

Historical Background of TFA

Ideas about helping Tharu Community back home in Nepal was being discussed among Tharus studying and working abroad for many years beginning early 1990s. There were only a handful of Tharus abroad at the time. Some initiatives were taken in limited scope with some results, but a more organized effort was needed encompassing all Tharus living abroad. Number of Tharus started to increase in the USA after 2000, the largest number making the city of Chicago home. As the Tharu population grew, discussions of forming an organization intensified. The email group account was created by Dr. Sushil Chaudhary of New Mexico in 2005 to facilitate communication. The discussions led to a consensus for organizing a gathering in Chicago with the help of local Tharu organization called Tharu Pariwar of Chicago (now known as Chicagoland Tharu Society) during the Thanksgiving holiday, Nov. 24-25, 2006.

The gathering was named as "**1st All America Tharu Bhela 06**" to which Tharus from the USA were invited to participate. Several Tharus from various cities including Tribhuban Choudhary of Gallup, NM traveled to Chicago and participated in the meeting. And almost all Tharus from Chicago were not only able to attend, but also provided all possible help and support for the success of the meeting. Three major topics discussed in the Bhela include: i) if an organization was needed to unite and support Tharu people, ii) doing something to help and empower Tharu community in Nepal - "Education", and iii) doing businesses jointly in the US to improve the financial condition of the community. Other subjects of the discussions were helping and guiding newcomers to settle in the US, foster friendship, and help and support each other. Participants seemed very enthusiastic about forming a Tharu organization and it was proposed to be named as "Tharus and Friends Association (TFA)".

In order to explore and materialize the above ideas, three (3) major committees were formed at the Tharu Bhela.

1. **Ad-hoc Committee:** The main task assigned to this committee was to do homework for holding a Tharu convention and work toward formally forming a Tharu organization in the USA in a year. This required outreaching Tharu people, who could not come to the Tharu Bhela, to collect their opinions for the above idea, and also write a by-laws. The five (5) members of the committee were as follows:
 1. Trib Choudhary, Gallup, New Mexico - President
 2. Tilak Mahato, Tucson, Arizona - Secretary
 3. Kalpana Chaudhary (Saptary), Chicago, Illinois - Treasurer
 4. Urmila Panjiyar, Torrance, California - Member
 5. Suresh Chaudhary, Somerville, Massachusetts – Member
2. **Business Committee:** This committee was to explore the possibility of establishing and developing a business plan for Tharus in the USA. This business would become a source of income for the organization. The initial capital for the business would come from the interested members and donate a certain percentage of the profit to the organization. Several attendees pledged different amounts at the meeting, which totaled about \$42,000. Since the business venture would be a "for-profit" undertaking, it would not be a part of the organization officially since it was to be a "non-profit" organization. The business venture would be operated as a joint venture by the interested community members. The committee consisted of the following four members:

1. Suren Chaudhary (Sunsari), Chicago, Illinois
 2. Kalpana Chaudhary (Saptary), Chicago, Illinois
 3. Ramu Chaudhary, Branford, Connecticut
 4. Suresh Chaudhary, Somerville, Massachusetts
3. **Education Committee** – This committee was formed to develop scholarship plan and awarding criteria for Tharu students studying in Nepal. The meeting (Bhela) also decided to urge Tharu individuals to donate \$10 or more a month to the education fund of the organization. A sum of over \$500 was collected at the gathering. It was decided that till the next decision, 40% of the collected amount would be sent to Nepal for educational purposes - providing scholarships to deserving Tharu students starting the school year beginning August 2007. There were three (3) members in the committee.
1. Sushil Chaudhary, Chicago, Illinois
 2. Suresh Chaudhary, Somerville, Massachusetts
 3. Ramu Chaudhary, Branford, Connecticut

On January 8, 2007, the Scholarship Committee was expanded by adding two more members to the committee.

1. Kalpana Chaudhary (Saptary), Chicago, Illinois
2. Bikram Chaudhary, Tucson, Arizona

This committee produced “Policy and Procedure of Tharu Scholarship Program” which was finalized and adopted by the joint meeting of the Scholarship Committee and Ad-hoc Committee on Sep. 9, 2007.

In 2007, a lot of discussions took place on how to register the organization and what should be the name of the organization etc. There were suggestions by Tharus living in other countries, notably Laxmi N. Choudhari (Nepal), to include all Tharus living around the globe in the organization since they had been trying to establish a similar organization dating back to 1990s. This idea seemed to align with the concept of the TFA. Laxmi N. Choudhari also suggested to include the word "international" while naming the organization. Although his suggestion could not be accepted for some valid reasons, it was agreed that the new organization would accommodate Tharus from around the world.

As assigned by the Tharu Bhela, the Ad-hoc committee organized and held Tharu Convention within the stipulated time (Thanksgiving Holiday on Nov. 23 and 24, 2007) at the residence of Dr. Sushil Chaudhary in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. This was the First Annual General Body Meeting (GBM). All Tharus living in the US in contact with the group were invited to the meeting. Nominations to elect first executive committee members were also called three weeks before the GBM with the plan to hold election at the meeting. The GBM adopted the bylaws written by the Ad-hoc committee and elected the First Executive Committee of TFA. Following were the elected members who assumed office from January 1, 2008, for two years.

1. Tribhuban Choudhary, Gallup, New Mexico - President
2. Bikram Chaudhary, Tucson, Arizona - Vice-president
3. Tilak Mahato, Tucson, Arizona - Secretary
4. Sushil Chaudhary, Rio Rancho, New Mexico - Treasurer
5. Sushil Chaudhary, Chicago, Illinois - Member
6. Kalpana Chaudhary, Chicago, Illinois - Member

7. Urmila Panjiyar, Torrance, California - Member

The minutes of the first GBM was circulated to general members via email. The GBM also decided that the TFA would be registered in the State of New Mexico since three Board of Directors needed with at least permanent residency status for registering the organization and New Mexico was the State where this was possible. Another big decision that was made at the GBM was about the Scholarship Fund. Majority of the participants of the GBM who also contributed to TFA since the Tharu Bhela in Chicago wanted all of their contributions to be used for scholarship instead of only 40 percent of the fund decided in the Chicago Bhela. This was extensively debated at the GBM, and it was decided to seek opinions directly from the fund contributors and follow their individual wishes. Based on their feedback, the GBM made the following additional decisions on funds:

1. There would be two categories of funds: i) TFA General Fund – membership fee, gifts etc., and ii) Scholarship Fund – all donations for scholarship program. These two would be kept separately.
2. Effective immediately, all the fund raised/collected for scholarship would be utilized for the scholarship purpose only.
3. Membership fee would go to the TFA's general fund and be utilized for Association's transactions.

On November 3, 2008, the registration documents were filed with the Secretary of State in the State of New Mexico and TFA became official. Since then, TFA has been working as a non-political and non-profit organization. On August 21, 2020, TFA also obtained approval from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) to become a tax-exempt (public charity) entity. Money donated to TFA is tax-deductible. That means the donors can claim deduction in their income tax filing for the amount they donated to TFA.