinita, decorated the hands with mehndi of all presented ladies and young girls. Former Member of Nepal National Planning Commission and retired Professor of Economics from Rutgers University and founder of Mithilia Arts Institute, Dr. Prameshwar Jha, highlighted the significance and promotion of Mithilia arts in the United States. Dr. Jha has diligently represented and promoted Mithilia arts and culture in several countries for many years. We were proud and honored to have him at this gathering. With his blessing, in future we are planning to showcase culture and arts of Mithilia in various parts of the US.

The gathering was energized by performances from many brilliant and gifted guests at the event. Our talented ladies started the festivities with their brilliant performances. ANTA appreciates Mrs. Chanda Mishra, Mrs. Aprajita Jha, Mrs. Nilu Jha, Ms. Sarita Jha, Mrs. Munu Shah, Dr. Khusbhu Mishra, Mrs. Aprana Singh and Mrs. Manju Singh, who danced and sang in Maithili, Nepali, Hindi, Bhojpuri and English languages. Our special appreciation goes to Mrs. Nilu Jha and Mrs. Aprajita Jha for performing traditional JHIJHIYA dance.

Our charming kids amused guests with their marvelous performances. ANTA appreciates Ms. Anya, Ms. Anshu, Ms. Ashna, Ms. Shashi, Ms. Adya and others, for their energetic performances. Ms. Anya, especially captured hearts and minds of everyone at the gathering with her captivating performance. Ms. Arya Jha with her beautiful and angelic voice sang outstandingly in many different languages and melted the hearts of everyone present.

DASHAMI, DEEPAWALL, AND CHHATH CELEBRATION

Our Youth Team also participated and performed tremendously in various capacities to entertain the guests. ANTA appreciates Mr. Santosh Shah, Mr. Sandeep Singh, Mr. Manish Singh, Mr. Randhir Sharma, Mr. Umesh Khatiwada, Mr. Animesh Anand and Arniko Singh for their performances. Versatile artist Mr. Anil Mishra, also pleased the crowd with his poems, songs, jokes and dance.

This great gathering demonstrated that our community is filled with great artists. ANTA concurs with our Former General Secretary, Dr. Akhilesh Singh, who said, "Our community is rich with artists".



Herndon, VA

ANTA DC Chapter President, Mr. Anil Dwivedy along with his dear wife Manisha Sharma Dwivedy and lovely kids and nephew Mr. Rahul Thakur, hosted DC family for Vijayadashmi celebration on October 2, 2017 at their residence. In his beautiful yard on a very sunny and charming day, ANTA family and friends residing in DC area gathered and enjoyed varieties of delicious veg and non-veg foods. Respected mother of Mr. Dwivedy, blessed everyone with tika and jamara. ANTA sincerely extends gratitude to Mr. Anil Dwivedy and his entire family for organizing and hosting this very joyous occasion and appreciates everyone who attended and prepared delicious dishes for all of us to enjoy.

DASHAMI, DEEPAWALL, AND CHHATH CELEBRATION



Houston, TX

A Vijaya Dashami dinner was organized by Dr. Kaushal Jha and her beautiful wife at their residence on October 7th in Houston, Texas. More than 50 Teraians living in Houston and the surrounding areas attended this event. The event provided a great platform for exchange of thoughts and ideas amongst community members and culminated in the formation of the Greater Houston ANTA Chapter (Texas) under the stellar leadership of Dr. Kaushal K. Jha. The occasion was also attended by Mr. Ratan Jha, ANTA's founding member & President and Dr. Subodh Mallik, Senior Vice President, ANTA current Executive Committee. Above all, the presence of our respected elders, Dr Birendra Mallik and his wife Mrs. Shyamkala Mallik, graced the occasion.

DASHAMI, DEEPAWALL, AND CHHATH CELEBRATION



Lixington, KY

A Deepawali celebration picnic was held in supervision of ANTA General Secretary, Dr. Indra Dev Sahu in Lixington, KY on October 14, 2017. Over 35 people including children attended this fun filled and community unifying event, which was facilitated by Mr. Laxmi Mandal and Dr. Amit Kumar Jha. The event provided a great platform for attendees to bond with each other and share thoughts & views on issues impacting the Teraian region and its diaspora. Dr. Pramod Kantha, a founding member of ANTA and current ANTA advisor called from Dayton, OH to greet the participants and highlighted the history, objectives and achievements of ANTA. During the event, ANTA was pleased announce the formation of the Greater Kentucky-Ohio ANTA Chapter under the dynamic leadership of Mr. Laxmi Mandal. In addition, ANTA President Mr. Vijay Kumar Singh called from DC to welcome and onboard the new chapter officers.



Sterling, VA

Like past years, ANTA DC chapter celebrated Chhath at the banks of the Potomac River located in Algonkian Regional Park, Sterling, Virginia. Several hundred Nepalese and Indian devotees gathered together from many different states for the darshan of Chhathi Maiya. During the three days of this pooja, hundreds of people attended.

Our ANTA spokesperson, Mrs. Aprajita Jha, with her daughter and friends and fellow Life Members of ANTA, Mrs. Rekha Karn and Mrs. Aparna Singh, drove all the way from New Jersey to attend this auspicious event. Along with the Former President and members, ANS (America Nepal Society) Current President, Mrs. Prabha Bhattarai Deuja attended the pooja as well. Locally, majority of the ANTA family members and friends attended the celebration. Our invitation was open for everyone.

DASHAMI, DEEPAWALL, AND CHHATH CELEBRATION

This year we had Ten Vrati for Chhath pooja. Our dear friend, Mr. Kripa Singh and his wife Mrs. Anita Singh, took charge of the pooja. They performed kharna, at their residence with well over hundred people attending; task he undertakes every year. Our ANTA Life Member, Mr. Vijay Pratap Singh and his wife Mrs. Meera Singh, took charge of the management of Chhath ghat; responsibility he assumes every year. This pooja was performed in team work and was made possible by the sheer hard work and dedication of many volunteers. Local ANTA family and friends actively participated and assisted.

ANTA extends utmost gratitude to Mr. Kripa Singh and his family, Mr. Vijay Pratap Singh and his family, and everyone who made this festival a grand success.



Kansas City, MO

Mr. Amit Mishra, president of ANTA Kansas-Missouri Chapter hosted the celebration event at his restaurant (Seva Cuisine of India) in Kansas City to celebrate Dashmi, Deepawali, and Chhath wioth ANTA families and friends residing in the area. This occasion was met with great enthusiasm and support from the young and dynamic Teraians residing in greater Missouri-Kansas area.



ANTA GENERAL SECRETARY REPORT

1. Prepared the ANTA EC meeting guidelines, rules and code of conduct, 21 CEC meeting.
2. ANTA subcommittees
3. Projects:
 - Library project and Accessory for Dalit Children in Saptari
 - Students of Special needs at Basat pur Rautahat, Nepal
 - Nepal Flood Victim project 2017
 - Educational Scholarship Project in Western Terrain region of Nepal
 - Educational Scholarship Project in US
 - Blanket distribution program
 - Gender-sensitivity & Flood-preparedness Project
 - Mithila Art Exposition project in Janakpur
4. ANTA Cultural Programs
 - Mithila Culture Picnic 2017
 - ANTA Video documentary
 - Cultural activities on all Madheshi Festivals
5. ANTA Events
 - A Candlelight Vigil and the Prayers for the Flood Victims were organized Durga temple
 - ANTA events were organized on the occasion of all terrain festivals in major cities of USA
 - Summer picnic events were organized
6. Seven Chapters (Midwest, Greater Houston, greater Kentucky-Ohio, Kansas-Missouri, California, Greater New York, DC) were formed/reshuffled:
7. ANTA provided financial and emotional support to help the funeral program of RamKali Yadav (Mother of Shambu Ray) in DC.
8. ANTA Provided financial and emotional support to funeral of Mrs. Arpita Shirma and her three years old daughter.
9. ANTA Audit Committee was formed to make the financial activities transparent.
10. ANTA EC members represented ANTA in several program and activities organized by other fellow organization in USA and in Nepal.

ANTA FINANCIAL REPORT

Income:

- 4th Convention: \$1,600.00
- Service Charge Refund: \$15.00
- Flood Relief: \$15,485.00
- Paypal: \$1,025.00
- BOA: \$1,750.00
- gofundme: \$12,710.00
- Chaudhary Family Help: \$700.00
- Membership: \$215.00
- Pledge made at Convention: \$600.00
- Help for Ramkali: \$1,030.00
- Paypal: \$377.00
- Check & Cash: \$653.00
- Scholarship: \$1,500.00
- T-Shirt: \$75.00
- Blanket Distribution: \$601.00
- Paypal: \$101.00
- Check: \$500.00
- Adjustment: \$15.00
- Opening Balance: \$1,617.25

Expenses:

- Blanket Distribution: \$601.00
- Uber Conference Fee: \$16.15
- Flood Relief: \$10,000.00
- Mass Conference: \$109.00
- Monthly Fee: \$45.00 (3*15.00)
- Help for Ramkali: \$1,030.00
- Reimburse to Chakradhar Mishra: \$355.00
- Convention Reimburse to Upendra Karna: 3,115.69
- Fee & Commission: \$335.44

Net Balance of ANTA:

- \$9,668.64 - In Bank of America Account
- \$2,150.13 - In Paypal Account
- \$9,691.17 - In Chase Bank Account

We are thankful to Dr. J.P. Sah, who transferred ANTA's chase bank Account to new committee on 27th February, 2018 with balance of \$9,691.17.

GENDER SENSITIVITY AND FLOOD PREPAREDNESS PROJECT OF ANTA

A two-day workshop on Gender-sensitivity & Flood-preparedness was held by ANTA on Dec 23-24, 2017 in collaboration with the local Red Cross branch to shortlist 70 families that were affected by the flood including some widows and disabled. Local agencies, government body, and security personnel along with a total of 24 guests were invited to attend the program.



ANTA is Proud of You!

- Dr. Mamta Singh , Associate Professor, received highly competitive and prestigious “Distinguished Faculty Teaching Fellowship” Award.
- Dr. Kaushal Jha promoted to Geotechnical Department Manager of T-Rex Engineering and Construction, LLC.
- Executive committee member and Women’s Coordinator, Dr. Archana Kayastha’s father Mr. Ratneshwar Lal Kayastha was appointed at the high post of Governor of Province 2 of Nepal.
- General Secretary of ANTA Mid-West Chapter, Amit Ranjan’s father Mr. Brikhesh Chandra Lal

ANTA is glad to share the success story of a Madeshi child (Anya Jha) in the USA Chess Blitz National Championship held in Orlando, Florida on December 7th, 2017. Anya Jha ranked first under 600 rating. Anya is 7 years old and she is a second grader. She is coached in school by a Brazilian International Master who has been Anya’s true mentor. It gives us immense happiness to see a girl child aspiring to become a Grandmaster one day.

Anta congratulates Anya’s parents, Mr. Arbind Jha and Mrs. Aprajita Jha (ANTA’s Spokesperson) for their daughter’s accomplishment. Above all, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight that every Madheshi kid could dream big and achieve it, if we all come together and share wisdom and resources that we collectively possess here in the USA and back in Nepal.



Shawn Ray, son of Dr. Ram L. Ray secured his position to go to regional level completion for spelling BEE. Please see more about our outstanding kid Shawn in the link below:

<https://www.cfid.net/en/news-media/district/birkes-ault-students-place-first-second-elementary-spelling-bee/>

ANTA congratulates Dr. Ray and his family along with the little champ Shwan Ray.



SAT/ACT AWARD FROM ANTA

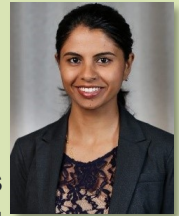
ANTA is excited to announce an academic prize for high school seniors (12th graders) residing in the US who achieve the highest score in the SAT/ACT tests. This scholarship will be granted annually and is sponsored by Mrs Anita Mallik, wife of Dr Subodh Mallik, ANTA's Senior Vice President. Mrs Mallik herself is a mother of three children and has committed to this award as a token of appreciation for high-achieving students in the Teraian community.

The details of the award follow below:

- The person who scores the highest will receive \$300 and the runner up will receive \$200.
- This award will be conferred annually to the graduating seniors belonging to the ANTA families.
- Copies of the official scores should be sent to the Award Committee between March 1st and May 1st of every year and the winners will be announced on June 1st annually.
- The ANTA Award Committee will use appropriate conversions between the SAT and ACT test scores and their decision would be final.
- The award will be bestowed during an ANTA event or the check will be mailed to the recipients if in absentia.
- Additionally, the awardees will be recognized at the subsequent ANTA convention.
- The email address to which scores should be sent to will be publicized in early 2018 through ANTA's website and on our Facebook page. Please stay tuned.

The Mallik family's kind gesture is greatly commendable, as this will be a great encouragement for our children and a binding force for our community. All our kids aspire to be the best that they can be and ANTA feels obligated to nurture and publicly recognize their excellence.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S Day 2018 - By Dr. Khushbu Mishra



Before we blissfully wake up to celebrate women's day and start wishing women around us "Happy Women's Day", I urge all of us to stop and think: Why do we celebrate Women's Day? I started with a simple Google search and as per the [UN website](#), "It is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political." The history goes such that in 1909, the first National Woman's Day was observed in the United States on 28 February. The Socialist Party of America designated this day in honor of the 1908 garment workers' strike in New York, where women protested against dire working conditions.

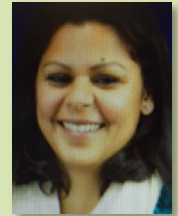
At a glance, it seems amazing that we would take a day off of our busy calendar to recognize the achievements of women. On the flipside, women have been discriminated against for centuries so we created a special day to smash together all women's achievements to one-day all-women. While there are many ways to track gender discrimination, the [Global Gender Gap Report](#) is a noteworthy organization that benchmarks 144 countries regarding their progress on gender parity. They focus mainly on four themes: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. In addition, they collect data on the dynamics of gender gaps across industry talent pools and occupations. Not surprisingly, in the current turn of events around the world, data show that the gender gap is widening in many places. Clearly, celebrating women's day has not worked but so hasn't many other steps that we have taken since the first Charter of the United Nations, signed in 1945, an international agreement to affirm the principle of equality between women and men. In fact, at the present rate, it is estimated that gender parity across the world will take over two centuries, 217 years to be exact.

Let us move on from the data of the world to our home country, Nepal. In the interim constitution of 2007, women for the first time were given equal rights to property. They were also given the right to pass on their citizenship without the aid of their male partners. Where are we today? Yes, one would think that we could only progress, but alas, the Global Gender Gap report is a warning for regressive policies that have been the recent trends around the world, including Nepal. As of the most recent constitution, women cannot independently pass on their citizenship to their children without their husbands. Yes, in Nepal women are not equal citizens to men by the state, let alone the societal beliefs.

By portraying our women as less than men, we are telling our society that women are not dignified human beings. Perhaps this is why while the rest of the world (especially the western countries) have been able to gain momentum on the #MeToo movement, sexual victims in Nepal are still struggling to even file their cases against the perpetrators. As per a recent article in [AlJazeera](#), an average of three rapes are reported in [Nepal](#) every day. It is important to note that this is the number of reported cases. Nobody knows how many are not reported given the social stigma attached to rape.

I urge all of us to take a moment to think about how over the years, we as individuals, may have perpetrated gender discrimination either consciously or subconsciously and what can we do to reduce our roles in such inhumane practice in the future? As for me, I was able to conduct a gender sensitivity workshop in a rural village of Nepal, funded by ANTA, with 60 families and was met by a positive feedback on the changing attitude of the society towards women and girls. Even if the state is lagging behind, I am confident that with our individual contributions, we it will not take 217 years for Nepali women to achieve gender parity.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION AND PREVALENCE OF AUTISM IN NEPAL— By Dr. Archana Kayastha, M.D.



Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. People with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged. Some people with ASD need a lot of help in their daily lives, others need less.

Children with Autism Spectrum disorder (ASD) show impairments in two major areas

social communication and interaction

restricted repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, and activities.

ASD encompasses disorders previously known as autistic disorder, Pervasive developmental disorder and Asperger disorder (also known as Asperger syndrome)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released new data on the prevalence of autism in the United States. This surveillance study identified 1 in 68 children (1 in 42 boys and 1 in 189 girls) as having autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Around 13 percent of these children “lost the diagnosis” later — meaning they no longer had signs and symptoms that fit on the autism spectrum.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis of ASD is made clinically, based upon the history, examination, and observations of behavior.

It should be considered in children with abnormalities in social interaction, social communication, and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, and activities. Accurate and appropriate diagnosis usually requires a clinician who is experienced in the diagnosis and treatment

Even though ASD can be diagnosed as early as age 2 years, most children are not diagnosed with ASD until after age 4 years. The median age of first diagnosis by subtype is as follows.

- Autistic disorder: 3 years, 10 months
- Pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS): 4 years, 1 month
- Asperger disorder: 6 years, 2 months

Studies have shown that parents of children with ASD notice a developmental problem before their child’s first birthday.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION AND PREVALENCE OF AUTISM IN NEPAL — By Dr. Archana Kayastha, M.D.(CONTd.)

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

Developmental screening is a short test to tell if children are learning basic skills when they should, or if they might have delays. During developmental screening parents required to provide information on how the child learns, speaks, behaves, and moves. A delay in any of these areas could be a sign of a problem.

Many screening measures have sensitivities and specificities greater than 70%.

Training requirements are not extensive for most screening tools. Many can be administered by paraprofessionals.

Parents' concerns are generally valid and are predictive of developmental delays. Research has shown that parental concerns detect 70% to 80% of children with disabilities.

Developmental screening is a short test to tell if children are learning basic skills when they should, or if they might have delays. All children should be screened for developmental delays and disabilities during regular well-child doctor visits at:

- 9 months
- 18 months
- 24 or 30 months
- Additional screening might be needed if a child is at high risk for developmental problems due to preterm birth, low birth weight or other reasons.

In addition, all children should be screened specifically for ASD during regular well-child doctor visits at:

- 18 months
- 24 months

Additional screening might be needed if a child is at high risk for ASD (e.g., having a sister, brother or other family member with an ASD) or if behaviors sometimes associated with ASD are present

If the doctor sees any signs of a problem, a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation is needed.

ASD may occur with or without medical, genetic, mental, or behavioral disorders (eg, intellectual impairment, language impairment).

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Types of Screening Tools

There are many different developmental screening tools. Selected examples of screening tools for general development and ASD:

- Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)
- Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales (CSBS)
- Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS)
- Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (MCHAT)
- Screening Tool for Autism in Toddlers and Young Children (STAT)

A more comprehensive list of developmental screening tools is available from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), including descriptions of the tools, sensitivity and specificity. The list includes general screening tools, as well as those for ASD.

DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS

There are many tools to assess ASD in young children, but no single tool should be used as the basis for diagnosis. Diagnostic tools usually rely on two main sources of information—parents' or caregivers' descriptions of their child's development and a professional's observation of the child's behavior.

In some cases, the primary care provider might choose to refer the child and family to a specialist for further assessment and diagnosis. Such specialists include neurodevelopmental pediatricians, developmental-behavioral pediatricians, child neurologists, geneticists, and early intervention programs that provide assessment services. Selected examples of diagnostic tools are:

- Autism Diagnosis Interview – Revised (ADI-R)
- Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule – Generic (ADOS-G)
- Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS)
- Gilliam Autism Rating Scale – Second Edition (GARS-2)

In addition to the tools above, the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fifth Edition(DSM-5) provides standardized criteria to help diagnose ASD.

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SUMMARY

Evaluation for ASD should be made comprehensive , preferably by a team that has expertise in the diagnosis and management of ASD. The evaluation should include a thorough history, including family history and psychosocial history. Primary care physician's responsibility is to listen to the parents and take their concerns seriously and refer appropriately.

Focus should be on

- The comprehensive evaluation
- Definitive diagnosis of ASD
- Exclusion of conditions that have symptoms suggestive of ASD
- Detection of comorbid conditions
- Determination of the child's profile of strengths and weaknesses

As of now, the issue is comprehensive evaluation, the development of therapy and prognosis, although relevant, must be attended to later.

The information concerning autism and its effect currently in Nepal is very limited. Autism Care Nepal, an organization working for Autistic children predicts there are 300,000 children in Nepal suffering from ASD, but there is no official data. The organization is run by parents who are passionate about the cause. The major challenges they face are providing therapy and additional support to these children.

Children in the US get a lot of help from the government. School district has funding to support the children with disabilities, teachers have training in special education. Children less than 3 years old get evaluation and diagnosis through Early Start which is funded by the government and completely free of cost. Private insurance also supports diagnosis and therapy and work together with the government agencies. Because of rising numbers of Autism and there is a nationwide shortage of Developmental Pediatricians in the USA.

In Nepal, there is evidently a lack of effort and policy surrounding this subject. The government does not have any education policy or strategy to meet the needs of differently abled children. Situation is even worse outside Kathmandu. Children outside of the valley with the condition may not be able to access the service because of financial constraints or difficult accessibility. Due to misconception and lack of education concerning the subject people remain uninformed and confuse it with a mental disorder. To ensure concrete action from the government , awareness must be brought to this subject through formal and informal programs, mass media etc.

Awareness is the critical starting point, the place where all the momentum begins. By understanding what the people with Autism need, we can help them better. As a community, let's get behind the legislation that supports and trains the professionals. Let us support programs in place for people with special needs. Let us raise awareness by creating opportunities for dialogue.

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