



ADOPTION IN NEPAL

1ST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTION



Government of Nepal
Ministry of Women, Children
& Social Welfare



Government of Nepal
Central Child Welfare Board



Child NGO Federation-Nepal



Nepal Children's Organization

Introduction

As in other countries, adoption system in Nepal too prevailed during the ancient times. Childless couples often adopted children either from their own families, or from close relatives who usually either happened to be economically weak, or had many children. During those days, adoption was considered as a pious and generous gesture. Often, adopting families were showered with praises and were respected in the society. While some families really deserved such praises and respects, some did not, as they treated the adopted children below human dignity. Despite of the promises and assurances, some adopting families did not treat in a good way such children, which they would have otherwise treated to their own children. If questioned, they would rather and simply say that they were doing favors to the children and their families. In most cases it has been seen that the adopted children are made to do all sorts of household chores.

Adoption Trend

In many countries, especially in South-Asian countries, adoptions are done for different reasons, rather than due to the natural feeling and want of a child or children. Then there are own reasons for adopting a boy and a girl. Generally, in these countries, adoptions of boys were more common and preferred than the girls because of some age-old traditions, customs and beliefs. In case of absence of own son, wealthy and rich people often adopted male children as their rightful heir to protect their properties and carry on their family business.

Gradually, adoption of children outside from own family members and relatives also became acceptable. Since last few decades, the practice of adoptions of Nepalese children by people from different parts of the world has also started. People in the country have different opinions about the adoption of Nepalese Children by foreigners. Some say it is good for the children as they think that such children will have a better future and better life. On the other hand there are also people who think adoption of Nepalese children by foreigners should be discouraged and stopped as they think that often such children are either ill treated or abused in different ways. In fact, there have been few cases where adopted children have been ill treated and abused, but then such incidents take place even inside own country and by the adopting Nepalese parents and families. It is a natural phenomenon that where there is good, there is bad too. Hence, a few such incidents and discouraging acts by some section of people should not be taken as obstacles for the works of good cause. Adoptions are the result of human instinct, and therefore, perhaps will continue as long as human beings exist in this universe. It existed in ancient times, exists in present day and will continue to exist in the future too.

International Adoption

Often, foreigners adopt Nepalese children either with the direct approval of the natural parents or from children's homes after fulfilling certain legal procedures and formalities, as prescribed. But in the both situations, approval of concerned government authority is a must. Presently, there are about 958 adopted Nepalese children believed to be staying with their adoptive parents in different countries. Of these, 425 are boys and 533 are girls. In Italy alone, there are 226 adopted Nepalese children.

Hence, it would not be wrong to say that adoption has gone international and has equally become more complicated and an issue of great concern to all involved in this sector. In case of inter-country adoption, it is no more a matter of concern between just two individuals, two families or two parties, but has rather become a concern of the governments of the countries involved in the process. International adoption is a very sensitive and complicated issue as it not only ties relationship between individuals/families of two countries, but also establishes relationships between the countries involved.

Adoption, though is becoming more popular and is being encouraged, it also carries a little bit of suspicion and doubt about the lives of the adopted Nepalese children living abroad with their adoptive parents. Sometimes, negative rumors are heard about the treatment they get once they land in the country whose citizens have adopted them. Although there are certain rules and regulations regarding adoption by foreigners, but once they are taken out of the country, it is not easy to have further information is available about their whereabouts and conditions.

Adoption is more common in developing and poor countries. People from developed countries adopt children, who often are either orphans or abandoned at birth by their unmarried mothers. It is very common in poor countries that poor families often give away their infants for a small amount of money. This is especially true when the child is a girl. In such a situation, it becomes the responsibility of the government, national and international organizations, child homes, and all other concerned to watch and check all types of mal practices and illegal trafficking of children.

Until few decades back; Nepal had very few organizations working in the field of children. These organizations rather worked as child welfare centers and orphanages, and were mainly concerned about giving protection and basic education to its little inmates, as they had no one to take care of them, The Paropkar Sansthan and Nepal Children's organization, that still exist are two such organizations. But with the restoration of democracy in 1990, and with the problem of rapid growth in population, the problem of orphans and abandoned children also increased, as a result, it was not possible for these organizations alone to absorb all such children. There was a need for more of such organizations. Realizing this, some people with head and heart established child centers or children's homes to give protection and new life to many orphans and abandoned children. Although, in the beginning, the objective of these organizations were purely based on child welfare and charity, but soon, with the permission of the government, they started to operate as adoption agencies and became major contact points for inter-country adoptions. Despite of good intentions of many of such adoption agencies, some section of people started having negative attitude and thoughts about inter-country adoption because of some misdeeds of such agencies. However, it cannot be denied that these agencies, to some extent have been successful in giving new life and future to many children, whose life and future otherwise would have been in uncertainty and darkness. Even though, we cannot totally deny some incidents of ill-treatment and violation of child rights faced by some adopted Nepalese children abroad, we have also to accept that many of adopted Nepalese children are leading a comfortable life and are getting the best of everything, which many of us just dream about. Thus, a few negative incidents should not discourage us from working towards a good cause benefitting thousands of abandoned and underprivileged children whose future and fate are in darkness.

Adoption Situation in Nepal

Adoption of Nepalese children by people from different countries is becoming more popular and is in rise. Approximately, 250 adoptions of Nepalese children of both sexes of ages between 3-4 months to 3-4 years old take place through various government authorities and adoption agencies, every year.

Description of Adoption of Nepalese children in different countries during last 5 years

SN	Country	No. of Children Adopted
1.	Italy	223
2	Spain	213
3	United States of America	177
4	France	135
5	Germany	112
6	Norway	22
7	Switzerland	23
8	The Netherlands	14
9	Denmark	10
10	Belgium	9
11	Australia	1
12	Canada	6
13	Austria	3
14	Sweden	1
15	Finland	1
16	United Kingdom	5
Total		955

Source: Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, 2005/06.