

Familiar food turns a refuge into a home

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Tier 2 terms

persecution, originally, resettled, isolated, community, culture, prevention, mass, typical, items, ethnic (food), general, custom-designed, tradition, self-sufficient, basic, culture-appropriate, several, integrating

Tier 3 terms

refugee, agency, case manager, suicide, domestic violence, forefather, employees

Web Version: <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts/familiar-food-turns-a-refuge-into-a-home>



This article contains a multimedia feature that is available at the web address above.

Purna Magar: After the persecution from the Bhutan, I came to Nepal. I lived there 20 years, but when I came to America, I was not speaking in good language ... I [had] very, very poor English. So, at that time, I was shocked. I stayed inside the room for the whole three months. I feel that my refugee world has been a test on my forehead [of my strength].

Padam Giri: Clarkston is the place where refugees from different parts of the world can feel this is their home. Originally, I am from Bhutan. I live in refugee camp for 20 years and after 20 years, I get a chance to get resettled in the United States and working with one of the [inaudible] Agency as a case manager.

Padam Giri: Refugees from 15 to 20 countries — we resettle in this area.

Purna Magar: Doesn't mean that we are refugee; we became refugee by ourself, somebody made it. Somebody forced us to be refugee. It's a really, really hard, hard,

hard life and some refugees, they will suicide. So, that's my worry. If I find one people, one member from a community get suicide, I feel really, really, really upset.

Padam Giri: We figured out that the reason for our suicide and domestic violence was frustration and people are isolated from their communities, from their culture, from the family. How can we make the community feel like they are in home? So, they help us to provide suicide prevention training. We started celebrating our festivals in a mass way. It really helps the community.

Padam Giri: In Clarkston, the refugee can start their beginning of their life. They can get their food from Clarkston because Clarkston is a place where people who run a store are from different countries.

Purna Magar: I open my first store in 2013. We sell typical Nepalese, Indian, Sudanese, Bhutanese, Vietnamese; typical Burmese items, also. This is like a big library of ethnic foods. Those items are very real items that we cannot find in other general stores.

Purna Magar: They are finding the items whatever they are in Nepal. My grandfather used to eat the same kind of food, my forefather, and it's still me and it's still my son there. My son loves this one.

Nabin Chhetri: If we forgot to eat the food that we eat in our country, we'll forget everything: our religion, other things. Our children, our other grandchildren — they will just forget everything. So, it is very important to make them used to [traditional foods].

Purna Magar: I start to open a jewelry shop. We have designs for fathers, grandfathers, they used to wear, so that's kind of [inaudible 00:03:50]. They're custom-designed, the old traditional design, ethnic design. Our Nepalese and Bhutanese people, they love it. This is a small company with seven, eight people, eight employees, working over here. This are the skill that we need — they are Nepal.

Purna Magar: I want to help my communities, let them work, let them earn.

Padam Giri: We are kind of self-sufficient. We have everything here. Our community members start their businesses, which provide us our basic culture-appropriate grocery items.

Purna Magar: We have several communities that come over here in my store and they talk each other. They share [with] each other, they share their loves, so I feel, myself, proud. Our community's becoming strong.

Birkha Guragai: People are little bit comfortable, better integrating themselves into the community. We have learned to live in new place, scratching the back of one another.

Purna Magar: Refugees came over here, they are doing good. I love refugees. Let's help each other, let's work together — we will be something.

Source

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TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

1. Question

Padam Giri says, "We started celebrating our festivals in a mass way; it really helps the community."

- What does he mean by "a mass way"?
- Why would celebrating the festivals in that way help the community?

2. Question

Nabin Chhetri says, "If we forgot to eat the food that we eat in our country, we'll forget everything: our religion, other things; our children, our grandchildren — they will just forget everything, so it is very important to make them [as we] used to." Why would they forget "everything" if they don't eat the food common in their country?

3. Question

Birkha Guragai says, "People are little bit comfortable, better integrating themselves into the community. We have learned to live in new place, scratching [the] back of one another."

- Based on what this text about and using context clues, what do you think the word "integrating" means?
- What does he mean by scratching each other's backs?

TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Question

Padam Giri says, “We started celebrating our festivals in a mass way; it really helps the community.”

- a. What does he mean by “a mass way”?
- b. Why would celebrating the festivals in that way help the community?

Answer

- a. They are celebrating together in a large group, with a lot of people.
- b. Celebrating together may help people feel more part of a community and less alone or less as if they are the “only” person celebrating, which can be an isolating feeling.

2. Question

Nabin Chhetri says, “If we forgot to eat the food that we eat in our country, we’ll forget everything: our religion, other things; our children, our grandchildren — they will just forget everything, so it is very important to make them [as we] used to.” Why would they forget “everything” if they don’t eat the food common in their country?

Answer

He likens eating the food with maintaining a connection with their country and, therefore, their culture, religion, etc. Once you stop eating the food, he believes you may stop doing other things, as well.

3. Question

Birkha Guragai says, “People are little bit comfortable, better integrating themselves into the community. We have learned to live in new place, scratching [the] back of one another.”

- a. Based on what this text about and using context clues, what do you think the word “integrating” means?
- b. What does he mean by scratching each other’s backs?

Answer

- a. Integrating means bringing together or combining. It also can mean becoming part of the new country even while retaining customs from the home country.
- b. When someone in the community has a need (e.g., their back to be scratched), another community member is able to help out (e.g., by scratching their back).