Nepali Anthropology: New Direction and Contributions

Seminar Proceedings

Central Department of Anthropology
Tribhuvan University
Kirtipur

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Teaching, Research & Practices of Anthropology
Conversion
Territoriality and Borders
Health and Medical Anthropology
Identity, Ethnicity & Social Movement
Urbanism, Land & Peasantry

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Foreword

Anthropology in Nepal developed at a time when the discipline was under the sway of

Colonial rule in South Asia. The colonial anthropologists, entirely guided by the structural-functional theories and methods, viewed society as a homogenous entity and proclaimed for the primacy of harmonious social relations in South Asia. They collected cultural information from various communities and argued for a social *status quo* in the society. For these colonial scholars, change was a ubiquitous phenomenon occurring at a slow and gradual pace. Thus the notion of 'social cohesion' dominated the entire anthropological thinking of the early anthropologists, and Nepal could not remain untouched from the global phenomenon of colonial anthropology. This means Nepali anthropology, in terms of theory and methods, followed the linear pathways that the British colonial anthropologists had already paved for in the South Asian anthropology. As a result, Nepali anthropology could not develop its own independent theoretical approaches and methodological tools to understand and analyze the culture and society of Nepal from critical historical perspectives. This was not possible due to several reasons, of which the three most important were (1) the paramount influence of British education system in Nepal, (2) the impacts of British anthropologists who worked in Nepal in their various capacities as researchers and mentors during the time of institutional development of anthropology in Nepal, and (3) the basic training and orientation of the British social anthropology to Nepali anthropologists.

Over the decades since the early 1970s, Nepali anthropology developed and expanded its fields and sub-fields to a great extent. However, anthropology could not develop as an independent and distinct discipline in its full swing. One of the major limitations of its independent development was the joint operation the two different disciplines – sociology and anthropology – under a combined department until the beginning of 2016. After the reintroduction of semester system in 2014 for the graduate programs (M.A. level) offered at the University

Campus of Tribhuvan University in Kirtipur and the establishment of the independent department of anthropology in 2016, the much needed opportunity has opened up for developing the discipline further with integration of four fields of anthropology and introducing many other subfields for specialization. But we still need to enhance the theoretical and methodological rigorousness and widen the applied aspects of anthropological knowledge in order to establish Nepali anthropology as a uniquely distinct social science in the context of Nepal. It was at this critical juncture that the Central Department of Anthropology organized the First Annual National Seminar from February 20-22, 2015, with an objective to bring anthropologists working in Nepal together to discuss the new direction of Nepali anthropology and its contributions to the development of Nepal and Nepali societies.

This first annual seminar was of special importance to Nepali anthropology in many ways. Firstly, the seminar was organized on the eve of the establishment of an independent department of anthropology at Tribhuvan University. Secondly, the seminary brought more than 100 anthropologists together at a common academic forum that provided them with an opportunity to reflect on the trajectory of anthropology in Nepal. They discussed and shared collectively the future research directions in anthropology so as to develop Nepali anthropology that is always informed by the global developments in the discipline and shaped by local needs of the nation. Finally, it was important because for the first time a national seminar of this scale was organized mostly with the department's own resources. Usually, managing funding for such academic seminar is a huge challenge for academic institutions of the Tribhuvan University. Despite such challenges, I was able to manage the department funds to organize the seminar as well as to publish the proceedings of the seminar. I am really proud of it.

Altogether 33 very interesting and important academic papers on various themes were presented in the seminar. However, many paper writers were not able to revise and submit their papers on time. So, only 17 papers have been published in this volume. I like to thank all the authors of the papers published in this volume. I like to thank the editorial team

members – Binod Pokharel, Janak Rai and Mukta S. Lama Tamang – who worked very hard to put various thematic papers together in the form of this proceeding. Thanks to Nabin Rawal and Mahesh Raj Maharjan for editing the language of this volume. I would also like to thanks peer reviewers of the papers. The department administrative staff Ms. Sumitra Thapa and Ganga Shris deserve special thanks for managing the finance and logistics for the seminar. We appreciate the support we received from the Cornell Nepal Study Program (CNSP) and WINDOW program of higher education for the seminar. Finally, I would like to thank all my department colleagues and students for their active participation and unconditional support to the department for making the seminar a grand success.

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PREFACE

Pummeled by an unprecedented number of political upheavals and disasters, Nepal has been doughtily struggling to rise from the ruins. Notwithstanding this fact, the anthropology discipline has 'come of age' in Nepal due to the history of its teaching for more than three decades at the Tribhuvan University and research tradition maintained by native anthropologists for more than six decades despite its institutional infancy of less a year with the establishment of independent Central Department of Anthropology (CDA) at the University Campus, Kirtipur under it—an important academic event in the history of its institutional teaching triggered by the collective academic and professional contributions of Nepali anthropologists for the creation of objective conditions needed for its independent evolution. The current proceedings entitled "Nepali Anthropology: New Direction and Contributions" is, indeed, the genuine reflection of the contemporary works of Nepali anthropologists in the 'teaching', 'research' and 'applied' domains. The articles published in this edited volume are amply demonstrative of the brute facts that the galaxy of Nepali anthropologists has been effortful to enrich the discipline in Nepal by using anthropological theories (to the extent possible) as their perspectives in their respective researches with their epistemological assumptions (such as positivism and social constructivism or interpretivism) for the production and co-production of ontological assumptions (such as the domains of objectivism and subjectivism of the socio-cultural realities) through the adoption of their own axiological positions (either characterized by value-neutrality or purposefulness of their researches).Couched in other words, the genuine effort is on the rise to conduct anthropological researches within the ambit of afore-mentioned philosophical trinity of the disciplinary methodology which is gratifying in a way (with the due acknowledgement or admission of the fact that a few pseudo-anthropological works still exist which are neither informed by anthropological theories nor guided by methodological principles). There is the bourgeoning trend discernible among Nepali anthropologists to debunk the apocryphal research works—a trend toward intellectual forthrightness in the domain of anthropological research.

Laudable is the growing academic propensity among the younger generation Nepali anthropologists to reflect upon the anthropological

literature created hitherto with critical perspectives largely guided by their ratiocination for enriching it with the new contributions by rectifying the lacunae through theoretically-informed and methodologically-guided new empirical researches. In the same way, a growing interest is discernible among them to carry out researches on the virgin sub-fields within the anthropology discipline for carving out "ecological niches", on the one hand and making initial original substantive contributions during its inchoative stage, on the other hand.

What is needed for the further disciplinary efflorescence is the patience and perseverance of the anthropological neophytes for carrying out the theoretically-informed and methodologically-guided plethora of anthropological researches on the domains of a panoply of contemporaneous issues of Nepali 'social structure' and 'culture' left intact in this edited volume (subsuming the multiplicity of debates on federalism and political economy of underdevelopment which are not inexplicable anthropologically) which must be guided by the critical theoretical perspectives of anthropology and its sister disciplines.

Against this backdrop, the CDA has to be institutionally prepared with its unwavering commitment and firm determination to create social ambience for the native and exogenous anthropologists for their disciplinary interactions and exchanges on the contemporaneous anthropological realities. Being agog over this first publication of CDA, I, in the capacity of the Head of the Department, would assure the concerned anthropological community to make optimal effort for materializing this commitment in the days to come. I am immensely sanguine that this edited volume would be a 'milestone' for the future anthropological works in Nepal because of its usefulness for the university teaching, research and application in the development sector.

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August 2016

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Introduction

Mukta S. Lama
Janak Rai
Binod Pokharel

Nepali Anthropology today is in cross-road, if not in crisis. It has now reached a turning point where it needs to think critically and practically for future pathways based on its past successes and failures. In the rapidly changing national and international contexts, Nepali anthropology requires now to prove once again that it is locally relevant and can engage meaningfully in conversation with anthropological community at large. For this, Nepali anthropology should take up the emerging issues in its research agenda and think seriously about integrating its teaching with empirical research. There is a need that anthropologists in Nepal sharpen their focus and expertise and demonstrate their commitment to quality scholarship. The time has demanded that Nepali anthropology build its own distinctive identity as a discipline which champions the study of human universality and at the same time safeguards the cultural diversity in a better way. The deliberations and contributions in this volume clearly argue that renewed and reinvigorated anthropology in Nepal is possible. Nepali anthropology, referred in this volume, simply is a body of work by anthropologists in and from Nepal who are a part of larger community of anthropologists internationally engaged in a rich array of works on Nepal and the Himalaya.

The papers included in this volume were read in a national seminar on "Nepali Anthropology: New Direction and Contributions" organized by Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology at Tribhuvan University during 20-22 February 2015, Kathmandu. The seminar was an important juncture that brought anthropologists together to reflect on the trajectories of Nepali anthropology. The seminar was held in the eve of the formation of independent departments of anthropology and

sociology after 34 years of operation as a joint department. The objective of the seminar was to offer anthropologists space for reflections on the discipline's past and collective deliberation on the new direction that it should embark. The gathering was also a point where ongoing research on various contemporary themes could be shared and discussed.

The conversation among over 100 Nepali anthropologists engaged in different professions within Nepal was thus focused on examining their past achievements and inadequacies, and seeking space for autonomous existence for specialized contributions within a wider interdisciplinary academic environment. The papers presented in this volume, then, are a selection of writings which examine some of the current dynamics observed in development of anthropology in Nepal along some interesting work on pertinent themes taken up by the anthropologists in Nepal.

The first part of the volume consists of papers that attempt to review past performance of the discipline and chart out future directions of anthropology in Nepal by focusing on history, evolution, teaching and research, and future directions. The second part on the other hand presents papers on various themes. The research papers included deal with a wide range of issues observed and studied from different parts of Nepal in the last decade. The papers, based on the central tendencies, have been categories into broad five groups in this volume. The categories range from identity, ethnicity, and social movement, health and medical anthropology, religion and conversions, territoriality and borders, to urbanism, land, and peasantry.

The first part, which deals with reflections on the discipline of anthropology, includes four major papers. The first paper by Dilli R. Dahal is an attempt to trace the history and growth of socio-cultural anthropology in Nepal over the last two hundred years or so and its reassessment in the context of anthropological theories and methods. Dahal notes that anthropological beginning may be projected back as early as two centuries when European scholars started to study and write

about Nepali society and culture. The paper provides a broad overview of the works and their contents from 19th century works of Hamilton and Brian Hodgson to the most recent works by young scholars. Dahal argues that the scope of anthropology has widened over the years, covering many subfields of anthropology. Though there are some overlaps in the scope of anthropology and sociology in Nepal till today, the paper clearly notes that anthropology is a very different discipline than sociology in the context of its origin, contents and methods. By highlighting the contours of the growth and development of anthropology by Nepali anthropologists through research and teaching, Dahal's paper shows that anthropology in the form of ethnography is not a new phenomenon in Nepal. Plenty of literature is available today in anthropology for further research and teaching. Dahal notes that most of the anthropological contributions are rich in their contents, theories and methods. There are, however, also several gaps that indicate that question of 'human Subjects' is overlooked in most of the cases of anthropological research in Nepal till date.

The second paper by Laya P. Uprety and Binod Pokharel "Teaching Anthropology in Nepal: A Critique and a Proposal," as the title suggests, offers a comprehensive overview of the teaching, assesses its pitfalls and suggests ways for improvising the teaching for further effectiveness. In other words, this paper answers three major questions related with teaching of anthropology in Nepal. The first is, what was the status of teaching in the past? Second, what is the current status of teaching? And finally how to take it forward in the days to come? The range of issues covered by the paper is wide. For example, it discusses the curriculum and recommended texts and readings, teaching methods, institutional infrastructure and process as well culture of teaching and learning itself. The paper offers current state of the teaching, identifies the gaps and offers recommendation for improvements at all levels beginning with grade 11 level to Ph.D.

The paper is almost a history of anthropological teaching in Nepal and saga of its struggles. One of the salient issues the paper raises in term of key lack in the teaching of anthropology is its confinement to socio-cultural anthropology. The paper confesses that we have utterly failed to cover other three subfields in anthropology: biological, linguistic, and archaeological. These subfields even have not been treated tangentially and the authors argue that "inevitably much remains to be done in this regard in the days to come because this has been a faux pas from the part of leading mainstream anthropologists".

The paper by Man B. Khatri supplements the preceding paper by Uprety and Pokharel. The paper demonstrates that in the evolution of anthropology in Nepal teaching of ecological anthropology was central and marker of identity. When general public including media had no ways to easily distinguish anthropology from sociology, it was the course on ecological anthropology that helped set journey of its own. This paper explores evolution of study on ecological anthropology in the Tribhuvan University and how anthropology in Nepal has been able to contribute to teaching and research on the environmental issues. The term environment in anthropology is associated with the study of human-environment relations and Khatri discusses the experience in Nepal in the context of debates among ecological anthropologists around the world. The pertinent question this paper foregrounds is the identity of anthropology – which still to a great extent equates with sociology in general parlance and has little recognition by state authorities.

The last in this category is a joint paper by Mukta S. Tamang, Suresh Dhakal and Janak Rai entitled "Nepal School of Anthropology: Emerging Issues and Future Directions". The paper starts with discussion on the genesis of idea of Nepal school of anthropology by past generation of anthropologists, their visions and aspirations. The paper contextualizes the debate on the need for establishing Nepal school of anthropology by outlining the evolution of anthropology and engagement of anthropologists from across the globe in Nepal and

the Himalayas. The paper not only offers a lucid description of the history but also critically reviews the representation of Nepal and the Himalayas by these anthropologists and desire for ability to intervene on the part of anthropologists in and from Nepal. The desire of Nepali anthropologists to make anthropology relevant locally both in terms of tasks to improvement and human conditions through program and policy changes was central to such an idea of Nepal school.

The paper argues that although the ideas of past contributors were elemental in thinking about the critical role of Nepal school of anthropology, the changes that have taken place nationally and internationally, especially after 1990s, demanded recasting the debate in new light. The dichotomy between theoretical and applied anthropology has a different meaning today than three decades ago, and the sheer number of people involved in the vocation of anthropology who are well acquainted with theoretical debate has reached a critical mass now compared to the time of establishment of the department. Many social, cultural and political changes in the country, effect of globalization in peripheral locations like that of Nepal, and need for responding to the question of social justice, equality and tolerance and respect to diversity have heightened the need for better anthropology. Mounting challenges of producing quality ethnography and nuanced engagement in the theoretical debate notwithstanding for Nepali anthropologists, the paper offers suggestions for future directions and concludes with optimism and inspiration.

Religion Conversion

It is surprising that 'religion', a core anthropological area of study, has remained a marginal field of study for Nepali anthropologists. But it is evident that the interest in the study of religion is growing among the Nepali anthropologists and graduate students in the recent years. This volume includes two papers which examine broader themes of religion and ritual. The two papers in particular focus on the emerging social phenomenon of Christian conversion in Nepal.

Christianity has a long history in Nepal but Christian conversion is relatively an emerging dimension of socio-cultural changes in Nepal. In the recent years, Christian conversion has also become a contested issue in the public discussions of secularism and religious rights in Nepal. The new constitution of Nepal has banned "forceful" religious conversion, making it an illegal activity. Hence, debates on whether religious conversion is a matter of individual right to choose their religious faith, hence a right to religious freedom, as well as what constitutes a "forceful" conversion, have intensified in Nepal. Needless to say that there is a need for serious ethnographically informed studies to understand the complexities of religious conversions in Nepal.

In their papers, Indra Bahadur Rakhal and Lagan Rai have discussed different dimensions of Christian conversions in Nepal. In his paper, Rakhal discusses the general processes of Christian conversion and provides case studies to highlight the various factors that motivate people to convert to Christianity. However, Lagan Rai's paper focuses on the crisis of sociability among the same ethnic group, the Santhal of eastern Tarai, that has arisen among the group because of the religion conversion. Rakhal argues that the phenomenal growth of Christian population in Nepal is not only because of the Western professional Christian preachers and missionaries, but is also a result of globalization and labor migration of Nepali to countries like Malaysia, India, and South Korea. The author, himself a Christian and hence an 'insider', has explored the nitty-gritty of conversion processes both from the synchronic and diachronic perspectives. According to the author, globalization, labor migration and restoration of democracy in 1990 are major factors for the increased religion conversion in the context of Nepal. The author views that after the restoration of the democracy, more than the foreigners, the Nepali Christians involved in Christian organizations geared up the growth of Christianity in Nepal.

Lagan Rai examines the discourses of *jati* identity among the followers of Christianity and indigenous traditional religion among the Santhal

people. Rai primarily concerns on the ways in which traditional Santhal and Christian Santhal, despite belonging to the single Santhal ethnic group in terms of their shared substances such as language, ancestral territory, history and kin relations, demarcate themselves as separate *jatis* such that marriage alliance between the two groups is forbidden and socially disdained. The author argues that most distinguishing performances in everyday life of Christian Santhals are marked by (a) rejection of customary religious rites and rituals, and (b) shifting of marital alliance from *jati* endogamy or ethnic/tribal endogamy to religious endogamy. Among the Santhal people, such emerging shifts in cultural practices have become sources of conflict and contestations regarding their claims for cultural identity and rights. The author concludes that conversion to Christianity is a highly contested issue for two reasons. First, conversion to Christianity creates crisis in sociability in the community and ruptures the customary cultural obligations between and among the kin members, and in their ritual ties with the ancestors. Secondly, the shift in marital alliances from *jati* endogamy to religious endogamy and controversy over interfaith marriage contradicts Santhals' perceived traditional cultural boundary and thus opens up debates on *jati* identity and cultural rights of the Christians in particular.

Territoriality and Borders

The three papers in this volume examine the relationship between people and territory – how people make and 'break' territories through their rituals and everyday practices. Following the general traditions of 'anthropology of place' and anthropological approach to ritual, the two papers by Jiban Mani Paudel and Hom Yamphu focus on the interplay between ritual, territory, and people's sense of collective being emplaced in their ancestral lands and emphasize how people and places are mutually produced through cultural processes. The third paper by Anup Rai, on the other hand, draws on 'anthropology of border' to examine how people 'break' the perceived rigidity and fixity of the national territories demarked along the borders between Nepal and India.

In his paper, Jiban Mani Paudel combines anthropology of place and ritual to discuss how the local people of Nhāson located in the lower valley of Manang make sense of their territories and sub-territories through performing rituals, telling stories and narrating historical events, and by connecting their sense of place with everyday practices. The rituals, stories, historical events, and everyday practices are more than a simple performance of activities for entertainment or telling of tales/events as jokes; they are the sources of awareness and recognition of one's own territory and its boundaries. The author concludes that the place or territory and its boundaries are not always physical and political entity. Cultural practices such as myths, ritual and storytelling are important collective practices through which people remake and demark their physical territory and its boundaries.

Hom Prasad Yamphu's paper examines the relationships between scared oral ritual texts, people's sense of collective identity and sovereignty over their ancestral territories. Drawing on his ethnographic study of the Yamphu people from the Upper Arun Valley of northeast Nepal, the author discusses the importance of *pellam or mindum* in making the Yamphu as a sovereign people over their ancestral territory and land. *Pellam or mindum* is an oral culture, a corpus of sacred texts that encodes basic cultural themes, ancestral values, and propositions of Yamphu society. Yamphu *pellam* evokes ancestral attachment to the lands and offers historical, cultural, and spiritual grounds for Yamphu to objectify their collective identity. According to the author, chanting *pellam* is not merely an oral tradition; rather it is a cultural process, a cultural strategy, and a way of making Yamphu themselves as sovereign people to the lands in the territory. In the paper, the author also examines how Yamphu people enhance their political goals and objectify their sovereignty over their territory by chanting *pellam*.

Anup Rai presents an ethnographic discussion of the everyday practices of border crossing of a distinct border people – the betel nut carriers at the Karkarvitta border between Nepal and India at the easternmost

Tarai of Nepal. In their everyday lives, the betel nut carriers must 'break' the border so as to earn their subsistence. By focusing on the everyday interactions of these betel nut traders and carriers, whom the state authorities from Nepal and India deem as being involved in "illegal" activities, the author shows how the notion of the border carries polysemic meanings for the people who live in the 'margins' of the state boundaries and who interact with the border on a daily basis. This paper further explores how arbitrary nature of border becomes visible in the everyday lived experiences of the people, such as the betel nut carriers in borderland. The border is not fixed and static, nor it is merely a physical entity made visible by objects like pillars and the presence of the border guards. By examining the everyday interactions of the betel nut carriers at Kakarvitta border, the author infers that border is fluidly constructed. Border people like betel nuts carriers are actively engaged in the everyday process of border breaking and border making.

Health and Medical Anthropology

Medical anthropology is an emerging field of study in Nepal. This volume has two papers which highlight the relevance of medical anthropology in Nepal. Prakash Upadhaya focuses on how medical anthropological research, its understanding, and the use of distinctive perspectives of medical anthropology can contribute to enlighten public health and public health policy development in Nepal. He argues that medical anthropologists can contribute by informing public health policy decisions, especially in the development of systems of medical knowledge and medical care, the patient-physician relationship codes, the integration of alternative medical systems in culturally diverse environments, the interaction of social, environmental, and biological factors which influence health and illness both in the individual and the community as a whole. The author concludes that anthropologists and planners in Nepal can combine their expertise to make health care program culturally compatible with the local contexts.

Ram Hari Dhakal focuses existing traditional healing practices and their changes among the Hyolmos of Sindhupalchok district. Drawing on his ethnographic study with the Hyolmo people, the author describes the traditional healing practices of Lamaism, ethno-medicine, self-medication, and ancestor worship. Dhakal shows that the different medical practices coexist both in complementary as well as in conflicting relationships. He concludes that the role and performance of traditional healers are changing today due to the increasing impact of western medicine among the locals due to various factors such as the increasing economic wellbeing, education, transportation, communication, overseas employment, and tourism, and the expansion of modern health services.

Identity, Ethnicity and Social Movement

Ethnicity and the 'politics of identity' have emerged as one of the major areas of anthropological engagements in Nepal after the political transformations in the 1990s. As the eminent anthropologist of Nepal, Dilli R. Dahal succinctly observes in his contribution to this volume, "Cultural Diversity, Multiculturalism and Social Inclusion/exclusion have become other hot topics of research for Nepali anthropologists." The three papers in this volume examine different aspects of identity formation, politics of identity, and the issue of cultural loss.

In his paper, Pradeep Acharya analyzes the previous works of historians, linguistics, ethnographers as well as the census reports of different periods and the government's documents in order to highlight the dynamics and dimensions of categorization of people in Nepal from a historical perspective. His analysis shows that the historical texts on ancient Nepal predominately used the perceived physical categories, geography of origin, cultural and linguistic attributes as "objective marker" to describe the various groups documented in Nepal's history. In the later period, the emphasis shifted from physical features towards cultural differentiation and social and ritual hierarchy or in terms of caste ideology. The place of origin or geographical affiliation continues

to be important even in the classification of social groups based on caste hierarchy. The state was instrumental in codifying such categories through the legal instruments and practice of governmentality such the Old Muluki Ain of 1854, and objectifying different social categories through periodic census enumerations since the early 20th century, after 1950s in particular. In the recent decades, the state, following the political changes of the 1990s, has promoted the ethnic identification of the population of Nepal for recognizing the cultural diversity and pluralistic make of Nepali societies, and for promoting equitable socio-economic development of all social groups. In the paper, Pradeep Acharya argues that during the recent time the emphasis on categorization has shifted more towards the issues of human development, social inclusion as well as the majority/minority issues. He emphasizes that whatever the shift in the dimension of categorization may have occurred over the time, we should pay attention to the historical trajectory of such shifts. Otherwise, we may not clearly comprehend the modern mode of categorization, which is in a way also a continuity of the past to the present.

Shyamu Thapa Magar's paper examines the relationships between ethnic movement and ethnic identity construction process in Nepal after the political changes after 1990s and 2006. She provides an overview of the historical contexts for the resurgence of ethnic movements in Nepal and emphasizes the role of ethnic organizations and the alliance of ethnic organizations such as Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) in shaping the discourses of ethnic identity formation among the indigenous communities. Indigenous or ethnic rights movements strive to reform the undemocratic and exclusionary state towards democratic and inclusive polity where all group will feel equally belonged and included. In her paper, Thapa Magar highlights how the mainstream media, some dominant non-janajati scholars, and representatives of civil society expressed solidarity for the Hindu state and depicted Janajati movement as a threat to the social and religious harmony in Nepal. The trope of "national disintegration" and "deterioration of social harmony"

are common proses that the rulers and the dominant groups use to weaken and derail ethnic movements and the rightful demands of the marginalized communities. One of the insightful highlights of Shyamu Thapa Magar's paper is her discussion of the impacts of mainstream politics and political parties on ethnic movement. In general, all individuals involved in ethnic organizations are likely to be associated or affiliated with one of the mainstream political parties of Nepal. Such political affiliations and adherence to a particular political ideology of have created fractions and conflicts among activists and members of an ethnic organization. There is a widely held belief among the indigenous communities that the mainstream political parties play divisive roles and weaken the ethnic organizations and their national alliance like NEFIN. Similarly, it is argued that the party affiliation of ethnic activists can supersede the goals and agendas of the ethnic organizations. Drawing on her ethnographic study and interviews with Magar ethnic activists, Thapa Magar also adds a different view and argues that because of the popularity of the national ethnic organizations among their constituent ethnic communities, these organizations have become important platforms for indigenous ethnic activists to exercise their political power to be identified as an potential or upcoming political leader within their own ethnic group. With their affiliations to political parties, indigenous activists can benefit personally but they can also use the political parties to consolidate their collective voices and concerns within and through the established political and governance systems. To what extent such dual affiliations with the mainstream political parties as well as with one's own ethnic organization has actually contributed towards achieving the collective political rights of indigenous communities? This is an important field of study that needs to be explored.

The issue of cultural and ethnic identity is equally important for the refugee population who are forcefully displaced from their homeland and who live in unfavorable conditions in new places adjusting to the dominant ways of life of the host communities. Rudra Aryal's paper

examines the experiences of Bhutanese refugees living in the camps in Jhapa district of Nepal. He approaches the camp-life as a process of loss of cultural ways of life and collective identity embedded in their homeland and Lhotshampa culture. Once the refugees resettled temporarily in new host communities, they have limited social and economic resources to reconstitute their previous habitus and traditions which were grounded in different socio-cultura and environmental contexts of their local communities in Bhutan. For instance, all the Bhutanese were involved in subsistence farming in Bhutan but now only handful of individuals work in agriculture in and outside the camps in Jhapa. With this shift in livelihood patterns, they, particularly the younger generation, are forgetting the traditional knowledge related with farming; their social relations and organizations embedded in agricultural and their everyday interaction with the local ecology are fading away and becoming more individualistic towards the demands of market-based income generating activities in which the majority of the refugees are involved. Similarly, Aryal shows how the changes in marriage practices, family structure and kinship practices are impacting the bonds of the community that used to sustain their cultural identity and communal ways of life in Bhutan. The paper provides compelling ethnographic data to show how the refugees' collective inability to continue their 'homeland' based cultural and livelihood practices have engendered various social and psychological effects for different age groups and genders among the Bhutanese refugees. The rapid processes of acculturation and assimilation towards the ways of life of the host communities has led to the loss of indigenous culture and identity of the Bhutanese refugees living in the camps.

Shambu Katel's paper examines the existing practice of the indigenous government and judicial system of the Kisan, an *adivasi* community of 1000 or less people from Nepal's eastern most Tarai. With his ethnographic data and analysis, Katel challenges the taken for granted assumption that 'democracy' is a Western idea and practice that 'other societies' have adopted and followed in their political systems.

Illustrating with ethnographic examples how Kisan indigenous governing body such as *Baiga* system and the 'King' or *Mahato* as well as other officials are elected by the community in a free and fair manner, Katel shows how the fundamental attributes of democracy are actually institutionalized and put into practice by the Kisan in their customary governing and judicial mechanisms. In many formal 'democratic systems' that emphasize the popular electoral system to elect the people's representatives, the political leaders and officials, once elected, can enjoy their tenure for a defined period even if they become unaccountable to the people. In contrast to such system, the Kisan people have right to vote to terminate the tenure of their officials at any time if they do not perform their duties satisfactorily or if they indulge in 'immoral' acts once they hold the official positions. The paper provides a detailed discussion of the indigenous judiciary system of the community court or *Kachchheri* and its actual practices in the Kisan community. Unlike the formal legal and court system that is heavily bureaucratic and relies on a standard power-knowledge regime dominated by experts, the Kisan community court and its legal procedures are transparent, inclusive and participatory whereby the disputing parties worked among themselves to settle their cases. With his ethnographic data, Katel argues that democracy is a traditional way of life and day-to-day practice of many simple societies like the Kisan.

Urbanism, Land, and Peasantry

The pace of urbanization is rapidly growing in Nepal such that scholars now question the dichotomies between "rural" and "urban" in analyzing the changing structures and ways of life in Nepali societies. In this process of urbanization, the state is playing a catalytic role in 'urbanizing' the seemingly rural areas by declaring them 'municipalities'. The politics of municipality declaration and its impacts on the collective imaginations of the local residents of these new municipalities constitute the major focus of Amrit Kumar Bhandari's paper. His paper is based on the case studies of Putalibazar and Walling Municipalities of Syangja district of western

Nepal which were declared 'municipality' two decades ago. When these areas were declared municipalities, they lacked the basic infrastructures such roads, schools, health services, and so on. More importantly, the author, based on his interviews with people from different walks of life, argues that the local people used to have more rural ways of social and cultural life characterized by subsistence farming, sense of cohesive and bounded community, reciprocal labor exchange relationships, and pervasiveness of customary practices in everyday life. The declaration of the municipality did not immediately transform the material and physical outlooks of their places nor did it bring major development projects as the people had expected. But the declaration provided the local people with new collective imagination, sense of self associated with urbanism and motivation to become urban residents by changing their everyday practices related with housing, food habits, increased reliance on market and commodity exchange, social and interpersonal relationships with neighbors, and other realms of social and cultural life. The author concludes that the local people have overwhelmingly high expectations from the municipal declarations. While most of these expectations have not been met even after 18 years, the municipal declaration has led to many social and cultural changes in the study area. Hence, the municipal declaration by the state itself became a catalyst for accelerating the rise of urbanism in these two municipalities.

In what ways the rises of urbanism and modernization process in the Kathmandu valley, Nepal's capital, have affected the traditional peasants and their relationship with the farming land? Vishnu Archarya's paper examines this question with the ethnographic case study of the peasants of the Khokana area, a historic and traditional Newar settlement in Lalitpur district. The paper examines the explicit and implicit enablers responsible for the transformation of peasantry on the one hand. On the other hand, the paper highlights the ways in which neoliberal political economy forced the local peasants to come out of their traditional occupation as the cultivators of soil. Drawing on historical information,

Acharya shows how the state and its rulers during the 19th century appropriated a large area of Khokana's land by turning the customary owners and tillers of the land into tenants and subjugated them under the then existing land tenure system and the landlord-tenant hierarchy. Many of the local residents ensured their land ownership rights only after the Land Reform Acts of 1964. The author shows that until the early 1990s, the land transactions in Khokana was limited within Newar but this scenario drastically altered after the dawn of democracy in 1990s, when there was a huge influx of outsiders settling in the area by buying lands from the locals to build residential houses. In the beginning, the state and the private business companies were instrumental in appropriating the huge areas of local farming lands by providing minimal compensation and prices. In the 1970s, one of Nepal's giant corporate groups - the Chaudhary Group - took nearly 35 ropani of land for building factories by paying only eight to ten thousands per ropani to the local farmers. The government of Nepal continued the historical process of appropriating the local lands under the pretexts of 'urbanization' and modernization, for example, for establishing a tower for Nepal Radio and a prison by paying minimum subsidy to the local people. The author discusses other internal and external factors such as the higher costs of farming and the lower agricultural outputs, effects of climate change (erratic rain falls), impacts of monetization of economy and everyday needs, flow of internal migration to the capital city, impacts of development fantasy such as 'Fast Track' and 'Ring Road', and shifting of land-based *ijaat* economy to modern buildings, and the increasing selling of farm. Differing from theoretical claims which emphasize on the factors like industrialization, despotic regime of government agencies, and urbanization for peasantry transformations, the author concludes that that peasantry transformation is occurring without industrialization and complete urbanization process in a country like Nepal.

Teaching, Research & Practices of Anthropology

Anthropological Tradition in Nepal: History and Practices

Dilli R. Dahal*

Introduction

This paper is an attempt to trace the history and growth of socio-cultural anthropology as a discipline in Nepal over the last two hundred years or so, and its reassessment in the context of anthropological theories and methods. At the outset, let me clarify one basic issue. Anthropology and sociology have not been treated as separate disciplines in Nepal until now, even though a trained student of sociology and anthropology clearly knows that there are fundamental differences between these two disciplines in terms of history, methods and contents. In Nepal, the concept of four-field anthropology (social/cultural, biological/physical, archaeological and linguistic) is yet to materialize fully in the form of research and teaching. In other words, anthropology of Nepal, in most of the cases, is single field anthropology, i.e. socio-cultural anthropology, where it shares many of its features with sociology. In fact, there has been very little academic research in the sense of modern sociology in Nepal thus far. The urban and industrial problems have yet to become a part of sociological research and teaching. Technically, little sociological variables such as education, caste/ethnicity, religion, income, age, and sex are used for explaining and interpreting the problems and issues of Nepali society. This is simply because Nepali society is basically rural in nature, with more than 80 percent of Nepali people live in villages (CBS 2011). Nepal is one of the least urbanized/industrialized countries of the world. Those few sociologists (both natives and foreigners) who

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are engaged in the name of doing sociological research in Nepal are not very different in their field methods. Their researches overlap with socio-cultural anthropologists in terms of research problem, data collection techniques and final analysis. Even the government machineries and many NGOs/INGOs working in Nepal do not understand the basic differences between sociology and anthropology and label much of the anthropological works as part of sociology. To say flatly, more than 95 percent of research works published in Nepal in the name of society and culture until now has been undertaken by anthropologists. So, this paper entirely focuses on the history, growth and development of socio-cultural anthropology (hereafter anthropology) in Nepal.

The paper is organized into three sections. The first section begins with a clear note that anthropology was initiated in Nepal in the form of ethnographic research, almost two centuries ago, by western scholars. This trend is continuing even today. However, the scope of anthropology has widened over the years covering many subfields of anthropology. In the second part, the paper notes that though the research and publication by Nepali anthropologists are low in number , it is increasing gradually over the years due to : (a) the opening of teaching departments of anthropology/sociology in various universities in Nepal, particularly in Tribhuvan University (hereafter T.U.) since 1981; (b) the increasing number of young Nepali anthropologists/ sociologists who are employed in teaching and research profession over the years, and (c) the wave of democracy in Nepal after 1990. They have played a major role in identifying various ethnic/caste groups of Nepal from the cultural identity perspectives, resulting in a good amount of anthropological literature with new approach and thinking in this field. Finally, the paper assesses the future of anthropology in Nepal considering the major strengths and weaknesses of anthropological research and teachings.

For convenience, the growth anthropology of Nepal is discussed in three different periods of time (i) the rise of anthropology in Nepal from 1811-1950: a timeframe indicating the pre-modernization period of Nepal,

(ii) anthropology by professional anthropologists in Nepal, from 1951-1990, when Nepal was opened to the outside world, encouraging foreign researchers to carry out their research in Nepal and a period of so called "modernization", and (iii) the rise and growth of native anthropologists after 1990 and the period of the multi-party democratic form of government in Nepal, where the notion of "peoples" have been playing a central role, in any kind of formal or informal discourses and writings in the fabric of social science, particularly anthropology. And a period, when teaching and research are nurtured simultaneously, by both Nepali and foreign anthropologists.

The rise of anthropology in Nepal: 1811-1950

In Nepal, the genesis of anthropology is interesting. Unlike Europe, the United States of America and India, there is virtually little linkage between colonialism and development of anthropology in Nepal (Barth et al. 2005). Anthropology in Nepal was started by western scholars in the form of research and the subject was known by way of articles and monographs. Though many western scholars were not trained as anthropologists, they started describing the Himalayan ethnic/caste groups of Nepal, almost two centuries ago (Kirkpatrick 1811; Hamilton 1819; and Hodgson 1874). Colonel Kirkpatrick, while visiting Nepal in the Mission in 1793, collected information on different topics, such as history, geography and people, including the routes from Hetauda to Kathmandu . In chapter eight of his book, he describes the populations and inhabitants such as Hindu Brahmans and Chhetris, Newars, Majhis, Bhotiyas and few others. Hamilton (1819), who also worked for the East India Company, visited Nepal during the Mission of Captain Knox in 1802-03 and spent 14 months in Nepal, mostly in Kathmandu. In chapter one of his book, he describes the original inhabitants of the country such as Brahmans, Rajputs, Magars, Gurungs, Jariyas, Newars, Murmis, Kiratis, Limbus, Lepachas and Bhotiyas, and their manners and customs. The case of Brian Houghton Hodgson is exceptional. Hodgson, who landed in India in 1817 and joined the service of British India in 1819 as an Assistant Commissioner of Kumaon, was a great scholar of Sanskrit, Bengali and Persian. When Edward Gardner

(formerly the Commissioner of Kumaon) went to Kathmandu, as the First Resident of Nepal, Hodgson became his assistant in Kathmandu in 1820. He became Acting Resident in 1831 and was confirmed as a Resident in 1833, till his dismissal in 1842. During the period of his stay in Nepal and India, he not only collected a lot of Buddhist texts but also three truckloads of manuscripts in Sanskrit, Newari, Persian and English, dealing with the history, institutions, languages and ethnology of Nepal (see Introduction by David Denwood, in 1972 edition of Hodgson's book). In other words, Hodgson collected tons of materials from Nepal and these materials were eventually carried to India Office Library London for further study. Very few researchers had the scant idea about these Hodgson's collections. Only in 2003, a Nepali scholar from Center for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University had gone to the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, to explore Hodgson's collections, and we hope that these old Nepali materials would shed new lights on the present state of Nepali society and culture.

Brook and Morris (1928) while working in the Gurkha battalion of the British army provided the cultural accounts of Gurkhas, focusing on their manners, customs and ecology, including detailed clan names of the Rai, Limbu, Magar, Gurung and Chhetri. As many Gurkha soldiers bravely fought during the First World War of 1914-18 for the British empire, British were keen to know more about the Gurkhas so that they could be "better used" for their own mission.

How sound are these studies in the context of ethnographic technique is a big question. In this regard, Gurung (1997, 497) aptly remarks "Earlier social scientists visiting Nepal relied heavily on Nepali interpreters recruited mostly from educated high castes, who would be as alien to the group under study as the foreign researcher." No doubt, the mission to Nepal by these scholars had the "utilitarian approach" to facilitate and extend the powers of the British Colonial Government rule in India to further east and north (Sarana et al. 1976), but they provided interesting cultural accounts of various groups of Nepal, not in the strict sense

of ethnography as we are using the term today. But these interesting cultural materials could be used as reference materials for researchers who want to engage further in ethnographic research, language and culture of Nepal.

The growth of anthropology in Nepal: 1951-2012

Academic anthropology in the form of research and teaching started after 1950, when Nepal was opened to the outside world for visits as well as for research. In the preface to his book *The Sherpas of Nepal* (1964), the pioneer Himalayan anthropologist Christoph Von Furer-Haimendorf wrote that "in 1953, Nepal was a country virtually unknown to anthropologists." I feel that Haimendorf undermined the anthropological dimensions of works done by various authors during the period of 1811-1950. Unlike 'armchair anthropologists' they collected the data by themselves though they did not do intensive local studies. It is no doubt that the tradition of doing long fieldwork of the group concerned began in Nepal only after Furer-Haimedorf's research on the Sherpas. The Sherpas became so popular that almost every western research scholar wanted to focus his/her research on the Sherpas. The two prominent reasons for this are: first, the Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, was scaled by two mountaineers, a New Zealander Edmund Hillary and his counterpart Tenzing Norgay, a Nepali and Sherpa by ethnicity. So every mountain expedition team who was interested to climb Mount Everest wanted to know more about the Sherpas so that they could hire them as guides and porters for mountaineering expedition. Second, more and more ethnographers wanted to focus research on Sheraps to understand their socio-cultural status, physical features and adaptive strategies in the highest mountain region of the world.

Over the years, anthropologists from different countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan and others systemically explored Nepal in various fields and published a number of articles, reports and books, mostly in English and sometimes in their own languages. In other words, a large number of foreign

anthropologists, who were professors, researchers and students, engaged themselves in doing anthropological research in Nepal. The detailed review of anthropological literature in Nepal is beyond the scope of this paper. Below, I have chosen few anthropological studies to represent the general trend of anthropological studies in Nepal over this period.

General ethnographic studies

Nepal is a land of diversity not only in terms of physical features, but also in language, religion and culture. The 2011 Census of Nepal identified 125 ethnic/caste groups, 123 languages and 10 religious groups in Nepal. So, it is natural that the most popular area of anthropology is ethnographic research, where various aspects of many ethnic/caste groups living in different parts of Nepal were explored. Many anthropologists sought to understand the socio-cultural systems of various ethnic groups, analyzing their family, kinship, marriage, economy, traditional political organization and religion. Studies have also focused on myths and legends, relating to the origin, history, clan structure and belief systems of specific ethnic groups (Furer-Haimendorf 1964; Oppitz 1968 Hitchcock 1966; Messerschimdt 1986; Pignede 1977; Ortner 1976). If Furer Haimendorf was interested in the social organization of the Sherpas, Oppitz showed more interest in cultural history and material culture. Ortner wanted to understand the symbolic meanings of Sherpa rituals and religions, expressing social relationships of actors by acts, words and artifacts. Paul (1982) showed a concern regarding the psychological dimension of the Sherpa values and rituals. Using Geertz's model of symbolic anthropology, Holmberg (1989) analyzed the order and paradox situation in Tamang culture, focusing on myth, ritual and exchange. Hitchcock (1966) presented fascinating ethnographic accounts of Magars of Nepal. In fact, Hitchcock was a pioneer in initiating many of his American students from the University of Wisconsin (such as Tom Fricke , Augusta Molnar and Al Pach) to carry out anthropological research in Nepal.

Ethnographic research on Thakalis also deserves special attention. Vinding and Bhattachan's annotated bibliography in 1985 clearly notes

fifty works on Thakalis, including two books, by fifteen anthropologists. The study on Thakalis by Japanese scholars like IIjima (1977) sought to understand the social, cultural and economic changes occurring among the Thakalis, whereas Vinding's contributions on the Thakali dealt with history, economy, social organization and religion.

The other excellent ethnography portraying the social and symbolic roles of high caste women (the Hill Brahmin and Chhetri groups) is the work of Bennett (2002). The messages conveyed by Bennett are complex and fascinating, wherein a high caste Hindu girl has to play two conflicting roles in her life, a role which she plays at her parents' house as a daughter and sister as a sacred being and the role that she has to play at her husband's house as a wife and daughter-in law, where she is treated as a dangerous being.

Many ethnographic studies on the Newars of Kathmandu Valley were carried out from the materialist (Rosser 1966) and functionalist perspectives (Levy 1990; Nepali 1966). However, Gellner and Quigley's edited book *Contested Hierarchies* (1995) deserves special attention here as it focused on the Newar caste system in its totality, challenging Louis Dumont's caste model reflected in the Indian society (Dumont 1970). Authors here argue that Newar ethnicity is not only complex, but also its foundation is based on distinct caste principles. Declan Quigley challenges the religion-centered hierarchical caste model of Dumont, where the Brahmins are placed at the apex of this model. For him, it is the king who plays the central role in the overall caste structure among the Newars. The book clearly demonstrates, "caste systems are indeed contested and not given, both within and between castes" (1995, 4).

Another excellent ethnography on the caste system of Nepal is the analysis of the Old Mulki Ain of 1854 by Andras Hofer (2004). Sharma, in the foreword of this book, remarks that it is the first anthropological book on the caste system of Nepal. But it is also equally interesting to note that more than one third of this book deals with sexual relations between high and low caste groups and demonstrates that the higher the

woman's caste status, the more she is vulnerable in sexual matters, in the society.

Cameron's (1998) ethnography depicts gender and caste relations of Dalit women (so called untouchables) leading to domestic, economic and religious power in relation to their own men and high caste women of Bajhang district, far western Nepal.

There are some important contributions to Anthropology of Nepal in recent years. March (2002) provides ethnographic accounts of Tamang women from a feminist perspective. From her detailed qualitative interviews of selected five women and their songs, March draws on the worldviews and inner feelings of Tamang women from a cross-cultural and symbolic perspective. Liechty (2003) portrays the urban life and urban values in Kathmandu Valley. Drawing from both Marx and Weberian tradition, this study charts a path towards anthropology of middle class culture in Nepal. The author notes the cultural processes of consumption and the production of "youth culture" and argues that class, rather than caste, best accounts for the new socio-cultural patterns that have come to dominate the urban life in Kathmandu. Gray's *Domestic Mandala* (2006) is a rich ethnography of domestic architecture and activities among the high caste Hindus of Kathmandu Valley. Hardman's *Other World* (2000) is an ethnography of the notion of self and emotion among the Lhorung Rai of East Nepal. In her own words, the book is concerned with notions of self and person, which have some biological basis but are also constructed by peoples' cultural understandings, the concepts and premises and discourse of the group they identify with, such as the underlying assumptions of the nature and how they relate to the social world (Hardman 2000, 12). There are interesting accounts on Nepalis living inside and outside and Nepal, including the political and social transformation of Nepali people that has been taking place over the years (Ishii et al. 2007a , 2007b).

Theoretically, these ethnographic studies not only provide excellent materials in understanding the social structure of Nepali society but also

the caste system as a whole. Beyond ethnographic dimensions, many of these literatures suggest that purity and pollution are the basis for a hierarchical system in Nepali society and refers to statuses of people, objects and actions. This hierarchical structure explains dominance and inequality between different ethnic/caste groups and gender. Control of women is one of the major premises for social inequality in Nepali society even today. Most of these studies are well founded in the anthropological tradition of long fieldwork.

Population and resources

Anthropologists have shown considerable interest in demography and its relationship with the available resources in the country. Relationships have shown demographic trends (fertility, mortality and migration) and their effects on social structure (Macfarlane 1976; Fricke 1986; Levine 1989; Dahal 1983). Some anthropologists have shown their concern on fertility and population growth among the polyandrous populations (Goldstein 1974).

The Michigan School of anthro-demographic research in Nepal was initiated by Thomas E. Fricke, a student of John Hitchcock of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Fricke started the anthro-demographic research in Nepal as a graduate student from the University of Wisconsin and eventually began serious anthro-demographic research when he joined the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. The central research project led by Fricke and his associates in Nepal is the Tamang Family Research Project (TRFP), a combined ethnographic and survey data collection efforts, which seeks to explain transitions in fertility behavior through the impact of social transformation on life course transitions, family and wider kin relationship and the cultural shaping of individual strategies. Fricke and his associates have already published a couple of books and articles based on TRFP (Fricke et al. 1991; Dahal et al. 1993).

In terms of theoretical approaches, these studies not only depict aspects of adaptation in the mountain ecosystem vis-a-vis space and economy,

but also portray the life cycle of a community in relation to population and economic processes, as well as family formation. These studies conclude that there is a rapid rise of population within this fragile mountain ecosystem, which will have negative repercussions on people living in it.

Social structure, economy and change

A few anthropologists have also shown their interest in studying the trade patterns among the Sherpas, Thakalis, Byanshis, Mangabas and Bhotiyas (Furer-Hiamendorf 1975; Fisher 1985; Schrader 1988). These authors highlight how the issues of ethnicity, religion, subsistence and environment play key roles in the development of trade of these particular communities in the Nepal Himalaya. The general argument is that trading was taken up by many communities of Himalayan region in order to overcome the food deficits in the harsh mountain climate. But this is not only the truth, many of these groups became exemplary traders not because of the harsh mountain ecozones, which provide them with little food grains, but also because of historical contingencies, which helped them to monopolize the trans-Himalayan trade within their area. The contextualization of trade–related endeavors within the larger Nepalese and contiguous areas would necessarily draw attention to the sociopolitical maneuvering exemplified by the Thakali and the Byanshi, e.g., the instrumental shift made towards the Hindu values a clear case of socially induced economic maximization. On the other hand, some of these studies clearly note that ethnic /caste relations and identity issues in Nepal are well founded on economic principles rather the larger Hindu model of Nepali society (Levin 1987).

Conflict studies

In recent years, there are considerable number of studies by anthropologists on various aspects of armed conflict and its impacts in Nepal. A detailed review of conflict studies in Nepal is made by Dahal and Rai (2007). If Judith Pettigrew (2003) focuses on a rural village, 'Mauriguan,' highlighting armed conflict between the Maoists and Nepal army Shneiderman (2003, 45) deals with violent histories of the Piskar

killing of the poor peasants by the police to suppress the resistance to the local landlord. On the other hand, Fujikura's (2003) work highlights the role of the project of national development (particularly that of education) in the formation of new forms of collective imagination among the youths and their participation in the 'revolution'.

These studies clearly note how anthropologists are trained in collecting data even in armed conflict situation, a field approach very different from usually adopted by many social science researchers in Nepal.

But disputes and conflicts between brothers, neighbors and community as a whole are not a new phenomenon in Nepal. Caplan's work in East Nepal (Caplan 1970) is one of the best examples of how disputes and conflicts occur because of land ownership between two groups of people, the Brahmins and the Limbus of Eastern Nepal. His conclusions depict how high caste Hindus (Brahmins) exploit the indigenous groups (Limbus) economically and politically. Despite theoretical sophistication of Caplan's study, his findings should be used with caution as he selectively used his data (sample of the groups for the study was not chosen properly) to prove his hypothesis (Dahal 1996).

Growth of anthropology by Nepali anthropologists, 1990 onwards

How far Nepali anthropologists have traveled in professionalizing anthropology of Nepal? To answer this question, it is good to narrate a brief history of the setup of the Department of Anthropology at Tribhuvan University with a focus on teaching and research. For the first time, realizing the need of anthropology in teaching and research, Tribhuvan University (T.U) invited Professor Ernest Gellner of the London School of Economics in 1970 to submit a report on the need of anthropology/ sociology at T.U. Kirtipur, Nepal. It was his recommendation which led to the foundation of a research unit of sociology/anthropology at the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies (INAS), Tribhuvan University, on July 15, 1973. A British Professor, Alexander W. Macdonald, was appointed at INAS, whose further initiatives resulted in the appointment of three Nepali anthropologists at INAS T.U. In brief, anthropology of

Nepal by Nepali anthropologists began in the form research, conducting national seminars in anthropology and sociology and eventually publishing reports in the form of books and articles.

T.U. further initiated two activities simultaneously. (a) The Faculty Development Program of T.U. sent five Nepali students to India in 1978 for a Master's Degree in Anthropology and Sociology. Later, these scholars became the core teaching staff in the Central Department of Anthropology/Sociology at Kirtipur and (b) In 1978, the Dean of the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences requested the CNAS's anthropologists and sociologists such as Dor Bahadur Bista, Chaitanya Mishra, Navin Rai and Dilli Ram Dahal to design the syllabus of the then Department of Sociology/Anthropology. The culmination of these efforts set up a teaching Department of Sociology/Anthropologyat T.U. in 1981, with Dr. Chaitanya Mishra, a sociologist, as the first chairman of the department. This teaching department at Kirtipur was further bolstered by inviting distinguished professors of sociology, such as Kailash Nath Pyakuryal and Gopal Singh Nepali. In this way, a basic infrastructure for the development of anthropology and sociology in the form of teaching was created for the first time within Tribhuvan University.

In the field of teaching anthropology, the Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology (CDSA) T.U., Kirtipur, has the strongest core teaching staff, 31 faculty members in total in 2014 . Most of these staffs have their PhDs from the universities such as California (Berkeley), Harvard, Cornell, Hawaii, Michigan and Delhi. Currently 31 campuses/colleges within T.U teach anthropology/sociology at the mater's level. Today, the students of this Central Department are occupying key positions in many colleges/campuses of Nepal as the Head of Department in Anthropology/Sociology, such as Trichandra College, Patan Multiple College, Mahendra Morang Campus, Pokhara Campus and so on. A student can get a master's in Anthropology or Sociology only after completing nine compulsory papers including one paper as thesis. A student must go to the field to collect empirical data

to prepare his/her thesis under the proper guidance of a faculty member (Gurung 2012).

By now, the CDSA alone has already produced more than 1000 master's students in anthropology and sociology. By 2014, thirty-two students have already obtained a PhD Degree in Anthropology and Sociology from Tribhuvan University and other 29 students have already registered themselves as PhD students. In addition, Trichandra Campus and Patan Multiple Campus, which started teaching departments a little later, have already produced more than 1000 students with a master's degree in Anthropology and Sociology. In other words, hundreds of anthropology and sociology teachers are currently teaching in different campuses/colleges on a part-time basis, some on a regular contract, and most of them on a class-basis.

What kind of research Nepali anthropologists have done and what are their contributions in terms of theory and methods in anthropology? The state of sociology and anthropology of Nepal and the works by Nepali anthropologists and sociologists is already reviewed (Subedi and Uprety 2014). In this paper, I note that Nepali anthropologists are involved in contributing research papers and articles in two ways. First, they are contributing articles in seminars organized in Nepal and elsewhere; and secondly, individual researchers are conducting ethnographic and applied anthropological research and publishing articles, monographs and books.

The INAS, for the first time, conducted a national seminar on *"Social Sciences in Nepa*l "(Sharma, 1973) where two distinguished Nepali anthropologists presented their papers on the status quo of anthropology and sociology in Nepal. The other important national and international seminars which played significant roles to develop anthropology and sociology in Nepal where Nepali anthropologists presented their papers were: *Social Science in Nepal: Infrastructure and Development* (Upadhyaya et al. 1984), *Anthropology of Tibet and the Himalaya* (Ramble and Brauen 1993), *Anthropology of Nepal: Peoples, Problems*

and Processes (Allen 1994), *Anthropology and Sociology of Nepal: Cultures, Societies Ecology and Development* (Chhetri and Gurung 1999); *Social Sciences in Nepal (Khatry 1997); Social Sciences in a Multicultural World* (Pyakuryal et al. 2008) and *Readings in Anthropology and Sociology of Nepal* (Dahal, Uprety and Acharya 2012). All these seminar proceedings appeared in the form of books**.**

Since 1973, CNAS is publishing a bi-annual journal, *Contributions to Nepali Studies,* which publishes research on subjects like anthropology, sociology, history, political science, and demography of Nepal (41 volumes have already appeared). The Department of Sociology/Anthropology, T.U., Kirtipur, also started publishing its journal, *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology* since 1997 (12 volumes have already appeared). Since 2010, the Sociological/Anthropological Society of Nepal (SASON) has started publishing its annual journal, *SASON Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. All these journals encourage Nepali anthropologists and sociologists to publish their research work and scholarly papers. In addition, Patan Multiple Campus (*Contemporary Journal of Sociology and Anthropology,* since 2011),Trichandra Campus (*Samaj Journal of Sociology/Anthropology,* since 2010) and Baglung Campus (*Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology,* since 2005) have already started their annual journals, focusing on research articles by Nepali anthropologists and sociologists.

Some ethnographic studies on the Tharus (Rajaure 1981), Dhimal and Athpahariya Rai (Dahal 1979, 1985), Dhimal (Regmi 1991) and Sherpa (Kunwar 1989) began in the mid-1970s by Nepali anthropologists. Anthropologists like Dahal also started anthro-demographic research in Nepal and published a number of articles, including monographs (Dahal et al. 1993; Dahal et al. 1977). Recently Dahal (2015) has also published a book compiling his ten selected articles distributed across over 40 years of ethnographic inquiry in various regions of Nepal (and even the United States).

During this period, Professor Bista made a landmark entry among the Nepali and western academia when he published a very popular book, in the earlier stage of his career, *People of Nepal* (1967) He also produced a very provocative monograph, *Fatalism and Development* (1990), in the later stage of his life. Applying the Weberian model of development/underdevelopment, the root causes of underdevelopment in Nepal were traced through the fatalistic values perpetuated by the high caste Hindu Brahmins of Nepal. He developed the key sociological concepts like fatalism, *chakari, afnomanche* and *Bahunbad* in the popular social science discourse. In fact, his ideas of Bahunbad became so popular that virtually every scholar who was against the ruling elite used this term lavishly to defend the case of oppression and suppression of certain groups of people in the context of Nepal. To test his concept of 'culture of fatalism' he even went to Jumla to establish a new research center, Karnali Institute. Bista's conceptual scheme was not free of some reifications of its own issues hard to resolve on the theoretical level. In addition to these scholarly books, he has published a number of articles in national and international journals. Recently CNAS has already published "Anthropology of Nepal" compiling Dor Bahadur Bistas articles, which he published over a certain period of time (Bista 2015).

Today, Dor Bhadur Bista is known as the 'Father of Anthropology of Nepal' not only for his scholarly contributions but his role in the establishment of Department of Anthropology/Sociology at Tribhuvan University. He widened the scope of research areas in anthropology further while he was the Executive Director of Center for Nepal and Asian Studies and played a key role in the establishment of Sociological and Anthropological Society of Nepal.

Equally important theoretical work was Gopal Singh Nepali's on the Newars of Nepal (1966). A student of G.S. Ghure, he systematically collected and analyzed the data on Newars of Panga, applying the structural functional model.

Other popular research trend in the post-1990 periods has been to deal with the issue of caste/ethnicity in Nepal. Using the larger theoretical notions such as primordialism (essentialism) verses instrumentalism (or situationalism or modernism), the prime debate among social scientists, including Nepali anthropologists, is centered upon whether "identity of people" is given or constructed. Issues such as indigenous verses outsiders and the concept of nationalism versus ethnicity and resistance dominated the discourses (Gellner et al. 1997) and Kumar (1995, 2000). Cultural diversity, multiculturalism and social inclusion/exclusion have become other hot topics of research for Nepali anthropologists and sociologists (Dahal and Kumar 2009). Various ethnic/caste groups of Nepal cling to various local identities in the name of Adibasi/Janajati, Madhesi and Dalits.

In addition to teaching and research, the Society of Anthropologists and Sociologists (SASON) was established in Nepal in 1985 to maintain the continuity of anthropological and sociological tradition in Nepal. It became a major arena for discourse on topics that were central to the academic work of anthropologists and sociologists and a major force in the intellectual life of its members.

To summarize, many of these books and articles by Nepali anthropologists, though well placed on anthropological field tradition, are somewhat weak in developing a sound anthropological theory.

Conclusion

This paper shows that anthropology in the form of ethnography is not a new phenomenon in Nepal. Plenty of literature is available today in anthropology for further research and as source materials for teaching. In Nepali anthropology there is clear domination of Anglo-American tradition in terms of theory and methods. Though major substantive and theoretical advances had not been achieved from Nepali materials, it however led to a growing scholarly interest about Nepal and Nepali people, and their perspective provided an enduring platform for Nepali anthropology.

At the same time, there are several weaknesses or limitations in anthropological research and writings by western anthropologists. Firstly, their studies primarily targeted either the Himalayan or mid-hill groups of Nepal, neglecting research on the people of the Tarai. Secondly, anthropologists were more interested with their colonial impression of so called "tribes" rather than focusing on "caste" groups of Nepal. So, focus was given to those groups who have joined either the British or Indian army. Thirdly, many anthropologists have their own fixed set of agendas of doing anthropological research in Nepal, as they hurry to fulfill their own academic goals. "Human subjects" is overlooked in most of the cases of anthropological research in Nepal.

In the initial stage, though Nepali anthropologists also focused their mode of inquiry on ethnographic research they gradually widened the scope of anthropological research in various fields, such as population, resources, adaptation, change and development. The post-1990 research in anthropology by native anthropologists is also guided by the concept of caste/ethnicity, nationalism, development, change and ethnography of conflict and war, peace building and conflict transformation. This is particularly due to three specific reasons: (a) after the April 1990, Nepal became a democratic state, wherein the role of monarchy gradually faded and eventually became a secular state in 2006 (b) since February 1996, the Maoists in Nepal declared an armed struggle against the government for almost a decade, keeping the kingdom under siege; and (c) since 2006, the Maoists joined the peace and democratic process of the government and the concept of "New Nepal" with the goals of restructuring of the Nepali state has begun.

Anthropology by native scholars is also weak in theories and methods. It consists of more descriptions in their accounts, rather than theories of anthropology for synthesizing the data. Teaching departments of anthropology are yet to cover the core areas of anthropology.

Despite these limitations, a new generation of scholars, all born after 1950, is taking over the leadership of the main academic centers of Nepal,

within anthropology. Close apprenticeship by senior anthropologists brought a distinctive style and ethnographic knowledge to them. Today, anthropology has become a highly saleable discipline in the form of research undertaken by many NGOs/INGOs in Nepal. In other words, no research on any development program in Nepal is complete today without hiring an anthropologist or a sociologist.

Finally, Nepali anthropologists have already begun serious ethnographic research in the name of preparing "Ethnographic Atlas" of Nepal". This particular project was initiated by the Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Tribhuvan University in 2011, with the financial support from Norwegian Government. As many ethnographic studies are done by western anthropologists to fulfill their own academic objectives and goals, there exists a huge information gap on the large number of caste/ethnic groups; particularly the historical and distinct socio-cultural information are still missing. This particular project has already generated scientific and descriptive ethnographic profile of 42 highly marginalized groups of Nepal (CDSA, T.U. 2014), and this is gradually filling up the lacuna of ethnographic map of Nepal.

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Teaching Anthropology in Nepal: A Critique and a Proposal

Laya Prasad Uprety* *and* ***Binod Pokharel*****

Prelude

Anthropology, the holistic study of mankind, has turned to become a mature discipline in Nepal since the commencement of its formal teaching at M.A. level in 1981 with the establishment of Department of Sociology/Anthropology under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Tribhuvan University (TU). There was only one specialization course (Ecology and Subsistence; more broadly, a course of ecological anthropology crafted by Dr. Navin Rai) that would help the graduate students to claim M.A. degree in anthropology. So was the case for sociology graduate students, who had a claim on their M.A. degree in sociology by studying a specialization course (Population Studies, a course crafted by Prof. Chaitanya Mishra). With the production of the first batch of graduate students in 1984, the undergraduate course of anthropology commenced in 1985 once the course was drafted by Prof. Laya P. Uprety and Prof. Tulsi Ram Pandey under the departmental leadership and guidance of Prof. Kailash Nath Pyakuryal (but students had to study it together with the course contents of sociology discipline). Finally, the introductory contents of anthropology began to be taught together with rudimentary sociology at the intermediate level (10+2) level under the Higher Secondary Education Board of the Ministry of Education) from 1999. At all levels, there have been a lot of changes in the curricula over the time moving towards improvement of disciplinary

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teaching of anthropology. In 2012, the Central Department of Sociology/ Anthropology (CDSA) began M.Phil. program in anthropology with a view to producing better Ph.D. candidates. Indeed, Ph.D. program in anthropology has been in operation right after the establishment of department. As of November 2014, 17 candidates have earned Ph.D. in anthropology from TU (see note at the end of this paper). But this Ph.D. program has been besieged by a multiplicity of own perennial problems pertaining to the maintenance of quality of dissertations produced hitherto. The objective of this paper is to critique the institutional teaching of anthropology in Nepal and offer proposals to the issues identified through the review of the Ph.D., M.Phil., M.A., B.A., and intermediate programs in anthropology in Nepal (the latter two being offered together with sociology, as indicated above). Anthropology program courses beyond the Tribhuvan University and Higher Secondary Education Board have not been reviewed in this paper due to the fact that "mainstream anthropology in Nepal" is primarily the "anthropology taught at TU and practiced by its leading faculty."

Globally speaking, it is an established fact that anthropology has its own history, theories and specific methods and hence is an independent discipline. Indeed, it has four distinct subfields, namely, biological or physical anthropology (the study of human genetic and cultural evolution and diversity), archaeological anthropology (the study of past human material culture), linguistic anthropology (the study of human language, communication, and writing systems), and socio-cultural anthropology (the study of human social and cultural institutions). Regrettably, in a span of 33 years of institutional teaching of anthropology in Nepal at TU, we Nepalese anthropologists have failed to cover all four subfields.

Historically, the mainstream Nepalese anthropology is basically socio-cultural anthropology. Succinctly put in another way, both foreign and native anthropologists have historically made tremendous contributions to the evolution of socio-cultural anthropology of Nepal. This will be amply clear if one reviews the anthropological empirical works from the time of Prof. C. Furer-Haimendorf (a British anthropologist who came to Nepal for studies of Nepalese society and culture right after 1951

when Nepal was formally opened for the western scholars) and Prof. Dor B. Bista (who happened to be the first research assistant of Prof. Haimendorf). Together with Prof. Dor Bahadur Bista, all other Nepalese anthropologists, notably Prof. Dilli R. Dahal, Dr. Bed Prakash Uprety (the first Nepali to earn Ph.D. in anthropology), Dr. Navin Rai, Prof. Rishikeshav Raj Regmi, Dr. Drone P. Rajuria, Prof. Om Gurung, Prof. Ram B. Chettri, Mr. Bihari Krishna Shrestha, Dr. Khem B. Bista, Dr. Hikmat B. Bista, Mr. Shyam Prasad Adhikary, Mr. Khem Raj Nepal, Mr. Yogendra Nath Ojha, Prof. Padam Lal Devkota, Dr. Harihar Acharya, Prof. Laya Prasad Uprety, Dr. Lazima Onta, Dr. Binod Pokhrel, Dr. Rajendra Pradhan, Dr. Bishnu Rai, Dr. Dhruba Raj Gautam, Prof. Chinta Mani Pokhrel, Dr. Bhanu Timseena, Dr. Suresh Dhakal, Dr. Mukta S. Lama, Dr. Janak Rai, Dr. Shyamu Thapa Magar, Dr. Shambu Kattel, Mr. Dambar Chemjong, Dr. Udav Rai, Dr. Sita Olee (Sewakoti), Dr. Kumar Upadhaya, Dr. Kamal Sharma, Mr. Hari P. Bhattari, have contributed to the socio-cultural anthropology of Nepal (including in the domains of development/practicing anthropology). This trend is being followed by many promising doctoral candidates (notably, Mr. Bipin Acharya, Mr. Kapil Dahal, Mr. Jiban Mani Poudel, Mr. Man B. Khattri, Mr. Madhu Giri, Mr. Pradeep Acharya, Mr. Ram Hari Dhakal, Mr. Sarad Chandra Simkhada) and other young anthropologists who have already completed M.Phil. degree in anthropology (notably Mrs. Anita Kasuju Shrestha, Mr. Hom Yamphu, Mr. Man B. Shau, Mr. Vishnu P. Acharya, Mr. Mahesh Raj Maharjan). Other young anthropologists who are involved in teaching anthropology and are in the process of earning M.Phil. degree in anthropology have also been contributing to the sociocultural anthropology (included are Mr. Navin Rawal, Mr. Anup Rai, Mr. Lagan Rai). Given the fact that empirical work on Nepalese anthropology is primarily within the gamut of sociocultural anthropology, teaching anthropology at TU is also naturally the same, which seems like the case of *déjà vu.*

Against the above backdrop and saga of anthropological development in Nepal, we Nepalese anthropologists, albeit mired in angst, must admit that we have, heretofore, utterly failed to cover other three subfields in anthropology: biological, linguistic, and archaeological. Succinctly

put in other words, they have not even been treated tangentially. Indubitably, much remains to be done in this regard in the days to come because this has been a *faux pas* from the part of leading mainstream anthropologists.

From the beginning of institutional teaching of anthropology in 1981 by combining with sociology to the initiation of semester system at M.A. level in 2014 with full-fledged separate courses in anthropology, only introductory aspects of biological anthropology (biological evolution) and archaeological anthropology (material cultural evolution) were taught in nutshell by combining these two subfields. But now, we have completely scrapped these aspects from our ongoing M.A. semester course in anthropology. Indeed, separate courses are to be crafted for teaching graduate students. Despite the fact that the CDA has the in-house capacity to craft a course on linguistic anthropology (because five faculty teaching at M.Phil. and M.A. programs have had their background in it from reputed US universities), it has not institutionally materialized yet—a function of unwillingness (so to say!) to contribute to the subfield. (However, gossip continues boisterously during the formal/informal meetings regarding it and fizzles out immediately after the meeting, and for the interested faculty with no academic background in the past, crafting a new course in this new subfield becomes a herculean task owing to the lack of access to the required teaching materials.) However, of late, a modicum of effort is being made by Prof. Laya P. Uprety to craft a course on linguistic anthropology as a required course for third semester of the first batch of semester program at CDA. The failure to incorporate the biological and archeological anthropology is attributable to the lack of adequate trained human resources, institutional non-initiative to introduce them, and the non-existence of infrastructure needed (e.g., laboratory) which requires a substantial investment (which is again a far-fetched dream at TU, which has an endemic problem even of making the salary of teaching and administrative staff available on time, let alone the initiative of financing the needed institutional infrastructure for these two sub-fields of anthropology).

Overall framework of the paper

Succinctly put, this paper is premised on three major questions of teaching of anthropology in Nepal: (i) What was the status of teaching in the past? (ii) What is the current status of teaching? and (iii) How to take it forward in the days to come? Closely associated with these three questions, issues related to teachers' and students' culture of learning and academic ethics would also be addressed to a lesser extent.

Ph.D. program in anthropology

Until the beginning of 2012, M.A. degree holders in anthropology with minimum second division score (i.e., 50 % or more) could be eligible candidates for Ph.D. in anthropology. Although TU system did not have a separate teaching program for Ph.D. degree in anthropology, the overall focus was on earning Ph.D. through meeting the set requirements through writing (a more British mode of granting Ph.D. degree). But the Ph.D. program devoid of M.Phil. program was found to be besieged by a myriad of academic problems. Therefore, given the fact CDSA introduced M.Phil. in anthropology in 2012 to produce better Ph.D. scholars, a review of existing Ph.D. program in anthropology is a precondition for rationalizing the existence of current M.Phil. program.

Review of doctoral dissertations in anthropology submitted to Dean's Office of TU and the administrative procedures adopted by it has revealed a number of issues to be considered. The issues pertaining to dissertation quality comprise of (i) relative weakness in problematization, specification of appropriate theoretical stance/perspective, and development of own conceptual framework of the proposed research; (ii) review understood and practiced as ritual only (hence, lack of comprehensiveness, contextuality, and criticalness of the literature surveyed and reviewed); (iii) relative weakness in specifying the appropriate methodology (vis-à-vis ethnographic sampling design, specific instruments needed for particular areas of information, method of quantitative and qualitative analysis, and even limitations (theoretical, methodological and empirical); (iv) relative lack of seriousness in ethnographic fieldwork and resultant shallowness/thinness in the amount and quality of data (triggered by short ritual fieldwork with less conceptualization of the

indicators of research variables identified and preparation of relatively poor methodological checklists); (v) relative lack of reflexivity in the fieldwork process; (vi) overwhelming descriptive presentation of data at the cost of analytical perspective; (vii) high degree of failure in developing the "conclusions" based on the major findings of the study (summary statements are treated as conclusions in most cases); (viii) rare linkage between the theory and data; (x) relative weakness in preparing the bibliographic listing by following a particular standard format (even by senior teachers at the university with 30 or more years of M.A. thesis guidance).

Reasons behind the relative poorness in the academic quality include: (i) the attitude of the candidates toward learning/enhancing quality in research performance (besides some genuine Ph.D. scholars who are committed to maintain the needed quality and develop potential to contribute substantially for the disciplinary growth, there is no dearth of those who want to earn degree by any foul means—the *tike/khate* Ph.D. aspirants, in the language of Prof. Bal Kumar KC, who are academically worthless but do not hesitate to brag about their Ph.D. degrees and to use them for their promotion and political appointments); (ii) defective institutional process of prequalification by Dean's Office until the commencement of M.Phil. (barring an exception to few cases, most articles submitted for prequalification are academically sub-standard and are published in low-quality magazines, and a candidate disqualified by one evaluator is again sent to another evaluator for rescue—to the best of our knowledge, no candidate in anthropology is reported to be barred from being a Ph.D. scholar in the last 33 years—a major source of Pandora's box); (iii) Dean's Office research methodology seminar is merely a ritual (organized for Ph.D. candidates without M.Phil. degrees); (iii) proposal defense, presentation of a paper in a seminar, and submission of review of literature (60 pages) at the department also generally understood and practiced as ritual events (even though substantive comments are furnished by the commentators, there is no institutional mechanism of ensuring whether these are incorporated in the subsequent revisions. but generally recommendatory letters are issued by the Head of Department (HoD) upon candidate's request (when the

supervisor is not even fixed by the Dean's Office during the proposal defense period); (iv) academic leniency towards the candidate due to patron-client relationship between the Ph.D. committee (comprising of supervisor and expert) and the candidate (defending thesis by the supervisors themselves on behalf of the candidates, humiliating the internal/external evaluators and the galaxy of experts on the day of viva voce through the use of vituperative language, signing the dissertations by the committee members without ensuring the quality of dissertations (there are secret anecdotal evidences that members have signed the dissertations even without reading once); (v) surreptitious organizing of viva voce of the poor-quality dissertations by the Dean's Office in the past with the grand design of the research committee of Dean's Office without informing the internal evaluators (because of their trenchant critique and the consequent need of major revision); (vi) pretext by the candidates for the excuses of non-performance (tendency to show personal problems to the committee to trigger apathy with a view to submitting the dissertations as per their personal calendar regardless of the quality); and many more.

Equally important is the institutional issue vis-à-vis the Ph.D. program (i.e., who should lead the Ph.D. program—Dean's Office or Department? Until now, Department has been the *de facto* institution for facilitating the whole Ph.D. program through the provisioning of qualified human resource, but this role is not recognized by Dean's Office, which claims that Ph.D. program is its program even though it is the administrative means which controls all the financial resources contributed by the Ph.D candidates). Time has come to reflect upon on the comparative advantages of the Ph.D. program to be run by the department through timely administrative decisions.

M.Phil program in anthropology

The start of M. Phil. program of 18 months' duration from 2012 has been a milestone in the teaching of anthropology in Nepal. Despite the fact that the courses were hastily crafted (after dilly-dallying for almost two years of initial proposal to develop the curricula for M. Phil. due to institutional shilly-shallying) to meet the deadline to procure the grant

support from the Higher Education Project funded by World Bank, they were unanimously approved by the subject and standing committees of anthropology/sociology disciplines after the designers of the courses presented for elaborate discussion. It was also agreed that they would be modified in due course of time. An effort has been scrupulously made to examine a slew of issues apropos of M. Phil. program. Major issues identified include the following:

Conventionality in the evaluation system on the whole

M. Phil. in anthropology, like in other disciplines such as Nepali, English, Population Studies, Economics and Sociology, has been dictated by Dean's Office of the Humanities and Social Sciences on the pretext of the decision of Faculty Board endorsed by the Academic Council. That is, there has been the institutional decision authorizing the Dean's Office to evaluate M.Phil. students with 60 percent of marks in each paper through written exams followed by 40 percent for internal departmental evaluation. Axiomatic is the fact that the higher weightage accorded to written exams controlled by Dean's Office has been resulting in less focus on the creative write-ups by the students under the supervision of professors. The greatest problem of our conventional teaching system is the emphasis on written exams to produce the pundits of anthropology skilled in *sugaratai* (learning by rote) which directly deprives students of the analytical, critical, and creative writing skills needed for them in their subsequent academic and professional life. Conversely, more emphasis has to be laid on creative write-ups instead of "learning by rote" used for written exams under the supervision of professors to improve the writing skills. Realistically speaking, the M.Phil. program in anthropology has to exclusively focus on creative/analytical write-ups, which will eventually help students in the subsequent writing of their doctoral dissertations. Even if there is the need of giving the written exams at the end of semester, the allocation of percentage of marks has to be a nominal. Alternatively, they can be given comprehensive exams in each paper at the end of second semester (when courses are over) in which students must be required just to pass them so that they are

qualified for beginning their doctoral theses (and such exams must not be graded). However, this may seem a farfetched dream because the university officials (who have been appointed as apparatchiks of major political parties) may not find it a worthwhile and welcome move (which may eventually erode their institutional control mechanism).

Ambivalence in the recognition of M.Phil. program by the current TU administration

On the one hand, the Dean's Office of the Humanities and Social Sciences claims the institutional ownership of the ongoing M.Phil. program as being implemented under its jurisdiction and controls it administratively (albeit the department has been *de facto* implementer of it). Granted this institutional position, it should have been more effortful in its institutional strengthening. On the contrary, of late, there has been the public announcement by the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences—at the orientation program organized by the CDSA at Matatirtha of Kathmandu of the new M.A. semester courses of sociology and anthropology—of initiation of "crash course" (in the offing), as the alternative of M.Phil. program, for qualifying aspirants of Ph.D. without the M.Phil courses. Despite the fact that there are many limitations of the current M.Phil. program in anthropology, it has been producing a number of young well-trained anthropologists equipped with sound theoretical and methodological knowledge and capacity of rigorous empirical analysis. When these students move to Ph.D. in anthropology, many of the malaises of current Ph.D. scholars without M.Phil. courses would be overcome. Hence, commencing a "crash course" as an alternative will not strengthen the M.Phil. program because the former will weaken it (if ever implemented) anon, leading to its eventual demise (because there will be no difference in academic treatment between candidates with M.Phil. of 18 months' duration and candidates with "crash course" in unusually short span of time willing to pursue Ph.D.). The "crash course" might be influenced by the political overtones as a corollary of patron-client relationship among the university officials (the apparatchiks, the patrons) and university teachers aspiring to be the Ph.D. scholars without the rigor of M.Phil. (the clients who definitely

played a crucial role in supporting the officials to be appointed in the posts through the recommendations of sister organizations allocated along the lines of political parties). Regrettably, without knowing the nitty-gritty of the level of academic rigor performed by the professors even by losing many other lucrative professional opportunities, there has been the allegation that this M.Phil. program has been a *kamaikhane bhado* (a means to eke out the livelihood for the professors involved in the program). Instead of brushing off such utterly unfounded allegations by the concerned official, there has been the proclivity of denigrating the program and the professors involved. One reason of creating such a situation for producing such utterances from the concerned official might be the consequence of the "mud-slinging attitude and behavior" demonstrated by the second batch M.Phil. students regarding the authenticity of their first semester results (i.e., the claim by a group of students that the deserving students were not evaluated objectively and students using the foul means were positively evaluated), and its communication to the concerned official might have given the negative impression about the M.Phil. program. Institutionally, the authenticity of this allegation is difficult to be established.

Underrepresentation/imbalance of crafted courses

After two years of implementation, a cursory glance at the M.Phil. course on anthropology gives the impression that the courses crafted are underrepresented/imbalanced in some cases. For instance, An 601 (The Anthropological Theories 1: Culture, Symbol and Meanings) for first semester and An 621 (Anthropological Theories 11: Social Production and Organization—both crafted by Dr. Mukta S. Lama as required courses), albeit excellent in their designs, look diametrically underrepresented. The first semester course aims at giving the perspective on how identity and meaning are linked to the practical exigencies of social life. The overall focus has been on signs, language, thought, symbols, meanings, interpretations, logic of myth, ritual and religion, the gift and exchange, discourse and narrativity, rewriting culture, psychoanalysis, culture and ideology. Hence, the focus has been on symbolic/interpretative and post-modernistic theoretical perspectives. The second semester course focuses on linkage between culture and social production, institutions,

representations, and practices. The themes range from kinship, family and descent to capitalism, practice, post-colonial perspectives to practice theory and transnational theory. Emphasis has been laid on understanding the theoretical perspectives through reading the ethnographic texts. Structural-functionalism, practice theory, limited Marxist anthropological perspectives, transnational anthropological perspectives, etc., have been covered. But the course does not remain comprehensive because it does not furnish the balanced multiplicity of perspectives. For instance, there is the need to have the focus on cultural materialistic theory (i.e., Harris), cultural ecological perspective (i.e., Steward), other ecological approaches (i.e., Rappaport, Anderson & Bennett), ethnocognitive theory (i.e., Conklin & Frake and others), more on Marxist perspectives (i.e., Godelier's perspectives in Marxist anthropology), indigenism, etc. The proposal is to make a concerted institutional effort to provide balanced theoretical perspectives so that students would have a myriad of theoretical options needed for their forthcoming empirical works. Given the fact that a separate course of kinship studies with two parts for M.A. semester students has been crafted by Prof. Laya Prasad Uprety (who are the potential source for M.Phil. and Ph.D. in anthropology), the introductory contents on kinship/descent has to be scraped in the revised course from the second semester theory course; instead, other advanced theoretical contents of kinship/descent can be added.

Another course that seems underrepresented is an optional course of first semester, An 604 (Anthropology and Development) crafted by Dr. Binod Pokhrel. The course was crafted by focusing on development with anthropological/sociological perspectives. The focus has been on understanding development, its perspectives, theory and critique on participation, and contemporary development debates both in Nepal and the region. Although the course touches "the anthropology of development" in unit one (and a few good readings pertaining it are also prescribed), it is largely a course of "development anthropology" and hence is lopsided in its design. Therefore, additional efforts must be made to add the contents of "Anthropology of Development" to make it more balanced.

Similarly, another optional course, An 623 (Anthropology of Globalization), was crafted by Prof. Laya Prasad Uprety, with focus on critical overview of historical and contemporary processes of economic and cultural globalization and globalization of rural development with anthropological perspectives. Together with the review of global anthropology (through the review of historically oriented political economy works), critical assessment of published anthropological works on the contemporary globalizing process in Nepal has also been underscored. However, the course can be critiqued for adopting less theoretical perspective documents on globalization (an outcome triggered by the unavailability of sources easily accessible for which there can be no excuse). Barring an exception to one ethnographic case (i.e., sedentarization process of a hunting-gathering people from Thailand), all other course contents under unit 2 "Globalizing Rural Development" must be scraped because they are non-anthropological and other anthropological literature on globalization needs to be added.

Heaviness of courses

The optional course An 605 (Society, Culture, and Environment), crafted by Prof. Laya Prasad Uprety, is a bricolage of common property regimes and is very ambitious and cumbersome for the M.Phil. students characterized by *tabula rasa*. The focus has been to help the students understand major perspectives on society, culture, and environment through the review of global and Nepalese common property literature. Viewed meticulously, the three major units—namely, perspectives on society, culture, and environment and governing the commons (including indigenous knowledge for resource management and conservation of natural resources); critical reviews of the literature on the common property resources from Nepal; and cultural and human dimensions of global environmental change—are overloaded with numerous contents and inundated with heavy reading lists. Indeed, each unit can have one complete course for M.Phil. At this juncture, it is proposed that the course has to be halved by slashing down from unit one (i.e., perspective) and unit two (i.e., common property literature from Nepal) and the unit three (i.e., climate change) be scraped. Upon the completion of Ph.D. of Mr.

Jeevan Poudel, a separate course can be crafted on "Anthropology of Climate Change."

Less practicum-oriented focus on research methods in anthropology

An 602 "Research Methods in Anthropology," designed by Prof. Laya Prasad Uprety for first semester as a required course and implemented in the same semester, has the objective to rectify many of the methodological weaknesses discerned in the proposals, literature reviews, analyses and presentations of Ph.D. candidates without the M.Phil. courses. However, since the second batch, the course is being offered in the second semester with modification by Dr. Janak Rai (but the modification remains to be meticulously structured). The focus of the original course has been on: (i) theoretical perspectives, strategies of inquiry, sampling design, methods and analysis (given the fact that almost all Ph.D. write-ups used to show little or no understanding on the theoretical dimensions); (ii) interactive discussion on ethnographic research design (given the fact there was a rare culture of reviewing other doctoral dissertations for learning); (iii) interactive discussion on developing an academic research proposal for M.Phil.; (iv) interactive discussion on making research anthropological; (iv) interactive discussion on writing as a method of inquiry; and (v) practical session of writing research proposal and public defense. The course, albeit very cumbersome in the contents and reading list, is geared towards doing a good critical review and developing a good research proposal but lacks emphasis on anthropological fieldwork (a practicum in the real setting including field note-taking), actual analysis and interpretation of ethnographic data, and reflexivity, which are included in the provisional outline prepared by Dr. Rai. Therefore, a timely revision of this course is recommended for helping students to learn methods through ethnographic texts and practicum by combining the good aspects of the original course and the provisional outline.

Need to develop the courses by Nepalizing

Whatever the courses are crafted, additional efforts are to be made for the Nepalization of them (to the extent possible, which again is contingent on the availability of anthropological works). For instance, An 627

optional course (Human Rights, Multiculturalism, and Democracy), crafted by Dr. Suresh Dhakal and Mr. Dambar Chemjong for second semester, focuses on anthropological perspectives/lens on the discourse on democracy and human rights including multiculturalism. However, the course needs restructuring to make it Nepal-focused (to the extent possible by adding one or two units) so that it can have relevance to Nepal. Dr. Dhakal's doctoral thesis itself can serve as a case of the anthropological analysis of democracy in Nepal.

Similarly, An 606 optional course (Political Organization and Processes), crafted by Dr. Shambu Kattel (which was revised a couple of times in two year's time), aims at imparting specialized knowledge on forms and types of political organizations and processes existing in different socio-cultural settings based on theories and perspectives of political anthropology. This course, like An 627, also needs revision by making it Nepal-focused by adding one or two separate units (albeit a couple of literature are found to be included in the present draft). It would also be possible to look for and add some more contents on theoretical perspectives of political anthropology.

Need to upgrade the conceptual courses

Courses that are conceptually emphasized (and hence rudimentary in nature) must be upgraded by adding relevant theoretical stance backed by empirically-embedded ethnographies (to the extent they are available). For instance, An 622 (Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Indigenism), crafted by Mr. Dambar Chemjong for second semester as an optional course, has focused more on conceptual overview of ethnicity, nationalism, and indigenism and critical reviews of contemporary social political process in Nepal and elsewhere (through the lens of ethnicity, nationalism, indigenism). Ethnographies from Nepal are interesting but it is even better if only empirically-embedded ethnographies are prescribed (this has been suggested because there is the handwritten addition of a nonempirical work at the end of course made available by the market). There is the need to specify all readings prescribed clearly in all units (without saying the relevant/selected chapters). Definitely, rigor is a

must in crafting all the courses to be maintained by all anthropologists working at the university.

Limited diversity of courses due to the crafting of fewer number of optional courses by the professors

Now given the reasonable size of the faculty strength in anthropology at the CDA, the number of optional courses offered is very limited. The institution has failed to craft courses even if a number of headings of the courses were passed prior to the initiation of M.Phil. program. These comprise of: (i) economic anthropology (for first semester), (ii) Himalayan cultures and societies, and (iii) South Asian ethnographies. Indeed, besides taking immediate steps to craft these courses, institutional efforts are also to be made to craft additional required and optional courses. These could be: (i) kinship and family studies; (ii) linguistic anthropology; (iii) archeology and anthropology; (iv) anthropology of climate change; (v) ecological anthropology; (vi) anthropology of food; (vii) anthropology and identity issue; (viii) history of anthropology/ history and anthropology; (x) practicing anthropology; (xi) urban anthropology; (xii) medical anthropology; (xiii) anthropology of migration and cultural change, etc. Once courses are crafted, they can be offered depending upon the availability of faculty.

Another course, An 624 for second semester (Cultural Diversity and Contemporary Issues), crafted by Dr. Mukta S. Lama, albeit generally comprehensive, also looks repetitive regarding some contents of another course entitled "Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Indigenism," which need to be scrapped and other aspects of diversity and contemporary issues can be added. An 603 (Transformation of Caste) is an excellent course for first semester, crafted by Dr. Lama, but apparently has less focus on transformation per se as the title stands for.

Relatively less learning attitude of M.Phil. students through rigorous academic exercises

Although it cannot be generalized without real empirical study, the authors of this paper, based on their frequent interactions with first and second batch M.Phil. students, have gathered the impression that they

have relatively less learning attitude through rigorous academic exercises, which is amply corroborated by the absenteeism (of some students), irregularity in the submission of précis and papers characterized by lack of seriousness among generality of students on creative analytical papers/write-ups, and raising of the issue of evaluation marks with the faculty right after the publication of the results in each semester (e.g., the mudslinging attitude and behavior of second batch students regarding the claim of the use of fair and foul means for securing the higher marks and even the boisterous hue and cry by the first batch students on the issue of less marks when 5 out of 21 students were given A while none got A in M.Phil. Sociology from a group of 23 students). The interaction has also shown that there is a general demand of fewer readings (be prescribed) in most of the courses and liberal evaluation for giving higher grades. Institutional concerted effort needs to be made to change this current attitude through the inculcation of ideas for rigorous academic exercises for personal academic and professional as well as disciplinary promotion. Departmental orientations and frequent interactive sessions between professors and students on the need to change the prevailing attitude would be instrumental.

Unnecessary administrative red-tapism of Dean's Office and lack of promptness in the examination of copies by the concerned professors resulting into the delayed publication of results.

Virtually, the M.Phil. program is institutionally controlled by Dean's Office because it claims that it is its program. Given the fact that department is *de facto* implementer as indicated earlier on, it must be authorized to make all the final institutional decisions regarding the criteria of student enrollment, curriculum finalization, examination, and administration, and Dean's Office must be informed of these activities. At the moment, bureaucratic approval has to be taken for every initiative that the department intends to take. There is a lot of red-tapism, and therefore even a minor decision is not made on time. For instance, the subject committee made a decision to give enrollment to non-anthropology graduate students in the M.Phil. program, but this has yet to materialize when students are half way through the semester (reportedly, there was verbal approval to go ahead, but there is no guarantee that this

may be upheld in the faculty board meeting). The role of higher level administration is more a hindering one than a facilitating one due to the conventional bureaucratic red-tapist culture ubiquitous at the university. Additionally, the results are not being published on time. There has been the allegation that some of us teaching at the M.Phil. level keep the exam copies for months (even 10 copies) on the pretext of our professional business, which results in the delayed publication of semester results. Dean's Office also keeps the exam copies for a period ranging from two weeks to one month instead of allowing the department to keep them on the very day of examination. This also triggers the delay in the publication of results. Progressive work is needed to remove all bureaucratic hassles or types of red-tapism for the disciplinary promotion.

Faculty strength, teaching method, and curriculum of M.Phil. program in South Asian context: An evaluation

By and large, the teaching faculty in M.Phil. in anthropology is highly qualified with adequate academic and professional research experiences in socio-cultural anthropology in Nepal. They have had a number of publications to their credit. As indicated earlier, five of the faculty involved in teaching have earned Ph.D.s from reputed universities of the US. One with M.Phil. from Norway is also pursuing Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from a reputed US university. Other five teaching faculty have been indigenously trained (who earned their Ph.D.s from TU under the guidance/supervision of founder faculty).

The teaching method adopted is generally participatory. In other words, the curriculum has been crafted to implement in a seminar mode. Students are made the reading materials available one week advance and are required to attend the class by reading them and preparing précis (3-4 pages at the most). Unlike the conventional teaching (i.e., lecture method), professors play the new roles in facilitating the seminars. Although it is generally difficult for professors to strictly maintain the reading culture among students at the onset of first semester (a function of the lecture method and culture of learning by rote in the past), experience has shown that they get used to it in a couple of months (due

to the fact that there is no alternative). Definitely, committed students have learned a lot during the period of two semesters.

There is no uniformity among the faculty in *the modus operandi* of semester system of M.Phil. program (in terms of teaching practice, reading assignments, précis requirements, term perm assignments, and class test administration). This sometimes creates problems to those professors who want to maintain the reading and writing culture in totality and give class tests compulsorily. For instance, some professors do not care the actual attendance of students, for which certain mark is allocated (as agreed in principle verbally) and others strictly take attendance as a serious criterion for allocating certain marks. Some professors want précis of all assigned reading materials but others want the précis of certain sections only for their evaluation. Some professors want one term paper in a semester for their evaluation in a particular course and they do not administer the class tests for the internal evaluation. Others demand one mid-term paper, one final term-paper, and also administer the class tests. It has also been shared by M.Phil. students that some professors give home tests (a part of internal evaluation for 40 marks) after the final exams are over, and they are almost during the semester break (seems ludicrous!). The problem of M.Phil. program is that no institutional culture has hitherto started regarding the course and program evaluation at the conclusion of each semester. Therefore, efforts are to be made to institutionalize the process of internal evaluation and maintain uniformity by the coordinator and teaching faculty involved.

Despite the fact that M.Phil. program has a few problems encountered during the period of last two years, the program, if viewed objectively, seems relatively good in South Asian context. During the process of the crafting the curriculum, curricula of the M.Phil program of the department of anthropology and department of sociology under Delhi University were meticulously reviewed. Established is the fact that Delhi University is considered to have the strongest program of anthropology in South Asia. It was found that there was no specificity in the courses crafted at this institution. In each course, a couple of outlines were

crafted with a few books prescribed (4-5) and the name of the professor responsible for each course was specified. Compared to these courses, TU's M.Phil. courses look much better in specific contents and the subsequent prescription of reading materials (with specification of the pages of reading materials). During the process of writing this paper, we authors also visited the website of Cambridge University and reviewed the M.Phil. program in Modern South Asian Studies (implemented by its Centre of South Asian Studies) and compared TU's M.Phil. courses in anthropology with it, and it has been found that Nepal's program looks as good as that of Cambridge in terms of contents of courses and its specific reading materials.

M.A. program in anthropology

Together with sociology, a two-year master degree program started in 1981 with four papers in each year. As indicated at the outset of the paper, there was only one specialization paper for anthropology students (i.e., Ecology and Subsistence). According to Prof. Ram B. Chhetri (2010), the syllabus (1980-1981) was prepared tentatively and a number of changes were made together with teaching. The table below gives the glimpse of the first syllabus.

Table 1: Syllabus of Sociology/Anthropology from 1981 to 1989

First year	Second year
Theories in sociology and anthropology	Nepali culture and society
Human evolution and pre-historic culture	Sociological perspectives on contemporary Nepal
Social organization	Population studies (specialization course for sociology)
Methodology of social research	Ecology and subsistence (specialization course for anthropology)
	Dissertation writing

Positively speaking, syllabi of sociology and anthropology have been moving towards specialization. The faculty also began paying attention to the demand of the market in the process of designing the academic courses. These syllabi were updated in 1990 by adding "Development anthropology" and "Rural sociology" as specialization papers for anthropology and sociology, respectively. Then, anthropology major students began to have two specialization papers of anthropology (see table 2 below). Contents in foundation and theoretical approaches in anthropology were much better than the previous syllabus. The major issues of the first syllabus included: (i) there was very little anthropology in these courses (of theory, method, Nepali society and culture, and even in specialization course because half of this course was on conceptual domains borrowed from ecology) and (ii) overall emphasis was on conventional teaching and learning by rote, with no focus on creative and analytical write-ups.

Table 2: Syllabus of Sociology/Anthropology from 1990 to 1999

First year	**Second year**
Foundation of sociology and anthropology	Nepali culture and society (compulsory)
Human evolution and prehistoric culture	Population studies (sociology group)
Theoretical approaches in sociology and anthropology	Rural sociology (sociology group)
Methodology of social research	Ecology and subsistence (anthropology group)
	Development anthropology (anthropology group)

Thus, there were few optional paper courses developed both for the students of sociology and anthropology, and as a corollary of it, students had no choice to select the courses they wanted. Faculty of the department realized that such structure of syllabus could produce neither sociologists nor anthropologists. Hence, in 1999, M.A. syllabus of sociology and anthropology was thoroughly reviewed by considering the major lacunae. This happened in connection with adoption of the three- year bachelor degree by TU (1996) in place of its earlier practice of a two-year degree program. Separate courses of theories were designed which were compulsory for both sociology and anthropology groups. "Human evolution and prehistoric culture" was made compulsory only for anthropology group in second year. However, the methodology course was even poorer than the earlier one. The course largely focused on tools of participatory action research, which had little concern with sociology and anthropology. In this regard, Uprety (2008) says, "Research methods course has failed to focus on qualitative methods in anthropology. There is virtually nothing on the basic principles, paradigms, and perspectives of qualitative research or the discipline and practice of qualitative research, strategies of inquiry, methods of analyzing the qualitative empirical materials, the art and practice of interpretation, evaluation, and presentation, etc." Similarly, there was missing of qualitative data analysis in the research method course. One of the major changes of syllabus in 1999 was the adoption of a new paper course entitled "Analysis of society and culture in Nepal" for second year. Most of the readings of this course were theoretically embedded ethnographic monographs from Nepal produced by Nepali and foreign scholars. By and large, this course had helped to understand Nepali culture and society from anthropological perspectives. However, some elective courses such as "Project analysis and management" were weak in terms of subject matter as well as its disciplinary concern. A glimpse of new course designed in 1999 is presented in table 3 below.

Table 3: Syllabus of Sociology/Anthropology Crafted in 1999

First year (all compulsory for both sociology and anthropology)	**Second year**
Models of society	Analysis of society and culture in Nepal (compulsory for both group)
Models of culture	Human evolution and prehistoric culture (compulsory for anthropology)
Perspective in social and cultural change and development	Gender studies (optional for both sociology and anthropology)
Research methods in sociology and anthropology	Anthropology of natural resources management (optional for anthropology)
Analysis of social institutions and process	Anthropology in development process (optional for anthropology)
	Ecological & environmental anthropology (optional for anthropology)
	Project analysis and management (optional for both sociology and anthropology)
	Thesis writing

In 2009, syllabus for master's degree was again revised substantially. This course was designed considering splitting the department in the future. Shortcomings of the earlier courses were tried to be addressed. Methodology course was modified. A new course "Power and politics: Governing human collectives" was introduced as a compulsory subject both for sociology and anthropology groups in the first year (which was

neither political sociology nor political anthropology, and this paper was reportedly taught by political scientists in most campuses except in Kirtipur). Some paper courses were dropped out which were designed in 1999 due to lack of anthropological and sociological contents. Two papers, namely, "South Asian culture and society" and "Society, culture and health' were introduced in second year as optional papers both for sociology and anthropology groups. "Qualitative research" was introduced for anthropology group as an elective paper in second year. A few minor adjustments were made in 2013 as an addendum to the 2009 syllabus. Specialization paper courses started from first year. Now "Theoretical perspectives in sociology" would not be a compulsory paper for anthropology students. The paper on "Human evolution and prehistoric culture" was switched to first year for anthropology students and "Qualitative research methods" became compulsory paper in second year for the anthropology group (see table 4).

Table 4: Syllabus of Sociology/Anthropology Crafted in 2009

First year	**Second year**
Theoretical perspectives in sociology	Approaches to Nepali society and culture
Theoretical perspectives in anthropology	Human evolution and prehistoric culture
Power and politics: Governing human collectives	Anthropology of natural resources management
Analysis of social institutions and processes	Anthropology and development
Research methods in sociology and anthropology	Qualitative research methods
	South Asian society and culture
	Gender and feminist studies
	Culture, society and health
	Thesis writing

New Syllabus for Semester System, 2014

Full-fledged syllabus for first and second semesters of M.A. in anthropology major has been developed in 2014 for semester system in master's degree implemented at University Campus, Kirtipur. This comprises of 60 credit course for anthropology and sociology each. Now anthropological core courses are introduced. The present syllabus has incorporated the core areas of anthropology. For the first time, "Kinship study" has been included in the teaching of anthropology in Nepal. This new trend has completely broken the tradition of teaching the combined courses of sociology and anthropology at the master's level. This also provides the base for splitting the two departments in time to come. Courses for third and fourth semesters are being drafted and would be finalized soon (see the types of new courses in tables 5, 6 and 7 below).

Table 5: Syllabus of M.A. in Anthropology for Ist Semester

Paper	Code No.	Title of Course	Credit hrs	Remarks
1.	An 561	Introduction to anthropology	3	Required
2.	An 562	Anthropological theory-part i	3	
3.	An 563	Kinship studies-part i	3	
4.	An 564	Research methodology in anthropology-part i	3	
5.	An 565	Anthropology of Nepal and the Himalaya	3	

Table 6: Syllabus of M.A in Anthropology for 2nd Semester

Paper	Code No.	Title of Course	Credit hrs	Remarks
1.	An 571	Anthropological theory-part ii	3	Required
2.	An 572	Kinship studies- part ii	3	
3.	An 573	Caste, ethnicity & nationalism	3	
4.	An 574	Research methodology-part ii	3	
5.	An 575	Economic anthropology-part i	3	

Table 7: Syllabus of M.A in Anthropology for 3rd Semester

Paper	Code No.	Title of Course	Credit hrs	Remarks
1.	An 581	Linguistic anthropology	3	Required
2.	An 582	Economic anthropology-part ii	3	Required
3.	An 583	Anthropology of natural resources management-part i	3	
4.	An 584	Medical anthropology-part i	3	
5.	An 585	Ecological anthropology	3	
6.	An 586	Anthropology of development- part i	3	
7.	An 587	Anthropology of globalization	3	
8.	An 588	Anthropology of climate change	3	
9.	An 589a	Urban anthropology	3	
10.	An 589b	Political anthropology –part i	3	

Table 8: Syllabus of M.A in Anthropology for 4th Semester

Paper	Code No.	Title of Course	Credit hrs	Remarks
1.	An 591	Historical anthropology	3	Required
2.	An 592	Inclusion and equality	3	Required
3.	An 593	Thesis	6	Required
	AN 594	Anthropology of natural resources management-part ii		
4.	An 595	Medical anthropology-part ii	3	Optional Any one
5.	An 596	Anthropology of development- part ii	3	
6.	An 597	Food, culture and symbol	3	
7.	An 598	Development and displacement	3	
8.	An 599	Feminist anthropology	3	
9	An 600	Political anthropology – part ii	3	
10	An 601	Marxist anthropology	3	
11	An 602	Anthropology of religion and ritual	3	

On the whole, the newly crafted syllabus for master's degree has largely covered the specialization areas in sociocultural anthropology, but two other subfields of anthropology mentioned at the outset of the paper are still missing. In other words, some core courses such as archeology and physical anthropology are yet to be designed. There is a need of practicum course for research methodology in the fourth semester that will enhance the skills of students for doing field research in anthropology.

B.A. program in anthropology

Sociology and anthropology subjects were introduced in 1985 at bachelor's level in four campuses (namely, Tri-chandra, Patan, Prithvi Narayan, and Mahendra Morang). In the beginning, three papers (Introduction to Sociology/Anthropology, paper I; Nepali Culture and

Society, paper II; and Research Methodology, paper III) were introduced for two-year bachelor's program. In the first paper, some basic concepts, meanings, and scope of sociology and anthropology were incorporated. This course incorporated conventional theories (such as evolutionism, diffusionism, structural functionalism) and concepts which were common for both subjects in a single unit. Second and third papers were taught in second year. General overview of Nepali culture and society was taught under second paper, whereas basic concepts of research and methods of social research were the foci of third paper. A strange thing was that suggested readings were hardly compatible with the contents of the syllabus. In most of the cases, suggested readings were not available in the libraries and book stores. This curriculum was revised in 1996 along with three years B.A. program introduced by TU. New course incorporated six subjects including a functional paper. These were as follows:

1. Introduction to sociology and anthropology (SoAn 301)
2. Theoretical perspectives of cultural anthropology and sociology (SoAn 302)
3. Society and culture in Nepal (SoAn 303)
4. Perspectives on development (SoAn 304)
5. Research methods in sociology/anthropology (SoAn 305)
6. Development practices in Nepal (functional paper) (SoAn 306)

There were substantial changes in contents and structure of syllabus in its first revision. New paradigms, perspectives, and theories were incorporated in the revised syllabus. Unlike in the past, a full-fledged course of theory was designed at bachelor's level. However, core theories and concepts of anthropology could not be incorporated in the revision because of the existence of combined department. Some courses such as "Perspectives on development" and "Development practices" in Nepal were designed targeting the market demand rather than focusing on core issues of sociology and anthropology. These courses were not built being

based on anthropological knowledge, theory, and practice. "Development practices in Nepal" was an optional paper (which was also called functional paper) that was offered to the students having major subjects besides sociology and anthropology as well. Methodological course was oriented towards general social science research than anthropological research, where qualitative approach of data collection and analysis was almost nonexistent. One unit of the syllabus was offered for practicum, which could not materialize in all campuses due to various reasons (lack of resource and trained teachers, campus politics, etc).

New syllabus crafted in 2008

In 2008, existing syllabus was updated without replacing the older one. Few subunits were added in each paper. However, there is no substantial difference between new and old courses. Titles of the different courses are as follows:

1. Introduction to sociology and anthropology (code no. 311)
2. Theoretical perspectives in sociology and anthropology (code no. 312)
3. Society and culture (Code no. 313)
4. Perspectives on development (Code no. 314)
5. Research methods in sociology and anthropology (Code no. 315)
6. Development practices in Nepal (Code no. 316)

As mentioned above, there is no change in course titles and structures of the syllabus crafted in 2008, but contents were revised to some extent. Anthropological contents are largely represented in the courses, especially in introductory and theoretical courses. However, there is no fair representation of anthropological methods, tools, and techniques in methodology course. This course failed to incorporate the ethnographic approach and qualitative techniques and tools. Theoretical perspectives covered conventional theories of anthropology. Looking at anthropology/ sociology courses at bachelor's level, the course could not cover all

fundamental theories, subfields, and concepts from anthropology such as kinship, physical anthropology and archaeology, etc. It is now suggested to develop full-fledged courses at bachelor's level for anthropology group.

Pertinent issues of the two programs:

Traditional lecture method in both bachelor's and master's level programs

Bachelor program in sociology/anthropology is implemented in approximately 60 TU-affiliated colleges throughout the country. At the bachelor's level, original or prescribed texts of anthropology are hardly taught. Both teachers and students are largely dependent on textbooks and guides written in Nepali language. Traditional lecture method is the mode of teaching. There is no system of writing term papers and administering class tests. Interaction between teachers and students is rarely held in the classroom. Like the teachers of other social science disciplines, teachers of anthropology make notes at the beginning of their career and use the same notes throughout their tenures or until the courses are totally revised. If someone is energetic and devoted, he/she routinely updates his/her knowledge and shares with students. Students are also happier to get teachers' notes rather than reading the prescribed texts by themselves. Except in a few cases, students cannot score good marks in final examinations due to lack of rigorous academic exercises and irregularity in the class attendance. There is a rule of 70% attendance for being prequalified to appear in the final examination under the TU-affiliated colleges. However, it is not followed strictly due to various reasons (student union politics, reluctance of the campus administration, etc). Subject teachers as well as colleges are not held accountable for good and bad results of the students. Barring an exception, some private colleges have produced reasonably good quality of students—a function of the recruitment of few qualified teachers and enrollment of students with relatively good academic standing produced from the private English medium schools. But the number of such students is extremely small.

Hitherto, attending anthropology class at bachelor's level by students, like in other social science discipline, has been understood and practiced merely as a means to obtain formal degree. As a corollary, there has been the dearth of high quality students produced from bachelor's program. However, exceptions are always there.

On the whole, the annual M.A. program in anthropology throughout the TU is characterized by traditional lecture method as in B.A. program, which is largely non-participatory. Original texts are rarely read by teachers and students. However, a few faculty members at CDSA had initiated some level of participatory teaching in a few selected courses, which went pretty well. For M.A. program, there is a paper entitled "Approaches to Nepali culture and society" which is supposed to be taught in semi-seminar mode. The authors of this paper have both good and bad experiences in this paper. According to the course objective, students should present a review of the text focusing on methods applied in the particular ethnographic text. Texts are assigned one week in advance. Some of the students read and present the texts in their turns. However, some of them do not appear in the classes during their turns. This shows that we failed to make students accountable because there is no internal evaluation system in the annual examination system. There is no requirement of writing culture throughout the academic session except thesis writing (which has itself become problematic for the department; see below for details).

Student enrolment and number of students in M.A. program

Master degree program in sociology and anthropology has been implemented in 37 campuses of the country, where more than 5,000 students used to be enrolled annually until a couple of years ago. M.A. teaching in anthropology is relatively better in few campuses and central department where trained and experienced teachers are available. Although a large number of students are enrolled in M.A. at sociology/ anthropology departments, nearly 25 percent of them under the yearly system attend the regular classes (as per the conservative estimate). Of the total regular students, almost 25 percent students opt anthropology

as the major subject at CDSA. Occasionally, one or two foreign students also study anthropology, and this was more so in the past. The situation is more or less the same in all campuses where master's degree program in sociology and anthropology is running. A large majority of the students do not attend classes regularly and many of them do not know the names of their course teachers, including the name of the chair of department. In some cases, students never appear even at the time of admission and at the time of filling up the examination forms. All these jobs are done by their best fellows, close/distant relatives, acquaintances, and students leaders (because they think that this is the doable work for their constituency). For instance, until last year, more than 600 students used to be enrolled at CDSA annually. This number used to increase exponentially in the year of student union election. Of the total students enrolled, nearly 100 students used to attend the classes regularly, as indicated earlier. Generally, academic calendar does not work because one could observe students being enrolled until the time of filling up the forms with double amount of fees (once the TU's so-called date expires for doing so). After 2006, entrance examinations for master's degree in social sciences have been scraped due to pressure from particular student organization leading to opening the floodgate for mass enrollment, which has eventually contributed to further deterioration of quality of education. There is least understanding of the fact in the regime of student politics that higher education cannot be a mass education.

Like in other social science disciplines, examination of anthropology is conducted by the Examination Control Office of TU, where subject teachers have no more roles. Examination questions are set by a group of teachers and answer copies are examined by another group of teachers (who might or might not have taught the courses), which results in a problem of not assessing the performance of genuine students (this happens in the case when the examiners have never studied and taught the courses but are assigned to examine the copies). Despite such bleak situation, some graduate students of anthropology in the past had done

very well and gone to abroad with scholarships for doctoral programs and a few have earned their Ph.D.s from Nepal and now they have been contributing significantly to the promotion of anthropology discipline in Nepal.

Reading materials and medium of instruction

During the initial stage of the department establishment, reading materials were not easily available in the market. Few teachers used to have such books but they were reluctant to share with the students. Access to reading materials increased, to a lesser extent, when Norway's Bergen University's collaborative program was implemented at the CDSA. But after 1999, a sea change took place in the regime of reading materials. Original texts were prescribed which were available in book forms mainly brought by the teachers when they visited abroad for studying, attending seminars, or working as visiting fellows. In some of the courses, teachers themselves prepared the compendiums. Now there is no more problem of reading materials, at least in the case of CDSA and Kathmandu-based campuses since 2009, because compendiums were prepared for all subjects (which had all readings compiled in one place for both sociology and anthropology). Indeed, compendiums were prepared with the hard efforts of teaching faculty of sociology and anthropology. CDSA initially invested for the production of it. For maintaining the uniformity of anthropological/sociological teaching at all TU campuses for overcoming the relative scarcity of teaching materials, all campuses were requested to buy these compendiums for teaching purposes. Price of the compendiums was reasonably cheap (Rs. 25,000 for whole one set which covered all the outlined courses of sociology/anthropology). However, some of the campuses did not show interest in buying these compendiums showing the reasons of budget scarcity. This indicates that TU campuses would not like to invest for quality education. Online access to journals has also increased in recent time.

As reported from various campuses, only a few teachers followed the compendiums while teaching in the classes. Most of the teachers have

a tendency to teach in the classrooms being based on guides/textbooks written in Nepali language. There is a small number of students who consult compendiums even at CDSA. A bookseller near to CDSA reported that only seven/eight students buy compendiums and remaining others buy Nepali textbooks in one academic year. As mentioned above, a mass of the students is enrolled in the M.A. program but most of them never attend the classes. They have very weak English base and therefore they completely rely on guidebooks written in Nepali. Against this backdrop, textbook writing is flourishing as a lucrative enterprise. Reliable informal sources indicate that a popular textbook writer earns more than one million rupees in a year, which is three time higher than annual salary of a TU lecturer. However, such textbooks are not recommended by subject committee and Dean's Office of the Humanities and Social Sciences. These textbooks hardly represent the ideas and perspectives expressed by the original books. The declining quality of education in sociology and anthropology is the function of higher level of dependency of teachers and students on low-quality Nepali textbooks, irregularity of students, and lack of commitment of the teachers. Indeed, we authors are not against the culture of writing books but are critical of under-representation and distortion of the ideas of contributors from the original books. The university must have an institutional mechanism for controlling and ensuring the quality of such textbooks.

From the inception to 1990, the medium of instruction was English at the CDSA. From 1990s onwards, both English and Nepali have been adopted as the medium of instruction even at the CDSA. Reportedly, Nepali is exclusively a medium of instruction at all other constituent and affiliated campuses.

Teacher hiring and performance

The number of teachers is small in terms of program and number of students enrolled at different campuses of the country. At the CDSA, the number of teachers is in reasonable size. However, it is learnt that

master's degree program of anthropology is being run depending on part-time teachers at other campuses. TU Service Commission also advertizes less number of lecturer positions in both sociology and anthropology disciplines. Some of the good faculty have been teaching on a part-time basis for a long time, but retaining them without guaranteeing the appointment has been a herculean task. All this has the negative bearing on the quality education of anthropology. One of the greatest problems discerned ever since the resurgence of multiparty system in 1990 and establishment of republicanism in 2007 has been the appointment of part-time and contract teachers along the political party lines rather than based on their earlier academic performance (or merit). Even worst, the seats of such positions are divided along the party lines. All this unhealthy and non-competitive administrative practice has been the principal factor for making university an unattractive place for bright, promising and performing anthropologists. Furthermore, an excellent teacher would not live with the meager remuneration for a long time by teaching on a part-time basis. Uncertainty of being permanent in the future also discourages the deserving manpower to continue the teaching job.

By and large, there are trained teachers at the CDSA. They have done plenty of empirical research works and have a wider exposure to international academic and professional institutions. Of late, it is also producing good teachers (who are already teaching at campuses) through the M.Phil. program in anthropology. However, commitment is lacking among the most of "we teachers." Realistically, most of us are busier outside the university (research work). Though there is not a problem of trained faculty in anthropology, there is a problem in attitude. In some cases, teachers would not like to be involved in the whole process of teaching. For example, teachers' job is not only taking classes regularly. Besides that, they should check exam copies, mentor the research projects of the students (i.e., supervise theses), design and implement curricula, set question papers, and moderate exam copies and questions. Not only senior professors but even very young faculty

would not like to be involved in these activities, which may be due to their superiority complex or low remuneration. I have heard some of the faculty proudly saying, "Office of the Examination Control had sent me a bundle of copies in my absence, but I sent it back from my home by informing the concerned authorities about my business"—a pretext. If a senior professor or full-time faculty does not check exam copies, then Office of the Examination Control sends it to junior or part-time teachers, which may seriously affect the result of the students (primarily because of lack of experience, albeit they will have to be involved in due course of time through training/mentoring). It was often rumored in the past without naming anyone that the worst part of the examination was the existence of feudalism in the regime of examination, that is, the copies sent to senior professors for examination were reported to be surreptitiously given by them to their confidant junior teachers—which can be labeled as the system of "sharecropping" (often inscrutable, but it can be conjectured that there might be the understanding between them to share the remuneration paid to the senior ones upon submission of examined copies). Indeed, this is professionally unethical. Sometimes it seems that part-time faculty is more committed and dedicated than senior ones in terms of teaching and thesis supervision. There is no institutional culture for senior professors to train the new faculty in the regime of teaching and doing empirical research.

Semester system

It is too early to assess the recent introduction of semester system at the central department without completing one academic session. However, some positive signs are discernible from the first semester experience. Unlike in the yearly system, students are regular and come with their précis and get involved in class room discussions. They have written term papers too using the English language, albeit majority of them do not meet the graduate standard. Medium of instruction has been largely English, and only original texts are prescribed for reading. If we continue this practice, we can produce qualified students who can compete internationally.

However, some problems have been faced while implementing the semester system. There is no uniformity of classroom teaching/ discussion/seminar even within the subject if two or three teachers are involved in a course. Some teachers assign readings with compulsory précis for each seminar class, whereas some do not. Some teachers go to classroom with full preparation, but some do not, supposing that this is a seminar class and students should only come with preparation by reading the assigned materials and teachers' role is just listening/ facilitating. Some anthropology teachers still follow "the banking system of education" (Freire), that is, they are the real practitioners of lecture method as in annual system. Objective evaluation is lacking in some cases. Therefore, a standard guideline needs to be established regarding the internal evaluation system and method of teaching. Definitely, students can be taxonomized into three: (i) a few students with high level of linguistic competence get critically engaged in given texts who can nicely represent the authors and text contents; (ii) majority of students with moderate level of linguistic competence are found to be working hard to understand the texts; and (iii) a few students with low level of linguistic competence have serious problem to grapple with the original reading materials (albeit they are ostensibly committed).

Dissertation writing

As mentioned above, a large number of students are irregular in the class under the annual system. However, they come to the department seeking thesis supervisors when they complete their course work requirements. This has created a chaos while assigning the supervisors for them. After the department splits, there would not be a problem because anthropology has a reasonable size of the students who can be mentored/ supervised. But this has been a mirage due to the onset of utterly divided psychology among the faculty of sociology and anthropology. A large number of students, lack of learning attitude from the side of students, and non-existence of writing culture are the major problems for thesis supervision at the CDSA. Coping and pasting from the earlier thesis is rampant. We can see easily the notice of computer institutes with

mobile number in front of the CDSA about the rate of thesis. This type of practice discourages even the genuine students. All this has been a major corruption unchecked hitherto practically.

There is a problem in supervising the genuine students too. Owing to the non-existence of reading and writing culture, students generally do not have the idea of "problematization," "theoretical framework," "conceptual framework," "methodological specificity," 'analysis," "interpretation," and "writing conclusions." Even teachers have problems in these areas. There is a tendency to complete the thesis without doing hard work. All this has led to the taxonomization of students into two broad categories: (i) *chaite bidhayarthi* (tourist-like students who submit these during the extended period without working seriously or copying from earlier theses, and more than 90% of them do not know the names of chair of department and teachers), and (ii) *pakka bidhayarthi* (genuine students who generally attend classes regularly and are in regular contacts with the teachers).

But there is also a ray of hope because a few theses are excellent in quality. Definitely, regular and committed students have done well. But most of the theses, even in the case of regular students, are not good. Viva voce is just a ritual. Even if a student fails to say anything about his/her thesis, he/she would be passed. There is no uniformity in giving scores to the theses along the objective criteria. Objectively speaking, there is the preponderance of arbitrary evaluation. Sometimes, a poor quality of thesis is given good marks. Sometimes teachers take students' thesis evaluation marks as their prestige issues. Some of the teachers would like to escape from being thesis supervisors, whereas others forward the theses for viva voce without reading even once, let alone consider their quality.

One thing regarding dissertation corruption is worth sharing. When a student (regardless of his/her regularity or non-regularity in the class) is assigned a supervisor, and if the latter gives genuine comments/

suggestions for the improvement of proposal, the student never visits the assigned supervisor thereafter. After a couple of weeks or months, when the assigned supervisor encounters the student at the door of the department and asks the status of his/her thesis, the student, with a victorious mood and gesture, shares the laughter regarding the defense of his/her thesis (*a fait accompli)*, and indeed, such institutional mechanism really affronts the assigned supervisor. This is indeed rampant. There is no institutional mechanism for its check and correction.

Positive strengths of M.A. courses

M.A. anthropology course, as indicated above, is moving toward specialization. But if objectively viewed, the course has moved to better shape since 1999, which was further improved in 2009. More specifically, it contained all the contemporary theoretical currents, domains of recent trends of anthropology of natural resource management, medical anthropology, South Asian studies, development anthropology and anthropology of development, qualitative research methods in anthropology, etc. Courses of 1999 and 2009 have been appreciated by the scholars of European and American universities due to the richness of course contents and the diversity of prescribed recent reading materials. For instance, Prof. D. H. Holmberg and Prof. S. Kathryn view that our annual courses in M.A. anthropology (crafted in 1999 and 2009) are as good as the graduate courses of anthropology at the American universities. Of late, Prof. Om Gurung shared in an informal meeting of senior anthropologists of Nepal that the course of M.A. anthropology crafted for semester in 2014 (which he shared with western universities) is even more liked by both professors and students—a function of increased specialization in courses. He further remarked, "One graduate student of anthropology from Monash University of Australia saw our courses and liked them very much. He has come to Nepal and appeared in the entrance exam for M.A. in anthropology. He would study courses for a semester which would be credited there in Australia." Dr. Ram B. Chettri, a senior professor in anthropology, shared similar good news

about the strength of our M.A. courses in anthropology. He remarked, "European and American universities have liked our courses of study because we have succeeded in including core concepts of anthropology and past and contemporary theories comprehensively. More importantly, we have been able to design market-oriented courses."

Anthropology at +2 Level

The first course introduced at the intermediate level was in 1999. Two courses under the broader subject "Sociology" were introduced; namely, "Elementary sociology and anthropology" (of 100 marks for grade XI of 150 hours) and "Sociology" (of 100 marks for grade XII of 150 hours). The course of grade XI had the goal to introduce sociology/anthropology disciples by teaching students their basic concepts and languages. Self-evidently, the course contents were on the introduction to sociology/anthropology (20 periods); basic concepts in anthropology and sociology (30 periods); social processes (15 periods); social institutions (15 periods); social stratification (10 periods); social and cultural change (15 periods); key figures in history of sociology/anthropology and their selected contributions (included were A. Comte, M. Weber, E. B. Tylor, and B. Malinowski); and sociological/anthropological research (30 periods). The major issue of this course was that it was anthropologically unrepresentative because anthropology was included under the domain of sociology. Another issue was that not a single original text was prescribed in the reading list. Whatever included were merely the guide-like books of extremely low standard. Even completely plagiarized books were prescribed because the plagiarists might have had access to the corridors of power and they might have been asked to craft the courses after kowtowing the education bureaucrats for a number of times.

Sociology course for grade XII had the objective to provide the students with basic knowledge of the development of sociology and anthropology in Nepal. Simplistically, the course contents included development of anthropology/sociology (10 hrs); characteristics of Nepalese society

and culture; caste, class, and gender issues in Nepal; major religions in Nepal; major festivals of Nepal; and brief cultural studies (of selected caste/ethnic groups). The major issue of this course is that despite the anthropological leaning of the course, very few contents were specific (for instance, there were contents like gender in Nepal, history and culture of Nepalese society, historical development of sociology/anthropology in Nepal). Like in the first year, there was no prescription of a single original reading material.

The revised course in 2008 also included anthropology under the broader domain of sociology. The sociology course for grade XI had the general objectives to introduce the basic knowledge about the sociology/ anthropology and provide the basic knowledge about the various ethnic/ caste groups, society and culture of Nepal. The contents were on introduction to anthropology/sociology, basic concepts, social process, stratification, social institution, contributions of major sociologists/ anthropologists (H. Spencer, E.B.Tylor, E. Durkheim, B. Malinowski, and K. Marx), research methods in sociology/anthropology, etc. The basic issue of this course is that although a couple of sociologists are added in the course, the course was not better than the first course. The persons involved in the course crafting did not even have the knowledge on the meaning of survey and questionnaire technique because they have been treated differently assuming that they are different tools (indeed, a survey is a tool of collecting quantifiable data from a statistically determined sample through the administration of questionnaire). Interestingly, a few original books such as C. P. Kottak's *Anthropology*, A. Inkles' *What is Sociology*, G. S. Ghuriye's *Class, Caste, Occupation in India*, and P. V. Young's *Scientific Social Survey and Research* were included. Except Prof. D. B. Bista's one book, all the other books by Nepali authors are merely the guides.

Another revised sociology course entitled "Introduction to sociology and anthropology in Nepal" had the goal to help students familiarize

with the development of the disciplines of sociology/anthropology of Nepal and Nepali culture and society. Contents of the course were centered on development of sociology and anthropology in Nepal, people and economy of Nepal, social stratification in Nepal, social and cultural change in Nepal, major religions and festivals in Nepal and their sociological implications in Nepal, and brief ethnographies in Nepal (of 11 caste/ethnic groups). Definitely, the course has anthropological contents. The beauty of this course is that it has some specifications of content and hence looks better than the previous one. But sadly, persons involved in the crafting of the course have again failed to prescribe even one original textbook. But after crafting the courses, a team of experts led by Prof. Kailash Nath Pyakuryal (currently the vice-chancellor of Agriculture and Forestry University) prepared a teaching manual at the behest of Curriculum and Training Division of Higher Secondary Education Board. Although the team has attempted to be the samaritans at face value to clarify the units of courses for teachers and added a few original books in the reading lists, they are again hounded by the ghosts of substandard books in the prescription of reading materials.

A query: What is the policy of Higher Secondary Education Board on book prescription? Should the books of Nepali authors only be prescribed? If yes, why? Why not original books for concepts of sociology/anthropology and articles/books originally written by Nepali authors on Nepali society and culture?

Two overarching issues emerge from the review of course: (i) anthropology is not an independent discipline, and (ii) there is a politics of books (albeit books with sound sociological/anthropological knowledge must be welcomed, but intentional non-prescription of the original introductory books on sociology/anthropology leads to the nipping the buds of both disciplines in the absence of clear understanding with cross-cultural perspectives and examples).

Preliminary proposals

Proposals to be considered for Ph.D. program in anthropology

Proposals for improving the Ph.D. program include: (i) strengthening of existing M.Phil. program (albeit there has been the allegation by the administration that this program is only *kamiekhane bhado* (means of eking out the livelihood for the professors involved in it) by rectifying its existing weaknesses, with more focus on academic writing culture through the timely revision of courses—a review of six theses submitted by M.Phil. students shows that rigorous theoretical and methodological orientations with the concerted institutional effort of the department can potentially contribute to overcome many oft-repeated academic malaises listed above); and (ii) introducing/strengthening the institutional culture of giving seminars at different stages of dissertation writing in the presence of experts of department (including supervisors and experts without undermining their roles) and creating a mechanism within the department to ensure that the feedbacks/suggestions received during the seminars are maximally incorporated in the subsequent write-ups (in the case of Ph.D. candidates without M.Phil. degree at the moment and to be continued for new Ph.D. scholars with M.Phil. degree also).

Solutions to be considered for M.Phil. program

Solutions to be considered for M.Phil. program include: (i) institutional initiative for reversing the conventionality of evaluation system; (ii) more initiative for strengthening the M.Phil. program by rectifying its weaknesses instead of introducing the "crash course"; (iii) concerted effort within the department to make the crafted courses representative/balanced; (iv) reduction of the heavy size of some of the existing courses; (v) substantial improvement of research methodology course in anthropology with more focus on practicum-oriented contents; (vi) focus on the Nepalization of each course; (vii) upgrading the conceptual courses; (viii) crafting more optional diverse courses by encouraging each new Ph.D. holder in anthropology to craft a course in his/her area of specialization; (ix) concerted effort on orienting students on

learning/creative writing culture; (x) concerted effort for the autonomy of department in the implementation of program, etc. In addition, there has to be a minimum uniformity among the faculty leading the different courses regarding the *modus operandi* of M.Phil. program.

Proposals to be considered for M.A. and B.A. programs

Syllabi of anthropology and sociology have been frequently revised. If we overview the syllabi from the inception, the courses have been more specialized in anthropology. Thirty-three years' experience shows that combined course neither gives justice to anthropology nor to sociology. Most of the courses were and have been designed in negotiation. Separate courses offered in semester system of M.A. at the CDSA have created a conducive environment for making separate departments of sociology and anthropology. For a strong and independent department, there is a need of new course design at bachelor's level for anthropology because existing courses hardly fulfill the requirements for the enhancement of anthropological knowledge. Therefore, core subjects of anthropology need to be included from the undergraduate level. More specifically, like at the CDSA, there has to be concerted institutional effort at introducing and implementing seminar-mode classes at both M.A. and B.A. levels through the universalization of semester system with the support of TU (by discouraging the banking system of education), emphasizing on reading and writing culture, using original reading texts prescribed, making English as the medium of instruction, hiring new faculty based on meritocracy (a challenge due to political feudalism!), checking the corrupt practices of thesis writing culture through mandatory introduction of public defense of proposal and thesis (or making it optional provided the department fails to implement it), etc.

Proposal to be considered for +2 program

There has to be CDSA's total institutional support to Higher Secondary Education Board for developing anthropology as an independent discipline by making the expertise available, and abolishing the politics

of the use of substandard textbooks written in Nepali, including the plagiarized ones (be they in English).

Proposal to be considered for setting up and empowering the separate department of anthropology under TU system

Viewed longitudinally, the *zeitgeist* has now been appropriate for setting up a separate department of anthropology and empowering it—a function of the progressive specialization of discipline in the last three and half decades, availability of experienced manpower, and the cornucopia of the literature created by both foreign and native anthropologists in the field of sociocultural anthropology. The existence of combined cavernous department has made everyone working in it very jaded institutionally. Hence, concerted institutional effort has to be made scrupulously within a year from now to make anthropology a *de novo* discipline within the TU structure, filled with new enthusiasm among anthropologists. Owing to the unprecedented growth of teaching faculty and support staff at the CDSA over the years (which may be same outside also), the Kali Yuga has already entered in it. In other words, it has begun to experience the attributes of modern age due to the attainment of adulthood characterized by: (i) "dynamic density" in the language of E. Durkheim, which refers to the degree of the concentration of group—its members who start to remain separated by social distance within the organization as explained by Bohannan and Glazer in 1988; (ii) increasing unmanageability—a function of the vested interests of everyone for being ready to consume (eat!) *baklo dal* (meaning to say, the readiness to eat at the earliest the "thick pulse" cooked for a small family—the leeway to enjoy the resources as per the desire, which is difficult to enjoy in a stem family with many mouths to feed in a relatively resource-crunch situation), and (iii) onset of vices, that is, the bitter internecine feuds observed at CDSA in the relatively recent past, which seems to be dormant at the moment of drafting this paper. Definitely, the authors of this paper are also in favor of eating *baklo dal* as soon as possible because they uphold the belief that the ambience for eating *baklo dal* will enthuse everyone to

work assiduously for the further disciplinary specialization and career development of teaching faculty (this happens so primarily because managing *baklo dal* by new householders is generally a gargantuan task—a function of the skill and hard work required for the *bikas* of household, which is material plenty in the language of Prof. Tom E. Fricke, a noted American anthropologist). Provided the dream to set up the anthropology department has come true within the stipulated time, the first institutional leadership of it, in collaboration with the higher authorities of TU, has to make a concerted unfeigned effort to develop manpower on two major subfields, namely, physical anthropology and archeological anthropology, so that it can offer courses eventually. The new departmental leadership must initiate a new journal of Nepalese anthropology (such as Nepalese Anthropologist or Nepalese Anthropological Review, or any other name can be suggested). It must have a strong editorial board which must work very hard to maintain the quality of journal articles. Similarly, a new anthropological association (a sodality) must also be created under the tutelage of senior-most anthropologists (such as doyen professor Dilli R. Dahal), which will work for the real disciplinary promotion of anthropology in Nepal. It must also organize annual conference on the anthropology of Nepal and Himalayas in collaboration with the new department. It must also initiate a standard professional journal of Nepalese anthropology with the constitution of an editorial board. It must also conduct academic research in collaboration with new department in several areas—namely, kinship, family, marriage, language and culture, inclusion/exclusion/identity, tarai social structure, feminist anthropological domains, climate change, political institutions, food, culture and symbol, anthropology of development, anthropological perspective on displacement, domains of anthropology of natural resource management, medical pluralism, anthropological domains of education and globalization, and economic anthropological domains. Finally, we must now be ready to begin research on migration and cultural change and urban anthropology. Research is impossible without sufficient funding; therefore, the new department and

new society (in the offing) must work collaboratively for writing good quality proposals seeking funding from both national and international organizations. In so doing, collaborations with foreign universities can also be done to the extent possible. The research outcomes must be published in the journals of Nepalese anthropological society and the department, and edited volumes of standard books must be used as the reference materials for teaching anthropology at TU—a genuine effort for the indigenization of anthropology discipline. Young and promising anthropologists have to be recruited on competitive basis so that there will be ample manpower to run the department progressively once the elderly anthropologists get superannuated from it. Teaching must be based on the original reading materials at all educational levels. Last but not the least, we anthropologists must adhere to the age-old aphorism, that is, "united we stand, divided we fall."

(i) *Acknowledgements*: Authors of this paper are grateful to Prof. Dilli Ram Dahal, Prof. Om P. Gurung (currently the HoD of CDSA), Prof. Ram B. Chettri, Dr. Suresh Dhakal, Dr. Mukta S. Lama, Dr. Janak Rai, Dr. Bhanu Timseena, Dr. Udhav Rai, and Dr. Surendra Misha (a sociologist who was invited as guest by Dr. Pokhrel) for their constructive comments and suggestions during the informal discussion held at the residence of Dr. Binod Pokhrel near Nakhu prison in Lalitpur on the day of Goru Tihar (October 24, 2014).

(ii) *History of the genesis of this paper*: Earlier, even a smaller informal meeting for Dashain drink and carnival was held on September 27, 2014 at the residence of Prof. Dilli Ram Dahal where Dr. Mukta S. Lama shared one page concept note on holding annual conference of Nepal and Himalayas every year in December. As the outcome of discussion, it was agreed that five papers could be developed in five themes, namely, teaching anthropology in Nepal (by Prof Laya P. Uprety and Dr. Binod Pokhrel), history of anthropology

in Nepal (by Prof. Dilli Ram Dahal), issues pertaining to foundational anthropology (Dr. Janak Rai, Dr. Suresh Dhakal and Dr. Mukta S. Lama), institutionalization of anthropology in Nepal (by Prof. Om Gurung and Prof. Ram B. Chettri) and practicing anthropology (Dr. Bhanu Timseena and Dr. Udhav Rai). Present at the informal meeting of drink and carnival were Prof. Dilli Ram Dahal, Prof. Om Gurung, Prof. Laya Prasad Uprety, Dr. Binod Pokhrel, Dr. Suesh Dhakal, Dr. Mukta S. Lama, Dr. Bhanu Timseena, Dr. Udhav Rai, and Dr. Surendra Misha (a sociologist who was invited as guest by Prof. Dahal). It was also additionally agreed that these five full-fledged papers would be presented at the in-house national conference/seminar of Nepalese anthropologists in December 2014 (in view of the limited funds available at the CDSA from the Higher Secondary Project of TU financed by World Bank) which would serve the basis for developing a full-fledged proposal for seeking funds from national/international organizations for holding an international conference of the Nepalese anthropology in December, 2015. But all this did not happen in December, 2014 due to lack of preparation. Later, it was planned to be held in February, 2015. It has also been planned that the proceedings would be published. Candidly speaking, anthropologists began pondering over organizing a national conference/seminar when the sociologists revealed their schedule of organizing a national conference in honor of Prof. Chaitanya Mishra (now superannuated) surreptitiously planned for the first week of November 2014 at the CDSA meeting held in the month of August, 2014. Therefore, sociologist colleagues are to be thanked for triggering the immediate ripple effect of organizing the national conference/seminar on Nepalese anthropology. Notwithstanding this fact, informal talks were being held occasionally for the

anthropology conference/seminar but there was some sort of shilly-shallying.

(iii) Note on Ph.D. Holders in Anthropology from TU

The 17 candidates earning Ph.D. in anthropology from TU included Haribadan Pradhan (traditional baby caring practice in Nepal), Bishnu Pathak (people's war and human rights), Laya Prasad Uprety (anthropology of natural resource management with focus on indigenous knowledge and practices in irrigation), Bishnu Prasad Rai (socio-cultural change among Bhujels), Jibnath Parsain (poverty and livelihood), Keshav Kumar Shrestha (ethnography of Rajbanshis), Prakash Upadhaya (community forestry), Dhruba Raj Gautam (community-based institutions), Binod Pokhrel (anthropology of development), Srijana Pandy Bhatta (traditional health care practices), Shambu P. Kattel (indigenous practice of dispute management among Kisans), Suresh K. Dhakal (ethnography of political participation and representation), Sita Olee Siwakoti (identity of Shantals), etc (Subedi and Uprety 2014). In addition to these candidates, four other candidates who accomplished Ph.D. include Tulsi Dahal (Newar Dalits), Kamal Sharma (sanitation culture of Chepangs), Bhanu Timseena (ecological anthropological study of Majhis), and Uddhav Rai (anthropology of food security among the Chepangs) (Dean's Office Records, November 2014).

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Environmental Issues and Teaching Ecological Anthropology at Tribhuvan University

Man Bahadur Khattri*

Introduction

Few years ago, ecological anthropology was one of the subjects in anthropology, which differentiated anthropology from sociology at Tribhuvan University, when it was a joint department. A course entitled "Ecology and Subsistence" became the identity marker of anthropology, since the establishment of the department in 1981. The syllabus has changed and has been revised time and again in order to incorporate new knowledge generated in the field of ecological anthropology, globally and in Nepal. Although lacked reading materials from South Asian countries, the course has contributed significantly in spreading the discussion on ecological anthropology in the country. In this paper, I explore evolution of study on ecological anthropology in the Tribhuvan University and how anthropology in Nepal has been able to contribute to teaching and research on the environmental issues. The term environment in anthropology is associated with the study of human-environment relations, and I discuss the experience in Nepal in the context of debates among ecological anthropologists around the world.

Broader issues in environmental anthropology

Human beings around the world are wondering about the current global environmental situation, as well as how people have lived and utilized the natural surroundings. Natural catastrophes are taking place and people have observed their intensity and higher frequencies worldwide. These natural phenomena are conceptualized as anthropogenic

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environmental problems; however, they vary from place to place. The major environmental problems are associated with climate change, land degradation, deforestation, acid rain, ozone hole, extinction of species of plants and animals, natural disasters (flood, landslides, GLOFs, earthquake), hurricanes, storms and extreme weather events, pollutions (air, water, sound), wild fires. These environmental phenomena are widespread and devastating all around the world. These environmental issues are not only threatening human life and their livelihoods, but also the humanity as a whole. Killing (people and animals), destroying (crops, property, and infrastructures), land degradation, displacement or migration of the people are frequently taking place and are experienced by the people due to natural disasters. Human beings interact with bio-physical environment in many different contexts. Many of the human activities, their population density, population movements are associated with the environment.

Environmental consciousness has reached local people. Environmental problem is becoming a global issue and is associated with the existence of humanity as well. Human ecology is a sub-discipline of anthropology, which addresses the issues at various levels from household to global, in relation to environment and humanity. At the global level, the major environmental discussions are: ozone hole, destruction of ocean system and forest, air, water and sound pollution. At the same time environmental issue has become a political issue as well. Similarly, they seek culturally informed solution in environmental problems (Kottak 2006). In Europe, people have started organizing into political parties on the basis of how the political parties deal with the environmental issue (Engel 2014). We can observe environmental movements around the world in different contexts and issues. At the same time, these environmental issues have ushered changes on the mode of production in the society. Industrial production with the help of fossil fuel has become the main focus of environmental problem. Likewise, industrial production in relation to

capitalism and the primary focus on maximization of profit by a handful people of the world is understood as being one of the major problems. Irrational exploitation of the natural resources, wasteful destruction of capital and goods, and deliberate tendency of mass consumption among people are the major responsible and interconnected factors for environmental destruction (Engel 2014).

Environmental justice

Environmental justice is associated with universal human rights. People have right to enjoyment and protections where they live a peaceful and healthy life educate, play and work. Furthermore, it challenges discriminations and disparities in the allocation of benefits and burdens of economic developments (Steady 2009, 1). Some rich and powerful people benefit from environmental exploitation, while poor, weak and marginal bear the cost generated. Environmental justice is another area of study where anthropologists should focus on. There are a number of environmental justice movements globally and in Nepal. One example comes from Papua New Guinea, where the villagers lost their entire environment due to world's biggest copper and gold mining; they polluted Tedi River and destroyed 30 sq. km of rain forest producing 80,000 tons of limestone sludge per day, which they dumped on the river bank. People fought but due to the irresponsible government and corrupted officials, people suffered in a devastating manner (Low and Gleeson 1998). Environmental justice demands the right to areas where people live, work, and play. Limitless economic growth and the domination of nature for it also creates social inequality on the basis of race, class and gender with human right implication. Government's actions, inactions, and neglect even during natural disaster are also associated with environmental injustice (Steady 2009).

Environmental movements/activism

Environmental movement is one of the most important factors in favor of humanity and environment relationship. These movements react against

the merciless exploitation of natural resources and it tries to establish "humanization of nature" and the "naturalization of humans" (Engel 2014). The sources of environmental movements come from issues like the vanishing wilderness, when agricultural resources come under stress, pollution and garbage threatens human lives. Environmentalism in the USA is rooted in contradiction of ideology of "preservation of wilderness" and "scientific management" (Harper 2005, 351). Conservation is another movement in which people are fighting for the protection of their livelihoods in the environment. *Chipko* movement in Uttarakhand, India led by women is one of the well-known examples, which focuses on conserving environment protecting their own lives, property, water resources, soil degradation and natural hazards such as landslides, floods. According to Ramachandra Guha, *Chipko* movement can be viewed as a constituent element of an overall history of peasant protest in the area (Guha 1993). Such peasant movements are certainly related to struggle for protection of their environment and livelihoods. In Germany, there was a mass movement against production and consumption of CFCs, which causes depletion of the ozone layer (Engel 2014). Small farmers and peasants fought against the deregulated free trade, which had environmental consequences ("Declaration of Nyeleni" 2007). Peasants from Karnataka protested and attacked the multinational seed companies. They wanted to "banish all multinational seed companies" (Gupta 2006, 314).

Indigenous environmental knowledge (IEK/IK/TEK)

IEK/IK/TEK is one of the most important parts of knowledge system on the aspect of environment around the world. It has its own value and it is termed as environmental wisdom of native people. Furthermore, IK is considered as 'people's knowledge', 'folk knowledge', 'rural people's knowledge' (R. F. Ellen and Bicker 2000, 2). Anthropologists with ethno-botanical, ethno-ecological, ethno-climatic, ethno-medicinal and other works shared heavily the knowledge of indigenous people as

used in different contexts. Traditional and local knowledge recorded by cultural ecologists contain value to wider world. Traditional medicines are the source of thousands of useful drugs, used by westerners, and more are being tested and developed almost daily (Sutton and Anderson 2009, 4). Ayurveda represents great indigenous tradition of medicine. The nature of IK is constantly changing. The differences between indigenous-non indigenous has many specific regional and historical connotation (R. F. Ellen and Bicker 2000). TEK is associated with natural resources management, nutrition, food preparation, health, education, community and social organization. It is the basis for local-level decision-making, in areas of contemporary life. It is holistic, inherently dynamic, and constantly evolving, through experimentation and innovations, fresh insight, and external stimuli (Posey 2000, 36). There is a strong voice to protect IK/IEK/TEK worldwide, but my point is that without empowerment, protection and promotion of indigenous people's livelihood and culture, it is impossible to protect it.

Biodiversity and ecological anthropology

Biodiversity conservation is one of the big issues around the world. This issue gained prominence since many biological species are about to be extinct and scientists are worrying about the effect of it on ecosystem. The world community has recognized the value of biodiversity. The UN Convention on Biological Diversity has defined "biological diversity" as "the variability among living organisms, from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and ecosystem" (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity 2003). In this context, the meaning of biodiversity conservation has wide scope. In ecological anthropology, we focus on nature-human interaction as in biodiversity. Conservation of biodiversity becomes an issue for discussion since the the role of indigenous people, their participation, their knowledge on biodiversity, management of

the livelihood of the people comes together and anthropologists can contribute in this situation. Anthropologists have always focused on biodiversity conservation as part of human welfare. Anthropologists are heavily engaged on the issue in relation to indigenous people and their knowledge, values, traditions and beliefs. They advocate for socially sensitive and culturally appropriate strategies for achieving biodiversity conservation (Kottak 2006, 44).

Climate change and disasters

Climate change is a global issue which is associated with natural environment and socio-cultural life of people in resource sharing, conflict, security, sustainability of development, equity, age sex, class, region, religion and language, population dynamics, such as migration and displacement. Climate change is defined as changes in climatic phenomena, such as the rise of temperature, precipitation, and weather related extreme events (IPCC 2007). Since 1850 AD, temperature on atmosphere is rising, which is caused by anthropogenic factors. According to "IPCC Fifth Assessment Synthesis Report" 2015, the period from 1983 to 2012 was likely to be the warmest 30-year period of the last 1400 years in the Northern Hemisphere. There is an average global warming of 0.85 [0.65 to 1.06] degree Celsius over the period 1880 to 2012 (2015, 2). One of the conclusions is that in the high altitude and high latitude regions, global warming has been clearly observed and experienced by the people. According to Shrestha and Aryal (2011), in trans-Himalayan zone, the temperature is increasing annually at the rate of 0.09 degree Celsius. Due to rising temperatures, the melting of mountain glaciers are occurring and threatening avalanches and GLOFs. Sources of water are drying and also the changes in precipitation and extreme weather events are frequently occurring these days. For anthropologists, "climate change is ultimately about culture" (Crate and Nuttall 2009, 12). Environmental anthropologists focus on local level impact and on broader topics such as adaptation, perception, resilience,

changes in social and cultural life. Main concerns of anthropologists are about conducting research on impact of climate change on the people, assess vulnerability of the people, role of traditional technology and institutions in relation to adaptation.

Teaching ecological anthropology at the department of sociology/anthropology

Academic institutions are built to impart knowledge, basically, theories, concepts, and methods, which are generated around the world in particular disciplines. Similarly, we must contextualize such knowledge on current issues existing around the world. Students not only learn knowledge, but build skills, change their attitude and behavior, so they become sensitive towards sustainable and harmonious environments, which not only support present generation of people but also the next generations. Usually, learning or knowing is the common practice of university experience; however, at master's level, students are asked to write a thesis on the basis of field work; such knowledge is partly based on experience and manifested in the performance of an act, and is relevant to learning how as well as knowing how (Kassam 2010).

At the Department of Sociology/Anthropology inTribhuvan University, Nepal, since its establishment in 1981, "Ecology and Subsistence" was only an optional cum compulsory paper introduced to master's level course in Anthropology. This paper was introduced in the process of granting separate degree in anthropology in TU (Uprety 2008, 65). Therefore, this paper can be considered as a landmark in differentiating sociology and anthropology. Looking at the publications on ecological anthropological study in Nepal, the period between 1950-1990 was fertile (Dahal 2008). In the beginning both subjects had combined department, and except for the optional papers, all the other papers were compulsory for both anthropology and sociology students. The paper "Ecology and Subsistence "covered five units of 100 marks and consisted of 150 hours as teaching load. Unit I was Definition and Scope

of Ecology; unit II: Language of Ecology; unit III: Cultural Ecology, unit IV: Ecological Analysis of the population of Nepal (Mountain, Hill and Tarai) and unit V: Applied Ecology. Unit I and II were influenced from biological ecology. Only Unit III was the theoretical portion in ecological anthropology that too, at a minimal level. Unit IV was mainly on ethno-ecological studies, which were based on environmental settings and their cultural behavior, and this was the main focus. Unit V was to deal with ecological problems of Nepal, but specific problems were not indicated. The reading materials were divided into two sections: text books and reference articles. The reference articles were more anthropological than were textbooks. This paper was taught in the department for about 20 years without major revision. However, in 2048 B.S. very little revision was made. The only change was made in Unit IV. Previously, among the mountain communities, only the Sherpa people was taught. Later the Bhotiya and among the Tarai communities, the Dhimals were added, but there was no specific unitwise teaching hours. Looking at the features of the papers offered, the major objective was to introduce students to ecological anthropology and engage them on the study of human environmental relationships. The design of paper had greater impact on the way anthropologists work and understand the ecological and environmental problem in a particular socio-economic context.

A major change in syllabus of sociology/anthropology at TU took place in 1999, which also developed two separate theory courses for anthropology and sociology. At the same time 'Ecological Anthropology' (SA514) and 'Anthropology of Natural Resource Management' (ANRM; SA 512) were offered as optional papers to anthropology students. Ecological anthropology had more anthropological flavor and sophistication with theory and methods, but lacked a section of case study from Nepal (Uprety 2008, 73). Anthropology of Natural Resource Management (ANRM) (SA 512) was chosen by many students. In my opinion, ANRM

(SA.512) should be the course to teach prominent environmental issues elaborately from anthropological point of view, but it lacked sufficient theoretical backups, in comparison to ecological anthropology required for MA level students. The context of this paper was a time when there was a boom in community-based management of natural resources, biodiversity and environmental movements. This paper focuses on sectors such as farming, forest, water, and tourism. The students seeking job after completion of their study had more advantage since it was an applied type of paper. This paper would have been excellent if 50 percent reading covered perspective from anthropology, but it covered only 13 percent. In 2009, there was again a minor revision of the course, but at that time ecological anthropology was removed, and since then the course (SA 538 A) has considered teaching research outputs carried out by Laya Prasad Uprety, Ram Bahadur Chhetri, and Om Gurung, faculty members at the Department. These three were the Nepali scholars who published papers on adaptation, livelihood, resource management and law until 1996 (Subedi and Uprety 2014, 38). The revision of syllabus in 2009, especially on ANRM (SA 538 A) has introduced two important aspects. The first tried to orient how one can anthropologically assess government policy and plans on irrigation development, forestry and pasture management. The second is the introduction of climate change issue into the course. Another revision was made in 2012, in which two disciplines (Sociology and Anthropology) developed separate course for MA levels. SA 538-A was further developed and refined with some revision in Anthropology of Natural Resource Management (SA 512). The course was divided into three parts: Part one: Concepts, Perspectives, Debates and Practices in General (Resources) included four units (Introduction, Theoretical Perspective, Perspective from Anthropology, Common Property Regime in Water Resource: Theory and Practice) Part II: Natural Resources Management in Nepal: Policies and Practices included readings on Nepalese Policy, Plan and Legal Framework on Irrigation Development and Empirical Case Studies on Managing Water

for Irrigation, and forestry as a Common Property Resources; Part III: Anthropological Perspectives on Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples and their Rights to Natural Resources.

Besides separate papers of ecological anthropology, some units were taught in different papers, basically in Theory paper 'cultural ecology' in the first year and also in the second year. It was in the paper application of cultural ecological approach in Nepali context. Teaching in semester system started since 2014 in T.U. Anthropology of Natural Resource Management Part I and Part II has been taught in two semesters as optional papers. Besides Anthropology of Natural Resource Management, Ecological Anthropology and Anthropology of Climate Change of 3 credits each as optional papers are offered. Since 2012, M.Phil. level teaching has begun in both disciplines. There is a course on Society, Culture and Environment as an optional paper, and this has been offered for the first semester students in Anthropology. At the end, I would like to argue that actually we do not teach ecological anthropology on issues of environmental justice, food sovereignty, energy sovereignty, traditional knowledge on resources, biodiversity and climate change from a theoretical and methodological ground. Whatever is taught is basic and contributes little to impart knowledge on ecological anthropology.

Conclusion

Anthropology as a science of human culture has strong component of environment since its beginning. Anthropology has adopted holistic approach to understanding environment, linking the relationship of culture and social life of people. Human beings do not only interact with the surroundings of nature, but also with flora and fauna as resources for their survival. Anthropologists have been taking consideration of issues like how environment has played a role in human life in terms of determinism, possibilism and cognition; how human adapt to nature, is it by culture or are humans passive reactor to the environment

or are they active agent; how people share the resources and have symbiotic relationship among people of different occupation, whether environmental degradations are caused by local people or state and world political economy. Currently, anthropologists are more and more engaged on diversified, multilevel environmental issues like environmental justice, conservation movements, conservation of biodiversity and indigenous people, and climate change.

In the question of teaching environmental issue in TU, 'Ecology and Subsistence' was a landmark paper to differentiate anthropology from sociology. Because of the combined department many students and faculty had an interdisciplinary approach on a broad area of anthropology and sociology. The teaching of environmental issue in different forms has been given a high value in anthropology since its beginning. Considering the review of papers on ecological anthropology, globally, one compulsory rigorous paper on theories and methods in environmental anthropology is highly desirable for MA level students, incorporating reading materials on environmental condition and people's actions to conserve them. Similarly, another paper on ecological anthropology is also highly desirable, focusing on environmental movements from environmental sensitive regions, where people have struggled in order to protect their environment in Asia, Africa, Europe, America (North and South). Since climate change has become a big problem around the world, we must have another paper on ecological anthropology for M.Phil. students, focusing on theory and methods, while giving due attention on environment movements in South Asia and elsewhere.

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Nepal School of Anthropology: Emerging Issues and Future Directions

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Introduction

The founding scholars of discipline of anthropology in Nepal thought that they have, in effect, paved a way for establishment of Nepal School of Anthropology some three decades ago. The setting up of the Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tribhuvan University in 1981 and promising incumbent first cohorts of the Master's Degree students from the department was the center of hope and a key marker for such journey towards Nepal anthropology. The Nepal School of Anthropology as envisioned then was a robust institution where anthropology is taught and research conducted using the scientific lens of the discipline and ethnography as the core method.

More importantly, imagination of Nepali anthropology was tied to an idea of creation of a vibrant academic community who are expected to be engaged in studying and analysing Nepali society and culture in ways meaningful to local realities. Knowledge produced through such an exercise was also expected to enable the anthropologists in and from Nepal to engage with global community of anthropologists and social

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scientists on one hand and benefit policy makers and professionals of various social development works in Nepal, on the other. The idea of Nepali anthropology, in other words, was about generative conversation within Nepal and with outside world from Nepal, and the Himalaya. Nepali anthropology would engage in the study of human diversity and universality simultaneously and speak on the theme of improvement of human condition with Nepali characteristics. In the first issue of journal published by the Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology in 1987, Bista expressed an urgency to start the task of establishing Nepal School of Anthropology and commence coming of age of anthropology in Nepal.

What kind of knowledge should it produce as its priority was one of the central debates which was crucial in determining the identity of Nepali anthropology. Many elder generation of anthropologists thought that the priority should be given to the applied aspect of knowledge production through which anthropology can become a service to development and modernization, or promote nation building and national integration. Others argued that we should aim beyond applied aspect and should aspire toward contributing to theory building, whatever that actually meant. The question that in what ways these debates informed the works of Nepal-based anthropologists and how have they contributed in attaining its goal of establishing Nepal School of Anthropology has become pertinent as we discuss the future direction of anthropology in Nepal.

Charting the circumstances and context under which such debate and aspirations in Nepal took place could be useful for situating the journey. Primarily, it was the new context after 1950s, the "opening" of Nepal to the outside world and post-Rana period search for new future for the state and society. In the 1960s the active monarchy-introduced rhetoric of modernization aggravated desire for newer ways of understanding

of one's own society in terms of what it is and where it should lead, in complicity or otherwise. The existing explanation given by the ruling elites for governing population became obsolete and no alternative representation had yet arrived in the public sphere. It was during the time that some of the groundbreaking studies on Nepal society, history, polity and culture were coming out from the work of anthropologists from outside Nepal (see Dahal's article in this volume). Despite the recognition of their important scholarly contributions through systematic studies, the educated section of Nepal society was not fully satisfied. They felt that some of the explanations coming out of foreign scholars' work were either too micro for generating larger picture or contained certain sense of western bias.

As a by-product of colonial enterprise, anthropology inherited some of the eurocentrism which in some or other ways orientalised Nepali and the Himalayan society and culture. For example, anthropology of Nepal and the Himalaya by western scholars is often criticised for its representation of the area influenced by the notion of the region as *terra incognita* the European concept for justifying exploration and subsequent subjugation of undiscovered area. Similarly, a bulk of western writing appeared to treat Nepal as a never changing archaic society – a fossil, where the explorer would be able to study ancient or primitive forms of cultural traits. In this view, caste system reinforced by the state through legal means, Rana's princely regimes, tiny monarchy, and the tribal lives were all objects of exoticism and touristic gaze.

But the above concepts were only explicit in the early writings by the European explorers generally prior to 1960s. Anthropologists coming to study in Nepal during the later half of twentieth century were conscious about potential eurocentric biases. Nevertheless, they faced other kind of fallacies that needed to overcome. We would suggest that there were mainly two kinds of fallacies romanticism and refusal to see Nepali

society on its own terms. Those anthropologists who followed romantic approach viewed the Himalaya and Nepal as a sort of mythic Shangrila with beautiful terrain and valleys, inhabited by ever happy people. The other fallacy, on the other hand, geared towards regarding Nepali society and culture as an extension at the fringe of either Indic or Bodic civilization. As a meeting point, what one finds in Nepal is a version of greater civilization in south and the north. The Nepali version then may have remained archaic due to isolation or distorted through improper ways of copying. In both ways, Nepal was denied a representation as real society with its own originality, power dynamics, changes, happiness and sufferings experienced by real people.

The Nepali anthropologists were not satisfied with these threads of explanations but, discontents were also there for exclusive focus of the western anthropology in the realm of abstract theories guided by the need for engaging in on-going theoretical debates in the western community. Nepali anthropology found these concerns removed from what was actually needed in Nepal as they encountered both demand and desire for anthropology that is practical and can inform decisions to development and modernization.

The debate have now reached another level and the discussion in binary between foreign and native anthropology is not relevant any more. It has become clear to everyone that anthropological studies irrespective of location it is coming from complement each other to better understand the society. Nor is dichotomy between theory, policy and application significant, as all are related and inform each other. Moving beyond from the early debates, Nepali anthropology appears to be in the cross-road where it needs to chart its course with cognizant of issues emerging both at national and global levels. In this context, this paper critically reviews what have been achieved so far, what the emerging issues are and what needs to be done for realizing the dream.

Ground works and achievements

Publication of Dor Bahadur Bista's *People of Nepal* in 1967 and subsequent establishment of the Department of Sociology/Anthropology in 1981 may be taken as the early landmarks when the anthropology as a discipline germinated in Nepal with a small community of people within country researching, teaching and learning anthropology and publishing ethnography as academic discipline. Since the starting of MA degree in the Department, it has produced a good number of trained anthropologists in the country who are now involved in multiple sectors ranging from academia, research, bureaucracy, politics, NGOs and others. Today sociology and anthropology are taught in 36 campuses across the country. To date, it has produced 17 Ph.D.'s in anthropology and currently fourth batch of M.Phil. programme is undergoing training. A number of Nepali students also pursued higher studies in anthropology outside the country. With a critical mass of anthropologists in Nepal produced over the period, the seminar deliberation indicated that they would be able to lead the discipline in new direction that is, both theoretically rewarding and practically relevant. One of the key accomplishments taken, among others, was acquiring and sustaining a distinct identity of Nepali anthropology and demonstrating its relevancy to the general academic interests on the one hand and responding to contemporary state of Nepal on the other.

Since the 1980s, Nepal has encountered a number of major changes. The end of autocratic monarchical system of Panchyat in 1990 to open multiparty system, ten-year long violent political conflict 1996-2006, and subsequent peace accord, removal of two and half a century long feudal monarchy and tumultuous years of state structuring since then all heralded ruptures in the continuity. The popular upheavals of historically marginalized groups of *adivasi janajati* or indigenous nationalities, Dalits, Madhesis, women and others tremendously altered cultural life and outlook of ordinary people, caste and ethnic relationship, views

on nature and role of state and trends in inequality, and relentless search for better economic opportunities in neo-liberal economy of the globalizing world. The changed context in turn also expanded horizon of anthropological work in contemporary Nepal that goes beyond early debate primarily focused on romanticism, pure research versus applied research for nation building or country's development.

The spread of anthropological engagement in Nepal, however, can be seen as linked to the two main themes put forward by Dor Bahadur Bista, who is also known as the "father of anthropology." Based on reading of Bista's work, one can conclude that he conceived of descriptive ethnography and development as two key areas of work to be pursued by Nepali anthropologists. *People of Nepal* for the first time in Nepal set an example for the descriptive ethnography for later generation. The book put together description of more than three dozens of ethnic and caste groups from hill, Tarai and mountains, which implicitly became a template of ethnographic work in Nepal.

Bista was also the one who coined the term "Nepal School of Anthropology" which according to him needed to be established by Nepali anthropologists that can deal directly with the social, political, economic issues of the country. His emphasis on the "development" was explicated in distinctive ways in his book *Fatalism and Development: Nepal's Struggle for Moderninzation* published in 1991. In this book, he argued that Hindu values that promote fatalism and caste-based hierarchy were major obstacles to modernization and development of Nepal. Bista spoke on the theme:

> I am almost starting a campaign with this book. If we want to develop this country, we have to do something about this whole idea of preaching the so-called Hindu classical texts, which continuously fertilize the vigorous growth of fatalistic tendencies and attitudes in this country. My suggestion

> is that we should encourage and promote the folk tradition and culture of various ethnic communities for development instead (Fisher 1997:30).

With these explications, development thus became another central rubric under which works of many Nepali anthropologists after 1990s commenced. Many trained anthropologists engaged themselves on the issues of natural resource management, community forestry, irrigation systems, health service delivery, education, agriculture and development in general. This was also facilitated by entrance of international development aid in Nepal substantially since then. The work under this theme seldom produced detailed ethnographic monographs, and writings remained fragmented. Nevertheless, a commonality that combined the works of anthropologists under this category was perhaps the notion of promoting "people's participation" at grassroots level (Chhetri and Gurung 1999). The concept of promotion of participation perhaps distantly connected with the endorsement of "folk tradition and culture" as Bista himself thought important for development.

The front of descriptive ethnography also had flourished in a significant ways during this period as a second theme. Several short and descriptive ethnographies styled often in a colonial cataloguing appeared on Chapengs, Raute, Athpahariya, Jirel and many other groups. They were produced through universities, research institutions and independent bodies. The documents often described festivals, repertoire of birth and death rituals, dress, food and so forth. Most often written by educated urban elites, they depicted "ethnic groups" of Nepal as primitives in the need of development. These documents as old-fashioned ethnography are hardly linked with threads of debates on anthropological theories and perhaps little "future oriented" as Bista wanted. They were, nevertheless, instrumental in making the groups in question visible to the public, to empowering to a degree in unintended ways.

Effort in producing such descriptive ethnographies was made recently by the Central Department of Anthropology at TU. During 2012-2014, a team of scholars from the university embarked upon a research project which aimed at mapping and analyzing aspects of social inclusion by gender, caste and ethnicity in Nepal. A component of this larger research was production of ethnographic profiles of selected groups who were considered highly marginalized by the government agencies and others. Altogether 42 groups were studied by the anthropologists and local researchers over the period of six months and a large amount of empirical data was collected. The publication of the profiles of each group is underway and so far brief description of 21 groups is being published. A noteworthy point about the publication is that it also includes more than two dozens of caste and ethnic groups, especially from Dalit community who were never documented before. They provide introductory descriptions of the groups in terms of their history, population, location, language, tradition, together with quantitative data on status of human development and representation in public domain. The purpose of the publications at this point is limited to inform the public debate on identity, diversity and development, but the materials collected provide rich ground for discussion on theories for future.

Another dimension of ethnographic production in Nepal is writing on the cultures and communities by the members of the community themselves. As a part of the movements by the *adivasi jajanatis* or indigenous nationalities in Nepal since 1990s which were aimed at revival of culture, language, identity, and traditions, individuals from the communities started to publish materials about the community that they belong to. The practice, also referred to as auto-ethnography (Des Chene 1996), involved evocation of history, their relationship with state, autonomy and others aspects that would not only describe themselves but inform the present. Starting with major ethnic communities of Tharu,

Magar, Tamang, Gurung, Rai and Limbu, the practice now has expanded to many groups which have smaller population, including Dalits.

Cognizant of the contemporary transformations of Nepali society and culture, desire of self-definition through auto-ethnographies among people and bearing legacy of diversity and development left by Bista, young generation of anthropologists today find themselves in a challenging and interesting cross-road. They aspire for being able to engage with the theoretical debates in the Nepal and Himalayan anthropological community internationally and at the same time remain relevant and meaningful to the local debates and realties. The research themes they have undertaken range from culture, ethnicity, identity, caste, nationalism, state, history to sustainable development, conservation, economy, social inclusion/exclusion, health, education, natural resources management, poverty and underdevelopment, democracy, legal pluralism, *inter alia*. While the criticism that majority of them lack independent quality due to being consultancy or commissioned research remains valid, a number of researches have been elemental in giving quality to teaching, development work as well as in engagement in advocacy as scholar activists for social justice. And especially since later half of 2000 decade, the effort to articulate theoretical link and implications of empirical data generated at the ground by Nepali anthropologists have substantially increased. The results, however, is yet to be explored and articulated.

Critique and issues in Nepal School

In the last two decades, the Nepal School of Anthropology has expanded in terms of teaching, research and publications beyond Kathmandu as well as outside the Tribhuvan University. New courses have been introduced to address theoretical developments, global trends and emergent national agendas. And our areas of research have also broadened over the years. Despite this broadening, anthropology in Nepal continues to be concentrated in few thematic areas only. We see

this as one of the major problems in our disciplinary practice. The first concern, therefore, clearly is the issue of anthropology in Nepal coming out of the 'developmentalist' approach and setting new directions for its future.

There are a number of other themes that need to be highlighted that we see as the major emerging issues for Nepal School of Anthropology. We will propose some ways to address the emerging issues so that Nepali anthropology may take a desired course. But further discussion on developmentalist and positivistic orientation of past anthropology in Nepal would be fruitful to offer our critique. Anthropology in Nepal is still very much developmentalist in its orientation. Even now, 'development'-related courses dominate the MA level teaching in TU. Development-related articles outnumber other themes in all of the journals of sociology and anthropology published so far by various TU departments. We argue that this passionate love affair between anthropology and development was cemented when the discipline was introduced in the TU during the yearly 1980s. The founding members of the department envisioned anthropology as a discipline with a greater relevance and usefulness for Nepal's development. For instance, Dor B. Bista, the father of Nepali anthropology, believed that:

> Nepalese graduates or scholars in anthropology are among the extremely privileged few who are expected to play very significant roles in their country…. Imagine the burden of responsibility a Nepalese graduate of anthropology would shoulder in the continuing process of modernization of the country. This is not the case with most anthropologists of the industrially advanced and affluent societies of the world. (p. 9).

Bista's distinction between Nepali anthropology and western anthropology in terms of the practical, problem-oriented nature of the former is a telling example of what we call a positivistic envisioning of

anthropology in Nepal. Now we can ask to ourselves, "Are we really the extremely privileged few?" We guess, the majority of us will say, "No". The point we want to emphasize here is: this foundational envisioning of Nepali anthropology as a positivistic science with a greater utility for *bikas* had largely shaped and continues to shape the academic and practical engagements of anthropologists in Nepal, while many core areas of anthropological study and other emergent issues have been largely ignored.

The dominant discourses of bikas in Nepal are less concerned with religion, kinship, marriage, language, history, and many other realms of everyday life which anthropology considers its primary areas of study. This also explains why these core issues have been less studied by Nepali anthropologists but more by foreign anthropologists. We join other Nepali anthropologists in their calls for the need to reclaim the fundamental areas of our discipline through teaching and ethnographic research in Nepal. In the recent years, there has been an emerging trend, a visible growth of interest, among Nepali anthropologists towards, for example, history, kinship, rituals, religion, and other core areas of anthropology. This emerging interest certainly needs to be encouraged and institutionalized.

We all understand why "development" became almost the heart of Nepali anthropology. Development has been a state religion in Nepal since 1950 and it is still the most important sector for justifying the state existence, the most lucrative source of funding, for income generation, and for research works of the majority of anthropologists working in the TU. The saying that for the many anthropologists at TU, "academic work – particularly pure academic research and writing is a part time engagement – is to be done when one is free from consultancy projects" holds some merit.

We are not suggesting that Nepali anthropology should stop studying and working in 'development'. Both as a discourse and practice, development is embedded in peoples' everyday life and it continues to shape power relations between and among people, the state, and the Empire. The anthropology courses related with development field offered at the TU impart critical knowledge and analytical skill. We acknowledge that Nepali anthropologists have played important roles in producing critical approach to development in terms of theories, concepts, methods and models of interventions which can have direct practical and policy implications for the marginalized communities.

But now with three decades of emphasis on development, we need to reflect on the following questions. Have we been successful in institutionalizing the discipline of anthropology, anthropological knowledge and methods in the development sector? Put simply, does development sector recognize anthropology as a useful and relevant discipline in Nepal? It has to do with the question of disciplinary identity not with expertise of anthropologists working in development sectors. Often time, while working for development organizations, anthropologists are compelled to work under many covert titles such as "sociologist", "socio-economic expert", "cultural expert", but not as an anthropologist.

Have Nepali development anthropologists produced academic works which have led or influenced national debates and discourses on 'development'? Put simply, are 'anthropologists' recognized by the state and other development agencies as the key thinkers for policy dialogues and implementations? What should be the future of directions of development anthropology or anthropology of development in Nepal? We will return back to this question in the conclusion of our presentation.

After the mid-1990s in particular, ethnicity has emerged as a dominant area of study in Nepali anthropology. The issues of adivasi identity and rights, and their political empowerment have become important political agendas of the nation after 1990. The adivasi and janajati groups and their organizations have also emerged as key political actors which could influence political transformations in Nepal. These contexts and the political transformations after the mid-1990s influenced the growth of scholarship and academic discourses on ethnicity and related issues in Nepali anthropology. There are some interesting features about the mainstreaming of ethnic issues as one dominant focus of Nepali anthropology.

Despite this growth of academic interests in ethnicity, the issue of ethnicity is still outside of the TU syllabi at large. Until now, except in the MPhil level and the new MA semester system at the central department, there is no single course in anthropology on ethnicity and its related issues. Yet, in terms of publications and research works, ethnicity-related issues have stronger presence in the academic journals, books, media and publications by non-academic organizations outside the TU.

Like it or not, ethnicity is one field that has given Nepali anthropology a public identity. When it comes to a policy debate or a national concern related to the issues of adivasi janajati, even the state seeks to work with anthropologists. There are many factors for such public recognition as we have already outlined.

But we suggest that one major factor that has contributed to the growth of ethnicity related scholarship in Nepali anthropology is the strong presence of janajati scholars at the central department of TU. These scholars are also involved as activists and national leaders of adivasi rights movements. In other words, the combinations of activism, advocacy, scholarship, and anthropologists' presence in the national

politics and media have also helped to mainstream the issues of ethnicity in Nepali anthropology.

This shows that the presence of historically marginalized groups in academia can positively influence the content and nature of scholarship and academic discourses. We can question, how will Nepali anthropology look now if there were more women, Dalit, Madhesi, Muslims, and other minority groups in anthropology teaching faculties?

Anthropology cannot shy away from the reality and importance of multiculturalism. Anthropology should embrace multiculturalism – one way of doing it is by making our academic community more representative and inclusive.

Future direction and priorities

Thus far, we discussed about the foundational themes and the emerging issues pertaining to particular historical context. In this section, we discuss possible future direction of anthropology in Nepal. The future direction, in our given context, should also be a new direction, which, however, depends on how adequately and strategically we tackle the issues that anthropology at home is grappling with. There are three key guiding principles that would help think on future direction and priorities.

The first is the need to bring in anthropology to the core of teaching and research. One of the criticisms offered against previous courses on anthropology was that they were more market-driven and failed to emphasise on its own cores which could have prevented the discipline from being a vibrant academic field. Therefore, concerns were raised, among others, to update and upgrade the readings and research on prehistoric archaeology, anthropological linguistics, caste and kinship studies, religion and magic, political anthropology including the studies of customary institutions, historical anthropology, legal anthropology,

economic anthropology, and so on. Such courses were necessary also to deflate its 'developmentalist' image.

The second is to recognize the global interdependence and need for keeping close engagement with globally emerging themes in anthropology. Some issues, though focussed on local context and cases, as anthropology usually does, transcend the 'local'. Anthropology at home therefore needs to revise and offer the courses at par with global trend. This may include the courses on environment, climate change and ecology, globalization, neo-liberalism and market studies, global flow of humanity and international labour migration, human rights, et cetera.

An additional point to raise here is that our anthropological teaching and even research practices are informed by western, European and North American scholarship and tradition but largely remain unaware of regional, that is, of Indian and South Asian trend and tradition; let alone the Chinese and East Asian scholarships and traditions. We substantially share the intellectual as well as social political context with South Asia therefore, while going global we should not forget to incorporate regional as well.

The third point is the need for developing ability to grasp and grapple with the issues that have become pertinent in local/national context. Some of the issues that have become prominent in recent decades were not visible when the department was established and a few first syllabi were designed. Some of the issues that demand added anthropological concern and attentions include the courses on ethnicity and (ethno)-nationalism, identity, conflict and post-conflict transition, religion and secularism, trans-border/cross-border cultural exchange, health and medical anthropology, urban anthropology, industrial and organizational studies, labour migration, social movements, Madhes, multiculturalism, among others.

In summary, anthropology of Nepal should and must update itself to establish dialogic relationship with the global (trend of) anthropology, and to grow up to par, without losing its core. At the same time, the discipline cannot afford to overlook and ignore the everyday realities of the country to make it more relevant, pro-people and most-sought subjects at home. The following questions thus need to be considered while thinking future direction :

- Have we been able to remodel our teaching and research practices along with the changes taking place in global as well as in local context?
- Do we have adequately equipped institutional setups for effective teaching and research?
- Is the discipline properly recognized in the desired way by the public at large, and in general, by academia, including universities, and other state, non-state world?
- Why we, Nepali anthropologists, largely failed to bring out anthropological works with sufficient empirical data, interpreted and analysed with appropriate theoretical linkages? Or, why our anthropology even could not adequately respond and offer critical insights to contemporary social transformations, based on ethnographic materials?
- Last but not least, do we, the community of Nepali anthropologists, have clearly defined our roles in the given context? Are we rightly expected by government agencies, donors and non-governmental development organizations (as we claim we champion the culturally appropriate development and can offer most critical insights to the development world)?

The next steps

To achieve the larger goals or at least to orient our efforts towards those goals, some basic infrastructural requirements have to be fulfilled. A

cooperating university system and collective efforts from the community within are also equally important. An independent department of anthropology is certainly a prerequisite for the proper institutionalization of Nepal School of Anthropology. Now that we have an independent anthropology department within TU, paving its own way of institutional development and gain recognition as an independent discipline should be the way forward. Having a title of a separate department, however, will not be adequate; the university should provide the required infrastructure and quota for full-fledged faculties to run the department effectively and efficiently. The establishment of the new department should mark as a 'punctuated equilibrium' and remains as a 'datum point', a permanent marker, to review and reflect the institutional history of Nepal School of Anthropology in the future.

After having its own department, following are some of the works to be carried out for moving ahead towards creating and consolidating the Nepal school of anthropology and anthropology in Nepal.

Motivational institutional environment: This may include, for example, a conducive working space for faculties, libraries, e-library facilities, regular seminars, workshop and brainstorming sessions, institutional support for further studies, research activities under and in the department, periodic journals, et cetera. This would enable a teacher to perform also as a competent researcher as well as a publicly engaged anthropologist.

Functional and working institutional relationship: Relationship with international anthropological communities; namely, universities across the globe, research institutions, and other relevant agencies, that are contributing to strengthen the social sciences in general and anthropology, in particular, at the global scale.

Update syllabus and curricula: At the cutting edge of curricular updates, incorporating both the core subject matters as well as new courses

required to understand the recent changes and contemporary world, so as to keep the pace with global trend but linking to the local need, as well.

Teaching linking to the research: Following the previous points, the department should forge possibilities to involve faculties and students in research practices, with institutionalized collective and collaborative efforts. The institution should now seriously consider the teaching objects and methods of anthropology that makes the discipline distinct among all social sciences. But this does not evade the possibilities of collaborating with other social sciences, particularly in research.

Publication of ethnographic works: Publications of the native scholars, that is publications of original works, should be prioritised. As we indicated, anthropology in the recent decades have turned to become more developmentalist, deviating from ethnographic tradition.

Create collective working culture and forums: Academic community of anthropologists is not yet visible as a collective lot. Added efforts have to be made toward that direction as well. Hopefully, soon there will be a national network or a permanent association of Nepali anthropologists dispersed across the country. Similarly, a close network and collaboration with the foreign anthropologists who worked or are currently working in Nepal.

Maintaining academic community: With such a network and association, interactive forums and events are needed to create and organize to strengthen disciplinary solidarity, widen its scope, and for sharing ideas and experiences among the Nepalese and foreign anthropologists.

Conclusion

Since the establishment of the Department of Sociology/Anthropology in 1981 in Tribhuvan University, the discipline of anthropology has, despite

numerous challenges, offered a number of noteworthy contributions to deepening the understanding of Nepali society and culture. One of the key accomplishments may be taken as acquiring a distinct identity of Nepali anthropology and demonstrating its relevancy to the general academic interests on the one hand and developmental need of the contemporary state of Nepal on the other. Anthropology now has arrived at a juncture from where it should offer specialized contributions within a wider interdisciplinary academic environment and demonstrate its usefulness for thinking as well as improving human condition.

Nepal School of Anthropology, as envisioned by the founding members, is now to be realized, for which required ground work appears to have been in place. Potentials for building institutional infrastructure, availability of critical mass willing to embark on the journey, and more importantly clarity of vision among the members appear to make it all possible. Nevertheless, it has to be done not only because it is doable, but because it is indeed a historical obligation placed to current generation of anthropologists. Now is the time to walk the talk and deliver what is committed.

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Conversion

Conversion to Christianity through Labor Migration and Globalization

Indra Bahadur Rakhal*

Introduction

Almost all Christian communities who have either inherited the religion or acquired it in Nepal were converted from Hinduism and Buddhism. Historically, different approaches and methods have been implemented for conversion. In this article, I discuss conversion narratives of migrant workers and phenomena of conversion among ethnic groups, particularly the Magars, Tamangs, and Rais.. The narratives focus on understanding the circumstances, locations and agents for conversion and the reaction from their communities upon learning of their conversion. The information was taken on an individual basis in their homes and churches.

I argue that the classical approach and method of conversion, including preaching, social work and providing free education, have now changed and there has been a paradigm shift in conversion. Based on the data I have gathered, I argue that Nepali conversion process has a unique history. The phenomenal growth of Christian population in Nepali society is not only because of Western professional Christian preachers and missionaries, but is also a product of globalization and labor migration of Nepali migrants to countries like Malaysia, India, and South Korea. These migrant workers have also added to the conversion process**.** Moreover, access to modern technology has helped Nepali people to connect with the world and has also acted as a factor encouraging conversion to Christianity.

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Conversion as an influence of modernism

Modern cultural values have influenced the middle class society, and this is evident on the cultural change, that is undergoing. Mark Liechty (2010) has strongly argued that Nepali society is geared to a modern cultural destination. The middle class society is found to have been fascinated by the modern cultural values such as Christianity**.** Appadurai (1996) has shown how modernization has changed cultural values in the Indian society. He claims that electronic media is a principal means for promotion of modern culture in all communities, rural or urban, and this is well reflected in the religious practices and conversion of religion. James (2010) has claimed that television programs prepared by Christian groups have contributed to conversion of modern young Indians. The use of English language and music in churches in India seems to have attracted youths, print and broadcast technologies have helped people get better access to resources like Bibles, records of Gospel, biography and films on Jesus Christ, audio and visual records of sermons and devotional journals, and these resources have played an influential role in the conversion of the Nepali society. Simon Pandey, chairperson of 'Message of Hope', claims that radio technology has helped spreading the Message of Jesus Christ to every corner of Nepali society, including the Nepali diaspora. He views that the modern technology is a gift from God to share the Gospel to millions within minutes.

Conversion of traditional Nepali Hindus and tantric Buddhists into Christian faith is a way of adoption of modern cultural values. Such a conversion is supported by free flow of information through modern information technologies. There is increased access to information and means of contact and communication between people from diverse backgrounds, and the increased sharing of ideas have contributed to adoption of newer ways of life, including religion.

Modernism can be understood as influence and impact of modern technology, specifically the modern technology of communications, through which we have been able to receive details of every event

across the globe and have an opportunity to be influenced and share our cultures.

In addition to being exposed to the modern cultural values through the media, Nepali youth labor migrants have come into contact with Christian communities abroad. In Malaysia, they have come into contact with Christian community, which is ready to share its Christian faith with the foreign workers. A Malaysian Chinese Pastor has said, "Mission field is at the door, it is time for sharing Christ to the different nationalities within Malaysian Peninsula" (Harvest 2014, 3). Lofland (1981) gives six motifs of religion conversion; intellectual, mystical, experience, affection, revivalist and coercive. Larry Poston (2002) argues eight motivating factors including fear, other self-regarding motives, altruistic motives, following out a moral ideal, remorse and conviction of sin, response to the Bible teaching, example and imitation and urging and social pressure (Poston 2002, 1).

Christian conversion as a cultural change

Thomas (1998) argues that culture change is a dynamic process. Conversion started from colonial period. Religion is living culture and it changes along with cultural change. He argues that technology is a vehicle for cultural change. Modern technology has impacted the life of middle class society in Kathmandu (Liechty 2010).

Conversion after 1990 has been a process of adoption of modern cultural values. This is manifested in the form of symbols and religious celebrations like celebration of Christmas, and hanging metal cross on the neck and wearing neck tie and suits on special occasion in place of traditional material culture. The middle class Nepali society's cultural values have been affected by electronic media. Watching western English movies, mostly young people think that in this modern age they need English. The middle class society is a consumer society based on modern technologies (Liechty 2010).

While globalization is not directly referred to religion conversion, it is adoption of liberal economy which unites all capitalists in the process of global production and mass distribution. Nepali youths are forced to reach out to foreign labor market in search of livelihood. While abroad, Christian friends and church pastors and missionary provide material help to the migrant labors, who are in search of some form of social security when away from home. This initial help triggers the process for conversion. Apart from being the first point of help for migrant labors, the Christian missions actively engage in advocating the rights of the illegal workers and arrange for legal counseling and financial help. They also invite the migrant labor in trouble to the church services and camps. Also, the Christian owners of the companies which hire foreign workers are found to be preaching the gospel of Christ to their workers and inviting them in their fellowships. Churches thereby motivate them to accept Christian faith.

Entrance of Christian Gospel to Nepal

On 14th March 1703, six Capuchin Fathers travelled from Rome to Nepal (Rongong 2012) and this marked the beginning of conversion in Nepal. Nepali language speakers in Darjeeling and Kalimpong of India gradually converted themselves into Christianity**.** They claimed that they had been praying for Nepali Hindu's conversion, as is manifested in the prayer recited by Nepali Indian Christian, where they prayer is as follows: "*Prabhu Arjee Suni Leau, Gorkhali Le Mukti Paune Dhoka Kholi Deu"* [God ! listen to our prayers that the Gorkhali be saved] (Jeevan Margh Prakason 2009). Cindy Perry (1990) has argued that the Indian Christians of Nepali origin were the pioneers of 'tent making missionary', not professional preachers (Church/Christian missions paid preachers). The tent making missionary movement is a motivational principle applying to Christians who are in their professional fields. The local and global church equips them to witness their Christian faith to their colleagues in their working places and institutions and finally coaxing them to convert to Christian faith is the central idea of the tent

making principle. Theology of tent making principle is based on Paul's three missionary journey (Acts 13: Bible).

Practicing Christian faith has been socially contextualized and made relevant to the local culture. While church services and the holy rituals are performed on Sunday in the West and in the colonized Asian countries, in Nepal services and rituals are held on Saturdays. There may be two reasons for this, one fearing state prosecution and second, Saturday is a weekend holiday in the country and the free time could be used for mass prayer (Pandey 2003; Rongong 2012).

Nepalese converted by Nepalese Christians

Perry (1990) has not denied of entrance of the Capuchin Fathers to Nepal from Rome in 17th century (Perry 1990). But she has maintained that conversions of local Nepalis were initiated by the Indian Christians of Nepali origin from Darjeeling and Kalimpong. As Rongong (2012) states, "The group from Kalimpong landed at Tribhuwan Airport on the 3rd of March, 1956" (Rongong 2012, 67). They came to Bhakapur and shared Christian faith (Perry 1990) and began fellowship there, at the United Mission to Nepal's dispensary. Most of them were involved in teaching in schools and few had also been teaching in colleges, including Tri-Chandra and Bhaktapur College. Some also worked at Shantabhavan Hospital (now called Patan Hospital). One of them was Rajendra Kumar Rogong who taught in the Tribhuwan University in the 1970s. Rongong came to Nepal from Kalimpong, India, in the 1950s (Rongong 2012, 54) and worked as a Christian teacher and played a significant role in sharing Christian faith and also gave a pioneering leadership to the Nepali Church.

Uniqueness in Nepali conversion

The World Christian history gives account of mass conversion through missions and Church establishments. However, Nepal's conversion history is distinctly different. Christianity was not a direct result of preaching and teaching of the western missionaries as King Prithivi

Narayan Shah never allowed missionaries to preach Christianity in Nepal. Tom Fricke has argued that the conversion of Tamang in Timling village of Dhading "is not a straightforward result of missionization by outsiders" (Fricke 2008, 3).

There were only 54 converts during the time of King Prithivi Naryan Shah and they were forced to leave the country. They moved to North Bihar, Darjeeling and Kalimpong. Some of them worked in the tea plantations in Darjeeling and Kalimpong (Rongong 2012, 26).

The Nepali Christian community claims that there were only 30 Christians in the country in 1950s due to hostile environment, and most of the converted Christians migrated to Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Bihar (Rongong 2012, 26). After the Second World War, the world entered into the new era of modernization and globalization. The British began to recruit Nepali soldiers, and many soldiers converted while in the British army and came back to Nepal and settled in eastern Nepali city of Dharan, where their families also converted into Christianity. There were 200,000 Nepali converts (Fricke 2008,16). A rapid growth in conversion in Nepal was documented after 1990.

Major contributors of conversions

The major contributors to conversion can be taken as follows: a) political change in 1990; b) the role of Christian media, and c) role of print media.

Restoration of multi-party democracy in Nepal provided a freer environment for missions and Christian organizations to come and work here. The Christian organizations established themselves as local and international nongovernmental organizations and informal Christian groups, including United Mission to Nepal, Adventist Development Relief Agency, World Vision, International Nepal Fellowship, and these faith-based Christian organizations have played a motivational role in conversion and empowering individual Christians. Some of the other

organizations that are equally active in conversion are: Mika Network, Youth for Christ, Youth with the Mission, Nepal Campus Crusade for Christ, Gospel for Asia Mission Commission Nepal, Asian Out-reach, Gospel Recording, Scripture Union, Nepal Bible Society (Rongong 2012).

There are hundreds of individual groups of Christian missions funded by Western Churches, currently working in Nepal in conversion of Nepalese and have established Churches in both ways, directly and indirectly, through social works. There are direct Church-based establishments such as Assemblies of God, (AOG). AOG claims that there are 100,000 members in Nepal. Nepal Baptist Council (NBC) claims that there are 30,000 members in Nepal, Nepal Methodist Church (NMC) claims 50,000 members, Church of God (CG) claims 10,000 members, and Nepal Evangelical Holiness Church (NEHC) claims 50,000 members, and according to National Churches Fellowship of Nepal (NCFN), the oldest registered Church organization, claims of having over 1,000 churches and members numbering to over 1,000,000 (Ghale 2010). There are 2,799 independent churches in Nepal (DOWN-2007, 253).

Role of Christian media

Media is one of the most dynamic forces of globalization, which influences and connects people cross-culturally (Appadurai 1996). Media has been a powerful influential tool for cultural change, especially in youth culture in Kathmandu among the middle class people (Liechty 2010). Simon Pandey whose preaching is broadcast on a weekly basis in Nepal Television and Radio Nepal, the state owned media, and local FM radio stations, mentions that he receives hundreds of responses from all over the country and from the Nepali diaspora abroad. He has listed five Christian FM stations in Nepal, in Kathmandu, Dhulikhel, Jhapa, Rupandehi and Okhaldhunga. These stations air Christian messages and programs on a regular basis. James (2010) has stated the modern young Indian people converted into Christianity through TV programs and rock type of charismatic music and songs. The modern Christians mostly

used western music and English languages in the Christian churches in India.

Rabin Shrestha, 26, a student of ten plus two level who is studying in the Mega College in Lagankhel of Patan, was converted to Christianity two years ago. He said that he was attracted to Christian religion through a Christian concert organized by Patan Church's youth in December, 2011. He participated in the concert with a Christian friend. He adds, "I was touched by the thrilling music and songs". He was influenced by the young singers and decided to follow Christian religion. Now, he is a member of the Patan Koinonia Church. There is indifference but not much social pressures as he participates in the Newari bhoj (communal feast) with his Buddhists relatives.

Role of print media

Nepal Bible Society has reported in the General Assembly (2014) that 72,262 full Bibles (New testaments and Old testaments) and 371,889 new testaments were sold. Those Bibles are in five vernaculars (Thulung Rai, Eastern Tamang, Ghale, Maithali and Newari). And thousands of Bible booklets are distributed (General Assembly 2014). There are other Christian literature printers: Bible League, Scripture Union, Nepali Christian Writers Groups, Gospel Recording Satahan, Nepal Bal Sangati, among others. They print Bible literature in different forms and distribute them free of cost and people are said to respond positively.

Bal Krishna Sharma converted from Hinduism. He converted by reading the printed Bible literature. He is an outstanding scholar in the Nepali Christian community. He obtained PhD from Oxford University, United Kingdom, and was awarded "Educational Achievement Medal Award" by the first President of Nepal in September 2011.

Bal Krishna Sharma was born and brought up in a staunch Hindu Brahmin family in Panautee, Kavre. He says, "One day a person came to my school with some Christian literature to sell.. I remember I purchased

two booklets for 25 paisa, a quarter of one Nepali rupee. I began to read the booklets. It was a booklet on Jesus Christ. I was simply interested to buy the booklet, even though I did not know what was inside the booklet. As I began to read, I was very much impressed with the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In my young mind I thought, if Jesus came back to life, there is a life after death. At the end of the booklet, there was an address for a correspondence course, and I was sufficiently interested in it that I enrolled. I began to get mails from the 'underground' office (because later on I came to know that in Nepal Christianity was illegal). I did the course for about 3 years and during those days I saw no Christians. I wanted to meet up with them and finally in May 1976 two people came to my school and I took them to my rented room, where I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior".

After his conversion, his teachers and friends began to ridicule him because he became a Christian. He became an untouchable and lost his caste and family heritage. This conversion narrative provides an account of the decisive role of printed literature in conversion (Sharma 2015).

Nepali migrant workers' conversion in the global market

David discusses how globalization is harmonizing different cultures and beliefs (David 2013, 8). He argues that religion conversion is an interconnected part of cultural change. Bhattachan (1996, 85) has argued that in the process of globalization, "indigenous people's society and culture never remained the same". Further, he has claimed that globalization has had an influential impact on the cultural values of the heterogeneous society and is now being driven towards homogeneity. According to Pun (2014, 200) by nature society is dynamic. In the process of changing society, religion also changes. Bhattachan has observed that impact of globalization in the Nepali society is increasing and "individualism" is gaining popularity (Bhattachan 1996). This individualism has empowered people to decide for themselves on the kind of religion they want to pursue. The modern young Nepalese are

attracted to Christianity since there is much freedom and individual choice.

Frank (1998) extensively brings historical account of the Western and Asian technology and its impact on global economy. While I don't argue about the global liberal economy, it is being more evident that the global economy has created a space for labor market to the Nepali youth. Young Nepali youth started venturing abroad for employment purposes since 1980s, and from 1990 onwards, the Nepal youth flooded to the Middle East countries to work (Ghimire 2012, 5). According to him, every day 800-1000 Nepali youth migrate to the Middle East with a hope of a prosperous future.

After an armed insurgency began in 1996, people from villages were displaced and they migrated to cities. A large number of young people migrated to Gulf countries and other Asian and European countries as foreign migrant workers. According to Pasang Sherpa (2010), a worker in a Malaysian company, also a Christian worker, reported that over 500,000 Nepalese were working in Malaysia and 10-15 per cent of Nepali migrant labors have been converted to Christianity.

Some conversion case stories

Shanti Tamang, 28, is from Dimipokari, Ramechap. She went to Malaysia in 2008 to work as a housemaid for a Chinese Christian family. She worked there for two years. Two months after her employment, the landlord asked her to visit a church on Sundays, along with the family. She belonged to a Buddhist family and was hesitant to believe in Jesus Christ, but then, she realized that she was paid for obeying the orders of the family. After visiting a church for a few months, her faith in Jesus Christ started to increase. On the Christmas Eve in 2009, Shanti decided to convert. She accepted Christian religion and was baptized, seven months later. After finishing her job contract, Shanti returned home, but it was difficult to adjust at home, because her family was against her conversion. In 2012 Shanti's mother also decided to convert

to Christianity with a hope of getting cure for her long illness. In this case, Shanti's conversion started from Malaysia.

Pun Raj Buddha Magar, 33, from Falwang village, Kuril VDC, Rolpa, converted to Christianity in 2008. He narrates about his conversion stating that he went to Malaysia as a migrant worker in 2006 and worked for the Sony Company in Johobaru, Malaysia. He adds, "My company manager was a Christian pastor. He used to ask me to go along with him to his church on Sundays. At first, I told him that I was a Hindu and I thought the church was only for Christians and others would not be allowed. He said it was okay for anyone to visit the church. During Christmas, all the company workers were invited for feast. I joined the feast along with my friends who had already converted to Christianity. I did not know that they had already converted. I was surprised to see that many of my friends, who were earlier Buddhists or Hindus, had already converted into Christianity. After two years of working in the Sony Company, I decided to become a Christian. I was influenced by the fact that Christians were much open and friendly, not reserved, even the manager and owner of the company would have lunch and dinner together. I saw that there was less hierarchy in the Christian community, and they were much more helpful than others."

Moreover, he states, "I returned to my village in 2008. My family was not happy of my conversion. My mother wanted to put *tika* on my forehead and I refused. This was a surprise to the family. I tried to convince them but failed. Three months later, I joined the same company in Malaysia and went there for employment. I shared my difficulty being the first Christian in my family. My manager and company owner prayed for me and also increased my salary. The manager suggested to me to pray for my family and send money. When I came back to Nepal in 2069 B.S., my family seemed to have understood my conversion and accepted the fact. My family does not force me to participate in Hindu festivals and social celebration and rituals. They cook food separately during the festival.

Kaman Singh Thapa Magar, 36, born in Thutaga village of Mirul VDC, Rolpa, was born and brought up in a Hindu family. He states, "My father was a priest of *Bhume Devi*, which is a deity of fertility. Every year during the crop planting season in the month of *Jestha* and *Asar* (May-June), there used to be a week-long *puja and jatra,* where my father was the main priest and performed all the sacrifices of chickens, eggs and goats. And also, every year, we had to perform worshipping of the clan god, the *Kul puja*. It lasted for a couple of days with a lot of eating, drinking home brewed beer and wines, sacrificing pigs and goats. During one of such *Kul Puja*, a brawl broke out between the members of the clan. They were drunk and quarreling for nothing. I married a girl from Thabang village and after two years had a baby son. Due to the forceful recruitment in the Maoist Peoples' Army, I decided to go abroad for employment. I did not have enough money to pay for my placement in a Malaysian company and had to take a loan from a money-lender at a high interest rate. In July 2004, I started working at a restaurant in Daman Sarah of Malaysia, along with six other Nepali workers. I came to know that two of them had already converted to Christian faith and the restaurant owner was a Christian leader. On Sundays, all the workers in the restaurant would go to the Nepali fellowship. There were over two hundred Nepali workers in the fellowship. Free transportation, food and medicine were provided. I guess almost 50 per cent of the Nepalis in Malaysia have already converted to Christian faith. The owner of the restaurant was a kind person and treated us with love. He would provide us with overtime working opportunities. One of my friends, a waiter, preached me about Jesus Christ and said that if I accepted Jesus Christ, I would have no fear in my mind and that there would be peace and God would protect our lives. He told me that he had also escaped from the insurgency in Nepal. He fled a Maoist camp in Rukum, while on leave for celebrating Dashain festival. He shared his testimony often and encouraged me to become Christian. I joined other Nepalis on the fellowship for about a year. Leader of the fellowship was a Nepali worker named Ramesh Karki from Dhulabari, East Nepal. He was an educated person and the

Chinese Church paid him for running the Nepali fellowship. He worked as an accountant of a fishery in Clang Valley shop. He converted and the Malaysian Church sponsored him a three-month long Bible training and was then appointed as a Church worker. He was given good facility, a van and free room. He was a nice, helpful person. I accepted Lord Jesus Christ during a program to celebrate Christmas in 2006. I had consulted my family before converting and they agreed to my decision. They might have done so fearing the Maoist insurgency. My brother was a student in tenth grade, but he went missing during the insurgency. We do not have any information on him. My wife would often tell me not to come to Rolpa and keep working in Malaysia. My job contract ended in 2006, but it was extended for another three years. I was given a paid holiday. I came to Nepal and stayed in Kathmandu for two months. I asked my wife to come to Kathmandu. We stayed together for two months. My wife also accepted Lord Jesus Christ at the Grace Christian Church in Balaju.

I returned to Nepal from Malaysia in 2010 and have been staying in my village since. My wife and I both asked our parents and sisters to become Christian. They happily followed Jesus Christ and we have a fellowship at my village. It is a branch fellowship of Grace Christian Church, in Nimang, Rangkot VDC. We do not face any social pressure from non-Christian neighbors and relatives. They are very positive and some of them have already converted. A former Maoist soldier, who was considered unfit to be integrated into the Nepal Army, has also converted to Christianity and now he is working in Dubai.

Similar cases have been reported in other labor destination countries such as Israel (reported by Jonathan Rai, a Nepali Church Pastor 2009) and South Korea (reported by Som Gurung, 2012, a migrant worker in the South Korea). He is working in a horticulture farm. According to him, three Nepali Churches has been established. A foreign employment agent reported in 2011 that 25-40 per cent Nepali workers have converted

in South Korea and established Nepali Churches in Malaysia, Singapore, Europe and America (Mission Commission Nepal 2013).

Dambar Bahadur Thapa Magar, 38, from Marin Khola, Sindhuli, converted while working in South Korea in 2005. He says, "I was hired by a Korean Christian family in his apiary. The owner of the company trained me as a bee keeper. This Korean family was Christian. I worked in South Korea for five years. The Korean family introduced me to Jesus Christ and also led me to their church called 'Gospel Mission Church'. I sporadically attended Sunday services for about a year. I was very impressed by the singing, worshipping and praying in the Church. I saw many miracles, people healed from their sickness, freed from demonic possession, and also some other unbelievable things happened in the Church. The owner of my company was a wealthy man but his family had a very simple lifestyle. They helped the poor and needy people in India. They are also providing medical assistance to the foreign workers. In 2005, once the owners of my company asked me to follow him to the 'Prayer Mountain' - a mountain provided by the Korean Government for Christians to pray. On the mountain, I saw and experienced wonderful things and there were hundreds of other Christians praying with emotion, singing and worshiping, in their own ways. People of various nationalities came there for prayers. I saw some Indians. I found the experience to be thrilling and moving and mysterious. Upon seeing this spiritual commitment and dedication and devotion to the Lord God, I decided to follow Jesus Christ. When I told my company owner about my decision to accept the Lord Jesus Christ, he was very happy. Pastor John Sung Hoo, a senior pastor, preached me on 'Salvation and Liberation'. He also explained to me how the Koreans fared in 1960. Koreans were animists and had been suffering from poverty, sickness and all forms of anxieties. When Koreans started believing in Jesus Christ and worked diligently, God gave peace in the family and community, and prosperity began and now every Korean Christian trusts Jesus; Christians work hard and they are prosperous. Poverty in Nepali society has been associated

with the fatalistic Hindu religious values, believing in doctrine of *karma* (Bista 1991). In the case of Thapa Magar, the Korean pastor led him in a prayer of confession of the past life and deeds. He told that he was very emotional while praying and broke out in tears. "Since then, I experienced peace and confidence in God. The owner of my company was very happy on my conversion. I was deeply influenced by the Korean Christians and the changes they saw after conversion. When they accepted Christian faith and Christian way of life, their living values changed, they started working hard, became honest and lived with a full sense of responsibility and learnt to better manage resources. Now, they are prosperous people. I am using my bee keeping skills that I leant in South Korea. “Thank God”, now I have a good business of honey and have set up my own apiary in Chitwan and twenty persons are working with me. I am happy and grateful to God I could provide job to them. I have good honey supply to my Korean friends in South Korea.

After conversion, I have not faced any social pressure, because my father is a retired British army soldier, and although he did not convert during his service, he understands me well. He is not a devoted Hindu either. I married a Christian girl. Two of my sisters and a brother have also converted into Christianity.

Kumar Singh Buddha Magar, 37, born and brought up in a Hindu family in Kuril VDC shared his story. "I am the elder son of my parents. I have one brother and three sisters. I have a son and two daughters. I could not continue my studies as we were too poor to afford money for education. Because of my family's economic condition, I went to Shillong, India, in 2009 to work in a coal mine. There were not many villagers from our area. I went there with the help of my friend of Gharti Gaun. He told me about good money that we could make by working at the mines. I worked in a coal mine owned by a member of the *Khasi* tribe. I worked there about a year. The work was much risky. I came to know that all the *Khasi* people were Christians. Many Nepali had

already converted to Christian faith after marrying *Khasi* women. I was led to a *Khasi* Church by my fellow worker. There, I saw many people possessed with evil spirits. I saw the Church members praying to free the people from evil spirits. I was fascinated by this. I was quite interested to adopt Christianity because there was such demonic problem in my village, particularly in my own family; my mother used to suffer by such demonic spirit and visited shamans to cure her. I could understand that regular visits by shamans also resulted in our weak economic condition, as we had to take loans from money-lenders at high interest rates to pay for shamans for their service.

A year later, I returned to my village during the Hindu festival of *Dashain.* I told my family about what I saw in Shillong and how the people were freed from evil spirits and sickness. At first my father and my wife hesitated to convert to Christianity saying Hindu festivals and celebrations were opportunities to get our family members and relatives together, and that if all of us became Christian, we would not have such social functions and events. My mother was ready to convert because she had been suffering from different illnesses for over a decade. Our family decided to convert to help my mother free herself from evils spirits and illnesses. I went back to work in the mines in Shillong and this time I started visiting a Nepali Church called the Nepali Baptist Church run by a Nepali pastor, John Rai. After about three months, I met the pastor and told that I was ready to become Christian. In the later week, the pastor led me in prayer and I became Christian and after six months I was baptized. I returned to my village and told my family about my conversion. My father told me that there was already a Church run by Pastor Chandra Singh Gharti Magar in Nimang village of Rangkot VDC. I met the pastor and talked to him about our family decision of conversion. The pastor visited our house and led us to Jesus Christ. He told us that we would have to remove all the idols and images from the house. In the following week, a group of Christians came from Nimang

village and packed all the idols of clan gods and disposed them in the river nearby. That night, my mother became really sick. We thought it was her last day. At about midnight, we went to the neighboring village to call Pastor Chandra Singh Gharti Magar to our home. It was already 2 a.m. in the morning when we reached the pastor's home. The pastor was shocked to see us at his house at this time of the night. We explained the situation to the pastor who assured us that it was the last time the evil spirit would trouble the mother and that it would not do so ever again. He prayed for my mother. We returned after an hour to our village and it was already seven in the morning. My mother was asleep. Pastor asked us come together for fellowship and we began to sing and praise and worship. My mother was again possessed by evil spirits. She was mumbling and we could not understand what she was saying. Pastor asked us to continue praying in louder voice. He asked my wife to bring oil to sprinkle all over in the house and pour some oil on my mother's head. He laid his hands over my mother's head and prayed in the name of Jesus Christ. My mother fell down on the floor and this was the first time I saw something like this happen. We were all astonished. After a while, my mother began to move and stood up and she said that she fell so light for the first time since the last ten years. Pastor Chandra told us that the house was free of evil spirits. Since then, we have not had any incident like that. We are very happy and thank God for delivering us. Many such stories were told in Shillong but I had never seen or experienced anything like that earlier. Pastor Chandra Singh Gharti Magar baptized my whole family. Our financial conditions have also improved. We have enough food to eat and have been able to send our children to school. My relatives are also very happy that my mother's health is in good condition. After our family's conversion, many villagers have been baptized and have established three churches nearby. My understanding of becoming Christian has now changed, it is not jut changing religion but I feel more secure in life and family.

Initial role of the ex-British Gorkha army to expand Christianity

After the signing of Anglo-Nepal Sugauli Treaty in 1816, young ethnic Nepalis have been recruited as Gurkha soldiers in the British Army. Sir Ralph Tunner (2015), a British Army General, had mentioned Nepali youth of Gurung, Rai, Limbu ethnic groups are the "...bravest of the brave, most generous of the generous, and never had a country more faith than you". The retired British Gurkha soldiers played an important role as leaders in conversion in Nepal. Some retired Gurkha soldiers who led conversion in Nepal include Tul Singh Rai, Bimal Somdeva and few others. D.R Thulung (1968) pioneered Dharan Church in Dharan. Lal Sing Gurung (1985) established Baptist Church in Bharatpur, Bir Bahadur Rai (1982) established Daran Anugrah Church, Tula Sing Rai (1994) established the Lalitpur Baptist Church. Bimal Sodemba, who retired in 1980 from British Army, claimed that hundred of Nepalese were converted by him and his Christians friends in Hong Kong. Another person was Jash Bahadur Rai (1992), who established Grace Christian Church in Pharping Kathmandu. These churches have hundreds of branches and thousands of converts (Asia Evangelistic fellowship Nepal, 2014).

The retired soldiers converted while still in service in the United Kingdom, and when they came back to Nepal, they had an impact on the society and played roles in conversion of their families and relatives to Christian faith.

Conclusion

In the Nepali society today, Christian conversion can be taken as a major socio-cultural change. The Christian population is increasing in the hostile social environment. The Christian conversion in Nepal does not have a single reason; rather, there are innumerable reasons as to why a person has adopted Christianity. I conclude that the conversion of Nepali Christian fundamentally is not a product of Western missionaries. About 200 years ago, Nepal was closed to foreign missionary, even at a time

when there was rapid growth of Christians in Europe. This expansion led with the emergence of various denominations and establishment of different foreign mission societies. These foreign missions began to send missionaries to all over the world for the core objective of Christian conversion by using charity work, education, mercy service and also applied direct evangelization (Rongong 2012, 28). In the Indian Christian conversion history, William Carry is considered as a father of modern missionary (Ponraj 1996, 41). The major tools of conversion by the foreign missionaries were: 1) Education--providing free education from the primary level to high school, 2) Medical service--there are hospitals in India, such as Vellore Christian Hospitals in Madras, St. Stephan Hospital in Delhi, so on. 3) Social service, mainly caring orphans. Those orphans, when they became adult, converted into Christian faith and even have become preachers and missionaries, a kind of strategy of spreading the Christian faith to all the nations (Harvest Asia 2012, 4-6).

Nepalis were converted by the Nepalis Christians in different places and different times**.** After the restoration of democracy in 1990, the Nepali Christians involved in Christian organizations and geared up the growth of Christianity in Nepal. The ex-British Gorkha Army's conversion in the foreign lands also had an impact in their family and relatives. They were played the first role in Nepali Christian's history role and can be taken as the forerunners in Christian leadership.

In the latter days, the Christian conversion has undergone a paradigm shift. The modern cultural values, especially 'individualism', are being adopted in life style, which has fostered the younger generation to take a self decision in Christian conversion. This has been observed in the conversion of migrant workers among the Nepalese youth. Therefore, the Christian conversion in Nepal has to be also interpreted in the global context. And another theological fact is that Christian faith is basically centralized on mission in daily practice as an imperative commandment of the Scripture (Mathew 28:18-20).

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Conversion, Crisis of Sociability and Reframing *Jati* Identity among the Santhal Community of Eastern Tarai

Lagan Rai*

This paper examines the discourses of *jati* identity[1] among the followers of Christianity and indigenous traditional religion, among the Santhal people, an indigenous group from Nepal's easternmost Tarai[2]. Religious conversion, particularly conversion to Christianity, is an emerging social phenomenon in Nepal despite legal restrictions[3]. When conversion takes place in a relatively smaller and culturally 'homogenous' community, such as the Santhal, it can engender profound social and cultural changes; conversion to another religion can incite new conflicts among its members. But the local people and the community are themselves agentive social actors and they can also come up with culturally mediated

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1 I use the category of *jati* in this article to reflect how the Santhal people deploy the term to refer to themselves as a collective people in the sense of an ethnic group, not as a caste Hindu group.

2 The term Santhal and Santal are used synonymously by scholars. In my field study, respondents identified themselves as Santhal and I have used the term Santhal in this article. In Nepal, Santhal is registered as Santhal/Satar in the list of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFDIN 2002). However, the Santhal people consider the term *Satar* as a derogatory remark.

3 The Christian populations were not reported in the 1952/54 census. There were 458 Christians recorded in the census of 1961, which reached 101,976 in the 2001 census. The number of Christians has significantly increased after 1990. The number of Christians increased by 268.4 percent between 2001 and 2011. Christians and their organizations argue that the total number Christians is underrepresented in official censuses of the CBS (Dahal 2014).

ways and practices to resolve and address the challenges brought by conversion (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997). Among such sources of conflict, as many studies have revealed, the issue of interfaith marriage often becomes a highly contested practice, when members of indigenous community with strong emphasis on ethnic endogamy and clan exogamy undergo religious conversion (Connolly 2009; Smith 2009). In Nepal, despite the growing scholarship and research focused on Christian conversions (Barclay 2009; Shah 1993; Hembrom 1995; Fricke 2008; Pandey 2003; Perry 1997; Rai 2013) scholars have not focused on how religious conversions challenge the customary norms and practices of marriage and how people use marriage and marriage rules as ways of creating group boundaries between the converts and the followers of the indigenous religions within a single ethnic community. This paper demonstrates the need for anthropologists to refocus their analytical gaze on kinship and marriage in order to understand the emerging and arguably new dimensions of social changes brought by conversion to Christianity in Nepal.

This paper primarily focuses on the ways in which traditional Santhal and Christian Santhal, despite belonging to the single Santhal ethnic group in terms of their shared substance such as language, ancestral territory, history and kin relations, demarcate themselves as separate *jati,* such that marriage alliance between the two groups are forbidden and socially disdained. I argue that most distinguishing performances in everyday life of Christian Santhals are marked by (a) the rejection of customary religious rites and rituals, and (b) the shifting of marital alliance from *jati* endogamy or ethnic/tribal endogamy to religious endogamy. Among the Santhal people, such emerging shifts in cultural practices have become sources of conflict and contestations regarding their claims for cultural identity and rights. One can often hear these groups, the Christian and the followers of indigenous Santhal religion, who I refer to as traditional Santhal in this article, saying *"hamro kurai mildaina"* (we are not a good match) - thus demarcating each other and inferring confrontations of

their religious values and practices. This paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork that I undertook for a total of six months between 2010 to 2014 among the Santhals of Majhare Village Development Committee (VDC) in Morang District. Drawing on primary field data, I show that the cleavages and confrontations between Christian and traditional Santhal, which is mostly implicit in day-to-day life, become explicit and overt in the case of interfaith marriage.

It should be emphasized here that the kind of debates, contesting issues and discourses which I observed among the local Santhal people during the period of my field study did not converge with the ones we often read in the popular newspapers on Christian conversions and hear in the national debates on religious conversions (Shah 1993). Such debates and discourses at the national level often do not take into account the lived social reality, particular historical contexts, religious ideologies, and prejudices rendered against the marginal social groups such as the Santhal. I argue that scholars need to pay close attention to the locally embedded marriage and kinship practices to understand how various social groups within an ethnic community make claims regarding *jati* identity (what makes a person Santhal) and cultural rights. However, this paper mainly focuses on how people claim and reframe *jati* identity in the contexts of interfaith marriages. I have referred to the importance of clan and how the Santhals use politics of clan to claim their *jati* identity; however, the broader discussion on kinship is beyond the scope of the present paper. By doing so, this paper contributes to the emerging field of anthropology of religious conversion in Nepal.

Jati endogamy and making of *Jati* identity

The term *Santhal* is a derivate word and the Santhal people call themselves *Hor/Hod* (Haaland 1991). *Hod* is the ethnic identity shared by the Santhal people living across different places and regions. During my fieldwork period, I observed the use of *Hod* as a primary identity marker that the local Santhals use among themselves. For example, I often heard children of school-going age introducing themselves as *Hod*

during conversations with me. My respondents told me that when they speculate that a stranger is a *Hod*, they immediately initiate interaction, asking if they are *Hod* and where he/she comes from. Respondents from the Christian community also told me that despite their differences in religious beliefs, they feel other *Hod* to be trustworthy. The important point I want to emphasize here is that *Hod* is the pan-Santhal identity to which all Santhal feel a strong sense of belonging, irrespective of their religious beliefs.

Santhal community demarcates other Hindu caste groups as *diku*, Christians as *Isai* and traditional Santhal as *bidin hod*. Regarding the religious groups among the Santhal people in Morang, Premalata Ghimire (1979/1980, 1989) shows that there are three[4] distinct ritual categories (i.e., *bidin hod, safa hod, and kristan* (Christian) *hod*) within a single ethnic group. They broadly divide themselves into Hindu Santhal and Christian Santhal. *Bidin hod* and *safa hod* share affinity with Hinduism; however, they do not consider themselves a part of caste society. She argues that from the perspective of traditional *bidin hod* and *safa hod,* there are only two possible social groups or *jats:* Hindus and Muslims (Ghimire 1989, 1). As such, those who are not Hindus are Muslims or Muslim like. Thus, from this perspective, even the Christians are considered as Muslims, which are locally called as *Miya*. However, Christians Santhals do not agree with them and they consider themselves separate from Hindu and Muslim. In other words, the traditional Santhal and Christian Santhal perceive themselves as distinct *jatis.*

Both Christian and traditional Santhals, use the term *bidin* as a classificatory category of religious groups. However, they have contested interpretations of the term *bidin* in the study area. Since it is customary

4 A new religious group called *Jiyan Marang Buru,* who are reformist in nature, has come into existence within traditional Santhal community recently. *Jiyan Marang Buru* claimed that they were reviving their 'authentic ' religious practice and they were critical of the influence of Hinduism and Christianity.

practices among the Santhal people to not observe their major festivals like *Soharai/Sohrae* and *Baha* on a fixed date, they celebrate *Soharai/ Sohrae* in January/February and *Baha* in February/March. But the exact date of the festivals are collectively decided by the village such that the date varies among village to village. Unlike the traditional Santhals, the Christians follow a specific or universally homogenous temporal calendar (for instance, December 25 as the Christmas). Christian Santhals literally interpret *bidin* as "people without fixed days". A local pastor of the study area argued that the British coined the term *bidin* during the British Raj in India, as they were astonished to find out that Santhal people did not celebrate their festival at once. He implied that *bidin* was an evaluative term, the British used, to demark the colonized people who did not follow organized ways of social life based on homogenous temporal calendars. In other words, for the Christian Santhals, *bidin* is a sign of "backwardness"; they lack awareness of the value of time, which they think had affected the overall 'progress' of the Santhal community. However, the elder traditional Santhals do not agree with the Christian's interpretations of *bidin* and find such explanations misleading and as distortions of their rich customary practices, which among others is also the flexibility of their festival calendars. In reality, the local villagers have autonomy to decide dates for the festivals by taking into considerations the existing social relations of reciprocal commensality and feasts among and between families and relatives across many villages. For the traditional Santhals, the importance of meaningful sociality—inviting and visiting their families and relatives for feasts and drinking—must be considered while fixing the days/dates to celebrate their festivals. Hence, they find the Christian Santhals' interpretations of the term *bidin* misleading and even offensive. They argue that *bidin* was derived from root word *bid,* which implies a community fully devoted to its customary rules. These different interpretations of the word *bidin* and sharp dichotomies between Hindu and Christians indicate that the Christian and the traditional Santhals perceive each other as 'different' groups, even different *jati*. The Santhal people often use

the term *jati* to represent their collective self and cultural boundary in everyday practice. They derive the idea of *jati* from their understanding and adherence to primarily two customary *'niyam'* or customary social rules. The Santhal people have strong sense of *niyams* which govern their social life. The Santhal people have a customary institution called *Manjhi Pargana*—which is a village council having office bearers and where all villagers are its members. The *Manjhi Haram* is the head of the village council[5] who is called *Manjhi* colloquially. The *Manjhi* is responsible to implement the customary rules and decide actions against those who violate the *niyam*. As the first rule for *jati* making, the Santhal must conform to their spiritual ties with their ancestors by sharing a *bheti beri,* the customary practice of equally sharing the cost for public ceremony and rituals. The Santhal people become righteous members of their ethnic community by conforming to *bheti beri*. The regular contribution of *bheti beri* signifies one's affiliation to spiritual beings, ancestors, the community, and the *jati* as a whole. However, Christian Santhals condemn the sharing of *bheti beri* because they regard it as a traditional ritual of *murti puja* (worshiping of idols, spirits and deities), which is a sin according to the Bible. They reject the customary practice that traditional Santhals consider to be a foundation for *jati* making. Christian Santhals disassociate themselves from the traditional ceremonies and festivals as a way of marking their distinct religious identity. The rejection of *bheti beri* and the breach of the rule of *jati* endogamy, the issue I am going to address later, have provoked criticisms of Christian Santhals and questioning of their identity by the local traditional Santhals.

As the second rule of making of *jati* identity, the Santhal should strictly adhere to rule of *jati* endogamy and clan exogamy, which govern the traditional marriage practices. Thus, marriage and sexual relations within one's patrilineal clan[6] members and within three-generation

5 For details of *Manjhi Pargana*, see Siwakoti (2013) and Rai (2010).

6 There are twelve clans: *Hansadak, Murmu, Kisku, Hembrom, Mardi, Soren, Tudu, Core, Bedea, Besra and Pauria* (Singh 1994).

line of one's mother's clan are considered incestuous relationship**.** As one Santhal myth goes, the apical ancestors had divided their children into multiple clans in order to avoid the incest between brothers and sisters (Karua 2009). In the past, the Santhal people had the custom of forbidding a marriage between specific clans, such as the marriage between Hansda and Murmu clans or between Besra and Tutu clans. The violation of the clan exogamy is strictly subjected to severe form of customary punishment called *bitlaha,* whereby the violators of the social rules and their families are humiliated, assaulted and even ostracized by their entire community, as well as by the neighboring communities. A senior *Manjhi haram,* in his late sixties, from *Baadi Tola*[7] told me that *bitlaha* used to be so severe that offender and their families often used to run away from their village in order to escape the punishment.

In the past, inter ethnic marriage involving the Santhal and non-Santhal was also subjected to *bitlaha* punishment. But, if the community wanted, they also had culturally prescribed ways of approving the interethnic marriage by 'converting' the non-Santhal bride as one of the Santhal clan member. Communal approval of the interethnic marriage and the conversion of the bride into Santhal clan were achieved through a special ritual called *Jam Jati*. The *Jam Jati* is a public ceremony to reintroduce a non-Santhal bride into a Santhal community member by 'giving' her a Santhal clan.

Nowadays the breach of *jati* endogamy is only subjected to *Jam Jati*; the punishment of *bitlaha* is no more in practice. During the *Jam Jati* ceremony, villagers and *Manjhi haram* from different villages are invited to observe the ritual. The bride serves the gathering of people with special meals cooked without salt. The acceptance of food by the Santhal community and kin people, and the act of commensality—the enactment of the fundamental symbol and everyday practice of Santhal socialit—mark an important rite of passage for the couple, involved in

7 Santhals demark their village as *Tola*.

the interethnic marriage. During this ceremony, a Santhal family having clan title other than that of the groom's family (groom's father's side) adopts the bride as one of its family members and gives her their clan membership. The non-Santhal bride cannot be given the clan membership of the groom's father side, in order to confirm the rules of clan exogamy. Hence, the *Jam Jati* ritual, though performed to convert the non-Santhal bride, also sanctifies the rules of clan exogamy– a *niyam* Santhal considers to be fundamental to their *jati* identity. After undergoing the *Jam Jati*, the bride is formally considered as a member of the Santhal *jati*. For example, B.L. Hasda, a local of *Baadi Tola*, performed *Jam Jati* ritual in order to sanction the marriage of his son with a girl from *Gangain*[8] community. Although Mr. Hasda was an educated person and also an influential local leader, he was apologetic for breaching the *niyam* of *jati* endogamy. He invited villagers and *Manjhi haram* from surrounding five villages to observe the ritual. During the ritual, his son-in-law, who was from *Soren* clan, adopted the bride as his sister. Mr. Hasda happily asserted, "We brought her in our *jati* giving a *thar* (clan). According to our custom, she is our *jati*. She is *Soren* now."

Siwakoti (2013) argues that the rule of ethnic endogamy functions to preserve and protect Santhal ethnic solidarity and identity. She has remarked that such traditional social practices are likely to be bypassed in the coming days. However, my field-level findings suggest that the breach of *jati* endogamy is still considered as *chhut*; i.e., an act of defilement subjected to *Jam Jati* ritual. The rule of *jati* endogamy still provides the dominant norm and regulates marriage practices among the traditional Santhal community.

Conversion to Christianity and *jati* identity

Traditional Santhals consider religious conversion not only as adoption of new and alien religious beliefs and practices, but they also see it as a radical transformation of *jati* identity. They argue that after the

8 *Gangain* is a ethnic group enlisted within the category of *Janajati* (See NFDIN 2002).

conversion, Christian Santhals cease to remain Santhal and become other *jati* groups[9]. The customary *Jam Jati* ritual, which is originally performed to endorse *jati* identity to a bride from non-Santhal community, has also been politicized as a mandatory ritual to reconvert the converted Christians as the members of the Santhal indigenous religious group. In other words, if a Christian converter wishes to rejoin the traditional Santhal community and follow the traditional religion, that individual must undergo *Jam Jati* ritual. Such logic behind performing the *Jam Jati* to reconvert a convert is derived from their customary sense of *jati* identity, which Santhals believe is sustained by linking self to their ancestors through concrete practices, such as worshiping their spiritual beings and maintaining *jati* boundary by adhering to rule of *jati* endogamy. In other words, the *jati* identity is not simply given by virtue of one's birth into a Santhal family—people must constantly enact *jati* identity through their actions. They must adhere to the *niyams*—the social rules that Santhal consider fundamental for maintaining one's clan and *jati* membership. Through the *Jam Jati* ritual, the traditional Santhal exercises their cultural rights to penalize the converts for condemning ancestors' spirits, and for breaking the norms of *jati* endogamy in the case of inter-ethnic marriage.

L. Marndi, an active youth in his late twenties, who is dedicated to promote Santhal traditions and cultural identity, charged that the conversion to Christianity is a serious threat to the Santhal *jati* tradition and cultural identity. He remarked that they have promoted and continued the *Jam Jati* ritual as a control mechanism to stop moral anarchy emanating from conversion to Christianity and to keep their *jati* identity intact. Similarly, when I asked a *Jog Manjhi*[10], a senior Santhal in in his late fifties from Sirsiya village, about his opinion on reconversion of a convert, he was elated. He raised his voice slowly saying, "We have nothing to say when they convert. That is their individual choice. But when they need

9 Christian Santhals were stereotyped as British people and Muslim.

10 *Jog Maghi* is a customary social actor entrusted with his duty and responsibility to look after the moral behaviors of boys and girls.

to reconvert, we would not accept them without *Jam Jati*. We charge them *dunda jariwana*; i.e., penalties considering their economic status." Then he smiled for a while and explained to me the process of *Jam Jati*. He repeatedly recited, "We have *niyam*" (rules to restrain the converts). He further explained:

> A convert who wishes to reconvert to our traditional religion should formally make a petition[11] to include him/her as member of their original community, by offering bottles of *raksi* (*liquor*) to *Manjhi*. Then *Manjhi* decides penalty for the convert by evaluating economic status of the person. *Manjhi* demands bottles of *raksi* and birds like hen or a pair of pigeon to sacrifice, if a convert is from a poor family. But in some cases, *Manjhi* may be tough and can demand many bottles of *raksi*, three or four thousand rupees, and a large amount of pork meat. *Manjhi* sacrifices birds or animals offered by the convert to *Bongas* (spirits and deities). Manjhi further pleads with spirit of their ancestors to forgive the covert and accept the convert as a member of their community. Thus, the former convert is reunited with their *Bongas* and ancestors. This ritual is followed by the community's acceptance of meals and drinks from the former convert, which endorse his rejoining the traditional community.

Mr. Marndi's views cited here indicate that the Christian Santhals can appeal to the village council represented by the *Manjhi*, the representative village head, and they can re-join the membership of the traditional Santhal by paying the stipulated fines and undergoing *Jam Jati* ritual for the villagers. Thus, the *Jam Jati* ritual has acquired new significance in maintaining the perceived *jati* boundary between Christian and traditional Santhal. In other words, in the context of increasing conversion to Christianity, the customary ritual such as *Jam Jati* has become an impeccable marker of the traditional Santhal *jati* identity. A *Manjhi* from *Badi Tola* was very reactive when I asked him why it was mandatory to observe the *Jam Jati* ritual to reconvert Christian Santhals, who unlike the brides from non-Santhal community are from their own

11 Petition is colloquially termed as as *nibedan garne*

Santhal community. As he could not speak fluently in Nepali, he tried to explain in Hindi. He started to explain by saying:

> *Jam Jati* is similar to Christian ritual of baptism. Since a convert denounces all traditional rites and rituals, they are different *jati* after conversion. They can marry with any caste, even with *Dom* and *Chamar*[12]. But we are not allowed to marry outside our community. In case of such violations of this rule, we are compelled to observe the ritual of *Jam Jati*. One should regularly keep their faith on their ancestors' spirits to retain *jati* identity. When a convert starts to worship ancestral deities, they will again retain *jati* identity.

For this *Manjhi*, a Santhal can only become Santhal through *practice*; i.e., by adhering and following their customary rules and rituals, and most importantly, by maintain their ritual ties with their ancestors.

A middle-aged traditional Santhal, who had observed *Jam Jati* ritual to reintroduce a convert into the traditional Santhal community had similar opinion like the *Manjhi* from *Badi Tola*. He narrated an event of *Jam Jati* ritual:

> The male goat offered by the convert was sacrificed and cooked. The *Manjhi* and community elders were first served the cooked meat without adding salt as *prasad* (offerings to the deity). Later the cooked meat was served adding salt to all. The convert behaved liked a fugitive in the gathering and apologized for running away and appealed to accept him again. The *Manjhi* and the gatherings recited '*Christian bato hamro jatima ayo'* (he has come back to our *jati* from Christian).

The narrator claimed that a convert becomes other *jati*; therefore, the formal marriage between Christian and them is forbidden. He told me, "*Angrej bhayeko thiyo ni* (he had become an Englishman). *Angrej ra*

12 *Dom* and *Chamar* are discriminated as “untouchable caste” groups.

Hindu[13] *dharma kehi pani mildaina* (Hindu and Christian religion are totally different)." But when I said that traditional and Christian Santhals do share kinship relations, he seemed to be in a difficult position. He did not have a straightforward answer. He told me, "*Santhali ta Santhali ho* (Yes, they are Santhal too). They are like *Khirkhire*[14]. We do not like that. But why don't they leave everything when they denounce this religion? Why do they still retain clan and lineage? I have argued about these things with Christians many times but they did not care such comments." He showed his anguish and frustrations, implying that Christians were opportunist, but he seemed puzzled about the primordial kinship relations that they share with Christians.

The significance of adhering to rules of *jati* making was obvious in the case of M. Bersa's family (I will be discussing more about this family later). Mr. Besra's aunt had become very ill. Expecting his wife's recovery, his uncle and aunt began to attend the mass at the local church for a year. Unfortunately, his aunt's health did not improve and thus they stopped going to the church. When I asked Bersa's uncle if the traditional Santhal community penalized him through *Jam Jati* ritual, he said: "No, they did not. I had not broken up my relation with my *samaj* (community). I was contributing my share of *bheti beri* to our community during the *Soharai* /*Sohrae*, *Baha* and all other ceremonies." In this case, the *bheti beri* was instrumental for sustaining his affiliation in the community and in reproducing social relations and maintaining his *jati* identity.

New marital alliance: *Jati* endogamy vs religious endogamy

My discussions so far have highlighted the importance of *jati* endogamy and how the notions of *jati* identity resurface during interethic marriage and reconversion of a Christian convert to traditional Santhal

13 Hinduism has immense influence on traditional Santhal. They call themselves as Hindu in everyday life.

14 A wild cat-like animal, which prey on domestic birds, is notoriously famous for deceiving its prey.

community. In this section, my discussions will try to address the questions: Are Christian Santhals equally committed to *jati* endogamy, and if not, then how do they derive their sense of *jati* ? I argue here that conversion to Christianity has shifted marital alliance within Santhal community. Christian and traditional Santhal, despite being a single ethnic groups, have split into exclusive endogamous group, based on their religious affiliation as if they are two distinct ethnic groups. The marriage between the two, or the interfaith marriage, is condemned by both groups. When it comes to the practice of marriage, Christians exclusively prioritize their religious identity over their ethnic identity while seeking for groom or bride. A Christian family may establish marital relations with other Christian families from different ethnic and caste backgrounds. A Christian family generally prefers a Christian family of same denomination for marital alliance[15].

The formal marriage between Christian and traditional Santhal is strictly forbidden. All religious leaders and cultural experts from the two groups whom I interviewed were rigid on the question of interfaith marriage. All of them invariably condemned such marriage and claimed that formal interfaith marriage between the two groups is simply not possible. They explained that the formal marriage among traditional Santhal proceeds with the consent of two families; i.e., from the families of the bride and the groom. However, in the case of interfaith marriage between Christian and traditional Santhals, individuals often elope or marry without the consent from their families and communities[16]. The emerging

15 A senior pastor told me that he had confrontation with a Father from the local Catholic church because both of them wanted to enforce their own rule while officiating marriage ceremony when a boy from a Protestant church and a girl from a Catholic church eloped.

16 Customary practices of getting married by elopement is known as *angir* marriage. When a boy returns home his lover, his parents or guardians should compulsorily inform the *Manjhi* about the incident. Otherwise, he will be penalized. The *Manjhi* will interrogate the girl about her identity, previous marital status and her consent. This practice also shows that the traditional Santhal takes marriage without parental consent seriously.

ideal of 'romantic love' and 'love marriage' (Ahearn 2001) among the young generation has challenged the imposed social prohibition and condemnation of the interfaith marriage. Such challenges and growths of interfaith marriage among Christian and traditional Santhal groups have further intensified the underlying debates about *jati* identity. The Santhal categorizes the interfaith marriage as 'love marriage' – a practice which is more pronounced among the younger generations who attend or have attended high school and colleges.

Parents are helpless when their children fall in love with a partner from 'antagonistic' religious beliefs and when they cannot stop them from such marriage alliances. But marriage is not simply an individual choice; it is an embedded social process. The married Santhal couple cannot simply avoid their respective families and communities, because the social approval of their marriage still remains very important. Thus, after marriage, the two families and their respective communities enact cultural politics of converting the one with different religious faith into their respective religious faith. And, in most cases, such politics of conversions are gendered—the daughter-in-laws are generally under pressure to give up their religious faith and convert into the religion of their husbands' families. Put it simply, in the case of an interfaith marriage, it is generally the women who face more pressure to follow the religion of their husbands' families.

Christian community is also seriously concerned with marriage without parent's consent; they consider such marriage as "unholy" practice and take it as an indication of the weakening of the religious faith among its followers. Mr. N. Tudu, a man in his late fifties, also a member of the management committee of a local Protestant church, told me that they socialize their children to condemn interfaith marriage in regular mass and home. Similarly, a local senior pastor A. Baske also told me that their church strictly monitors the behavior of youths and sanction their marriages. He remarked that their Church condemns marriage without parents' consent and considers it an unholy marital union.

For the Christian community, interfaith marriage is a sin and a result of weakening of religious faith. The couple involved in such interfaith marriage are morally looked down and considered ‘culprits’ and 'sinners'. For example, F. Hasda, a college student from the local Catholic community, told me, "The Bible does not allow interfaith marriage. After being baptized, one should be faithful to the God and follow his rule. The parents of the couple can be expelled from the membership of the church if they are involved in interfaith marriage." Like F. Hasda, the cousin brother of Prem Lal Hasda (name changed), who married a girl from the traditional Santhal community, had similar views on interfaith marriage. He inferred that by marrying a non-Christian girl, his cousin brother had lost his previous social status in the church and in the Christian community. Not only that, he also expressed doubts about the intentions of his sister-in-law (Prem Lal’s wife) to follow or convert to Christianity. He was suspicious that she might eventually reconvert into her original religion and create additional problems for Prem Lal. Like the traditional Santhal community, the Christian Santhals have also retained traditional value of 'arranged marriage ' and the necessity of parental consent for a ‘good’ and ‘sacred marriage’. However, individual agency becomes dominant during love affair, undermining the established marital norms and practices.

Forbidden interfaith marriage and crisis of sociability

The schism between the Christian and traditional Santhal community, which becomes explicit during interfaith marriages has, underlying deep internal logic intertwined with history, religious values, and prejudices in their everyday lives. Historically, the Christian Santhal is a marginal social group, whose members have a long history of suppression and discrimination (Kehrberg 2000; Pandey 2003). In the past, Christian Santhals were ostracized from the community and prosecuted by the Nepali state (Perry 1997; Hembrom 1995). The traditional Santhal and Christian communities, in fact, are prejudiced against each other. The traditional Santhal community considers conversion to Christianity as an

emerging and a serious threat to their religion and customs. They have stereotyped Christianity as religion of Angrej or the British people, thus associating it with the religion of the British colonists. It is important to emphasize here that the collective memory and history of the Santhal resistance against the colonialism and British Raj in India (Sengupt and Lochan 2015; Sen 2005) is also shared and cherished by the local Santhals in the study area. The elders and knowledgeable persons from the traditional Santhal community pay homage to the spirits of those freedom fighters, such as Baba Tilka Manjhi, Sidhu Murmu and Kanu Murmu, as their sacred common ancestors. Thus the religion of the British colonists, i.e., Christianity, is seen as an antagonistic religion. In the past, Christians were regarded as "untouchables" and beef eaters due to the immense influence of Hinduism on the traditional worldviews of the Santhal[17]. Such worldviews still exist among some people from the older generations. However, the Christian Santhals deny that charge of beef eating as a prejudice against them. They argue that the Santhal people had a tradition of beef eating in India, but the Santhal community in Nepal condemned beef eating due to influence of Hinduism and Hindu state[18].

The Christian Santhals discriminate the traditional Santhals as "unholy" and inferior. They condemn practice of worshipping idols and traditional custom of drinking[19] as inferior customs. They perceive custom of

17 Christians were also stereotyped as *Muslman* (Muslim). For classification of Christians by the Hindu state see Hofer (2004).

18 Educated Christians fear the influence of Hindu fundamentalist in the traditional community.

19 Customary practices of drinking is a controversial issue within the many religious communities in the Santhal community. Protestant Christians and *Safa Hod* (orthodox Hindu religious group) strongly condemn the custom of drinking. However, the Catholic Christians have retained the customs of drinking as their traditional customs. Moreover, *Jiyan Marang Buru*, which is a new and emerging reformist religious group, has reformed the customs of drinking. They prohibit drinking of liquor but considers the locally brewed beer or *handi* drinkable.

drinking as a problem in sociability between the two groups. Prem Lal (who I have mentioned earlier), a Christian boy who had married a girl from the traditional Santhal community, remarked that Christian Santhals forbade their daughters and sisters to get married with the traditional Santhal families because they discriminate the traditional religious values and condemn the customs of drinking. He said:

> *Khayeko manche sanga kurai mildaina* (Interaction is not possible with a drunkard person). We keep distances even with our relatives when they are drunk. We do not like the way they drink in festivals. They drink excessively and connot control themselves. After getting drunk, they begin to quarrel with the family members and misbehave with us.

Customary practices of drinking alcohol have both social and religious significance in the traditional Santhal community. According to one Santhal myth, rice beer, known as *handi*, was invented by their ancestor, the guardian deity, in order to incite the first human couples into social and sexual intercourse (Rai 2010 and Siwakoti 2013 for myth of origin of Santhal). Thus, the traditional Santhal community considers the customary practice of drinking fundamental to their sociability and rituals. Serving of alcoholic drinks and acts of drinking together are essential for the Santhal notion and practice of hospitality towards their guests and relatives during major ceremonies and festivals. During the major festivals like *Sohrae* and *Baha*, they visit each other and exchange food and beverages.

In Santhal community, one way of renewing and strengthening social relations between kin members involves the reciprocal exchange of hospitality and visits during major festivals. Similarly, Santhal must participate in all the *rites-de-passage* rituals and events of their relatives. Socially, the Christians and non-Christian Santhals are part of the same kin and family relationships, which continue to mediate peoples' everyday social interactions. But as Christian Santhals condemn the drinking of alcohol, which constitutes a major practice of Santhal traditional

hospitality, the sociability between the two groups becomes problematic and difficult. A senior member of the local Catholic community remarked that his relatives who follow the traditional religion do not enjoy visiting him because he does not serve them alcohol. Traditional Santhals often remark that they would get nothing visiting their Christian relatives. Moreover, the traditional Santhal people believe certain rite-de-passage like birth and death are *chhut*, i.e., an act of defilement. And in such events, the families invite their relatives and other villagers to participate in the purification rituals. However, Christian Santhals declare that they have only worldly relations (such as exchange of labor or other secular interactions) with their traditional kin members and they denounce the traditional religious obligations of kin members. For example, a convert does not mourn the funeral rituals of his/her own parents if they are not Christians. Therefore, for traditional Santhals, the interfaith marriage and conversions to Christianity have led to a deeper crisis in culturally prescribed sociability that they highly value and wish to continue.

Interfaith marriage: Tug of war over integrity of faith

Interfaith marriage is one of the prominent causes for religious conversion among the young generation in the Santhal community[20]. In the case of interfaith marriages, one of the couples is required or expected to compromise his/her religious faith. Thus, interfaith marriage is always contentious practice, provoking explicit conflicts and confrontation between Christian and traditional Santhal communities. Each of these two groups perceive interfaith marriage as a potential threat to the integrity of the group's religious faith. A knowledgeable local teacher, an expert in the history and traditions of the Santhal people, asserted that the traditional community is not in a win-win position in an interfaith marriage. He commented, "Christians are selfish. They convert our daughters and they also force our sons to convert into Christianity." He substantiated his claim by telling me a story of a man, who is an active

20 For motivation for conversion to Christianity in Santhal community see Rai (2013)

ethnic activist and a district member of the *Nepal Santhal Adibasi Uthan Sangh,* the national indigenous organization of the Santhal people. As per the teacher's tale, the activist's only son converted into Christianity under pressure after falling in love with a Christian girl and he moved to live with the girl's families. Later I visited the activist and discussed the issue of interfaith marriage with him. He looked grave during conversation and told me that his son's interfaith marriage had split his family. The decision of his son had profoundly devastated him because without the son, there was nobody in his family to carry out the religious traditions. He still hoped that his son would reconvert to traditional religion in the future.

After listening to peoples' experiences of interfaith marriage, I can confidently infer interfaith marriage as a tug of war over integrity of faith between the two families from different religious traditions. The married couples will be under pressure from their respective families to continue their own faith. As a norm of the patriarchal family structure, normally a wife is supposed to follow religion of her husband but sometimes she also revolts against her husband's faith. I should emphasize here that the couples, who were brave enough to follow interfaith marriage, go through intense experiences of anxiety and doubts before they decide to marry a person outside of his or her religious faith. They are concerned about religious differences and possible negative consequences; they have to overcome in order to come into a marital relation, which is deemed amoral, unethical and bad by their family and in-laws. For instance, M. Besra and Prem Lal, whom I have introduced earlier, were concerned with religious differences with their girlfriends. Both of them had persuaded their girlfriends to follow their religious faith, in order to overcome the obvious and unforeseen conflicts in the future. Although their wives willingly followed their husband's religion, they were first doubtful about their wives' interests.

People discourage interfaith marriage because a wife may revolt against her husband's faith, which they believe will lead to a crisis in the integrity

of their faiths. The case of the daughter of a local *Manjhi haram* helps us to understand such revolts. The daughter of the *Manjhi haram* had retained her traditional religious faith after she eloped with a Christian boy. She told me that she was an orthodox Hindu since her childhood and was very rigid on her faith, such that her boyfriend was compelled to follow her religion. Her husband was also an orthodox Christian and had a church in the courtyard of their house. He strategically detached from the church for months before they ran away from the village in order to avoid the charges on him. Then he also started to worship Hindu deities. They got married in a Hindu temple after they eloped. When she returned home, her parents held a traditional Santhal marriage ceremony in her natal village. She proudly remarked that she was the only *bidin* woman to have succeeded in keeping her religious belief intact even after marrying with a Christian boy. She was determined to change the faith of her husband too. During our conversation, her father was lying in a bed on the courtyard, since he was not feeling well. He was listening to our conversation from the beginning. Since her father is a *Manjhi haram*, I was curious to know if villagers put charge on her family. As soon as he heard my asking, the father got up immediately and interrupted us saying "Why would they charge me? She is Hindu and she has married according to our custom." Her father carried no reservations against his daughter as she did not convert. In other words, he was the winner in the tug of war over integrity of faith, since he did not lose her daughter and his religion. They were even able to convert the Christian into their religion.

In some of the cases of interfaith marriage, social tension and dispute between the two families escalated when the families become reluctant to compromise their religious faiths. M. Bersa, whom I have mentioned earlier, passed through an immense liminal phase since his in-laws and their Church did not compromise their faith. His mother was against interfaith marriage. She stood against him the day she came to know about his love affair. His father did not have any reservation as long as

her girlfriend was ready to follow the family religion. His girlfriend, now M. Bersa's wife, was ready to follow the traditional religion, but her family and the church opposed her decision. Her family, the Father and the Sisters from the Church began pressuring M. Bersa to convert into Christianity. Hence, the conflict between the two families escalated. When I asked M. Bersa's father how he managed the interfaith marriage, he told:

> *Dherai tension bhayo* (I was mentally stressed). 'Father' and 'Sister' from the Catholic Church came to discuss with me. The Father told that my son should come to the Church because she was baptized. I argued that she had to confirm to traditional religion as she had come to his house. I had serious confrontations with the Father. I even scolded him. However, the Father and Sisters continued to persuade me. One day, as usual, the Father came to discuss with me. But I was so irritated that I shouted at him giving a threat, "If you come again, I will pick up my *lathi* (stick) and break your jeep." I did not receive any pressure from Church after that incident.

As this interview excerpts illustrate, when the two families are reluctant to compromise their faiths, such situations in interfaith marriage may even engender violent confrontations. However, a conflict between two families, as my discussions in the next section show, can be resolved, if not earlier, through Santhal customary institutions and practices.

Meditation of interfaith marriage

The customary institutions and practices have vital role to play even in new settings like interfaith marriage. Therefore, the traditional customs of marriage practices and customary institution of *Manjhi* have instrumental roles in crisis management during interfaith marriage. Even though customary institution remains indifference to Christianity, in times of inter-ethnic conflicts, a Christian family can also appeal to the *Manjhi haram,* the head of the village council of the Santhal community. For example, Christian Santhals seek help from *Manjhi haram* to settle

disputes in the community and also for searching their daughter[21] when she elopes with a boy from a traditional Santhal community.

Christian Santhal community also retains the customary practices of offering bride price called *gonon taka /pon* by reforming the practice. The family of bride groom offers money or clothes to the family of bride according to the family's economic status as *gonon taka* during the marriage ceremony. In the case of the traditional Santhal marriage practices, the amount of the *gonon taka* is fixed by the local community, which may differ across communities. The bride's parents and her grandmothers from both sides share the *gonon taka*. The customary practices of paying *gonon taka* is instrumental to facilitate dialogue and diffuse existing conflicts between two families during interfaith marriage[22]. After the payment of *gonon taka,* the family of bridegroom will organize marriage ceremony according to his custom. However, interfaith marriage has inferior status than traditional marriage. Bridegroom is debarred from taking the wedding procession to the bride's house. The girl's family, relatives, *Manjhi haram* and office bearers of the village council will participate in the marriage ceremony organized by groom's family.

Gonon taka has more symbolic than material value. For example, exchange of *gonon tanka* signifies consent and commitment for the new marriage alliance by the two families. During formal marriage *gonon taka* is presented during the *takachal* ceremony. *Manjhi haram, Jog Manjhi, Raibar* and some relatives go to the bride's house for *takachal* ceremony. *Majhi haram* and *Jog Manjhi* and close relatives of the bride also gather to receive the *gonon taka* and celebrate the event by drinking, singing and beating drums (Siwakoti 2013). However, the payment of

21 When a girl and a boy elope to get married, the girl's family should shoulder the responsibility to find where about the girl. The *Manjhi haram* or *Jog Manjhi* of girl's village, on the behalf of girl's family, will come to look for the girl. The process is called *mayang panja*.

22 For details of marriage process see Siwakoti (2013).

gonon taka during interfaith marriage symbolizes 'compensation and compromise'. Sometimes, the bride's family may bargain for the amount of *gonon taka* to express their anguish. In such case, *Manjhi haram* from the two communities (bride and groom's villages) and pastor will negotiate and decide the amount of the *gonon taka*.

Quest for monotheism and contested *jati* identity

While considering the *jati* identity, Christian Santhals explain that they only differ in religious values and practices with the traditional Santhals, but they are alike in other aspects of life. Christian Santhals contend that both Christian and non-Christian Santhal follow similar traditional kinship practices, languages, traditional dress, music, dance and greeting customs as markers of *jati* identity.

Christian Santhals and traditional Santhals have contesting arguments about the implications of traditional religion on their *jati* identity. The notion of religion in the Santhal community is expressed through the concept of *dharam* in everyday life. Traditional Santhals have different sense of *dharam* than the one envisioned by Christians (for debate of *dharam*, see Rai 2014). Traditional Santhals stress *dharam* as fundamental virtues and practices embedded in their everyday life to retain their traditional *jati* identity, for example, adhering to rule of *jati* endogamy. They contend that *dharam* and *jati* are firmly embedded and inseparable. Thus, they doubt Christian Santhals *jati* identity, since Christian Santhals condemn their traditional religious beliefs and practices. However, Christian Santhals argue that *dharam* is not the sole determinant of *jati* identity. They argue that kinship and clan membership provide substance for *jati* identity. Christian Sathals contend that religious beliefs and practices of the traditional Santhal are not the 'authentic' markers of ' *jati*' identity. Christian Santhals justify their claim by asserting the traditional myth of ancient religious practice.

According to this Santhal traditional myth[23], in the beginning, their ancestor used to worship only a single creator called *Thakur-Jiu*. They adopted other spiritual beings to get rid of the various troubles after they set out their journey from the mythic kingdom called *Champagarh,* in order to escape tyranny of a mythic villain called Madho Singh, who was an illegitimate child brought up in a palace. When it comes to the issue of *jati* identity, Christians and traditional Santhals narrate this same myth, but with different interpretations. A *naike* (traditional priest) in his late fifties, who was from a new reformist religious community called *Jiyaan Marang Buru,* narrated the myth to me. According to him, their ancestors were afraid that they would lose their religion if they broke the rule of *jati* endogamy by letting their daughter marry a person (the mythical villain Madho Singh) without a legal father. Thus, they fled to save the religion, leaving all their properties behind, dispersing to many places like Nepal and Bangal. He argued that their ancestors sacrificed all their property for the sake of religion. He further added:

> When our ancestors were running away from *Champagarh*, they unfortunately lost their religious text called *Hadram Puthri* on the way. British found the lost *Hadram Purthi* and translated the customs and traditions according to the Bible. For example, they translated their apical ancestors *Pilchu budhi* and *Pilchu budha* as *Adam* and *Hawa,* and the creator *Thakur Jiu* as Christian God respectively. British misinterpreted their ancestor's spirit as *Saitan*, i.e., an evil. They condemned their traditional practices of worshiping and offering *jad raksi* (alcoholic drinks) to their ancestor's spirit. Consequently, the later generations of the Santhal were ignorant about their original religion. The original religion was overpowered by Christianity and that our religion began to disappear.

The historical power relation between the Santhal people and the British during the colonial rule, and their subjugation, are reflected in the narratives of the Santhal in the study area. On the one hand, traditional Santhals categorized Christianity as *Bidesi dharam* (foreign religion) and *Angrej ko dharam* (religion of British people); Christians Santhals, on

23 For details, see Rai (2010) and Siwakoti (2013).

the other hand, contested interpretations of the myth mentioned above. They use this myth to justify their right to Christianity. For example, N. Tudu (who I have mentioned earlier), the president of the managing committee of newly established Protestant church in the study area, emphasized that their ancestors worshiped only one supreme power, i.e., *Marang Thakur* in Champagarh. He stressed that traditionally Santhal had affinity for monothesim, and their ancestors were close to Christianity. He explained how their forefathers were diverted to different religious faiths:

> When our ancestors were fleeing from *Champagarh*, Madho Singh realized that *Champagarh* would be silent without them. Then, he decided to make them return. He took white *Singh Sadam* (flying horse) and followed our ancestors. Disguised as a stranger, Madho asked our ancestors why they were going away from *Champagarh*. After hearing the whole story from them, he tried to console them and told them that he would negotiate with Madho Singh that they did not need to give him their daughter. He persuaded them to come back to *Champagarh* but our ancestors did not listen to him. Then he deceived them, suggesting to follow alien customs such as worshipping idols in order to hide from Madho Singh.

N. Tudu implied that the traditional Santhals were ignorant about original customs and religions. He argued that Christianity was the 'authentic' religion of the Santhal people. When I interrogated him if Christian Santhal lost their *jati* identity as argued by the traditional Santhal, he was very reactive and asserted:

> How did we lose our *jati* identity? It is a nonsense argument. Only an ignorant people talks like this. I am a Christian. I am baptized. My clan is *Tudu* and I do not marry with *Tudu*. My son will become *Tudu*. Then how did I lose my identity? I introduce myself as Santhal to outsiders. We have just changed their usual practices of drinking, worshiping deities, and we are same at heart."

Christian Santhals assertively claim their right to Christianity by mapping their lineage to the mythical first forefathers, namely *Pilchu budhi* and *Pilchu budha* who, they claim, only worshipped a single supreme power called *Thakur Jiu* . They imply that since their forefathers did not worship any idols and had faith in a single God, they do have right to convert to Christianity. Christian Santhals also derive their sense of *jati* identity by deploying the continuity of clan exogamy among the Santhals. Although Christian Santhals condemn interfaith marriage and *jati* endogamy, their marriage practice is also grounded on the traditional rule of clan exogamy. They strictly adhere to the rule of clan exogamy, like traditional Santhal, and consider marriage and sexual relations within the same clan as incest, even during interfaith marriage. If they belong to the same clan, even the Christian and non-Christian Santhals, despite their different religious faiths, still consider each other as 'brothers' and their social interactions do not appear to be very antagonistic[24].

Conclusion

Within the Santhal community, conversion to Christianity is highly contested issue for two reasons. First, conversion to Christianity creates crisis in sociability in the community and ruptures the customary cultural obligations between and among the kin members, and in their ritual ties with the ancestors. Secondly, the shift in marital alliances from *jati* endogamy to religious endogamy and controversy over interfaith marriage contradict Santhals' perceived traditional cultural boundary and thus opens up debates on *jati* identity and cultural rights of the Christians in particular.

Traditional Santhals express their sense of ethnic group as a *jati,* which implies a homogenous cultural group governed through customary rules of marriage, kinship and indigenous religious practices. Nevertheless,

24 This statement is supported by many field-based observations and interviews. However, owing to the scope of this page, I have not used these data here.

Christian Santhals also value *jati* identity and derive sense of their *jati* identity primarily from primordial entitlement of clan identity and practice of clan exogamy. However, traditional Santhal and Christian Santhals demarcate cultural boundaries in different ways**.** The traditional Santhal emphasizes adherence to rule of *jati* endogamy, whereas Christians Santhals stress importance of religious endogamy during boundary-making process, which provoke crisis in interfaith marriage and sociability among them.

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Territoriality and Borders

Delineating Territory: Local Narratives and Practices

Jiban Mani Poudel*

Introduction

During 2012-14, I was in Nhāson, the lower valley of Manang, for several times conducting field research for my Ph.D. dissertation. My research focused on local perceptions of and knowledge on climate change. During my fieldwork, I had opportunities to observe marriage ceremonies, funeral rituals, and other rites. Two events that I have observed in Nhāson really struck me. The first event was the marriage ceremony in which I observed a practice of pulling a mature sheep (*sānd*) by the bride's family from the groom's family when marriages were held between Nhāson and beyond Nhāson, the villages of Lamjung in particular. The second event involved a funeral rite in which I watched a Gurung priest (*kyapre*) imaginatively fed water that comes from springs on *Bhratang-bhir*, a steep cliff that separates upper and lower Manang, to a soul of dead person. The local Gurungs consider the water as *mle-kyu*, meaning the "forgotten water" which they do not drink in everyday life. The cultural practices and beliefs of the Gurungs with resonate their worldview. Ritual, as Geertz (1973, 89) suggests, is a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which human communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life and the world where they live. Drawing on Geertz, I have attempted in this paper to analyze the meanings embodied in the local practices of pulling a mature sheep in marriage ceremony and feeding water to a soul of a deceased person in trans-migratory ritual.

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My early academic training led me to approach geographical territory and its boundaries as entities marked by physical landscapes like rivers, mountains, rocks, and forests and as fixed topographies with political boundaries constructed by the state. Even today, many disciplines in social sciences on the study of place argue that territory and its boundaries are concrete entities which can be represented on a map marked by physical landscapes a kin to what Rappaport (1984) has called an "operational environment." The cultural practices that I observed compelled me to think territory and its boundaries in alternative ways than what I had understood earlier. These two cultural practices, which I will discuss in detail, offer different notions than the one held by many social sciences which consider territory and its boundaries as concrete and fixed objective entities. Indeed, territory and its boundaries are not always apparent as objects or things and get onto the map (Bateson 1973; Cohen 1985). They are a construction of mind and existed in the minds of their beholders (Cohen 1985). It is a "cognized environment" (Rappaport 1984). Believing in these premises, I argue that territory does not always have materiality; it has subjectivity in which local people assert meanings which cannot be seen by human through their naked eyes. It is constructed and defined by culture: through rituals, myths, and historical events (Rappaport 1984; Cohen 1985; Basso 1996; Rai 2013).

A place, Escobar (2001, 140) argues, is the *experience* of a particular *location* with some measure of *groundedness* (however, unstable), sense of *boundaries* (however, permeable), and *connection to everyday life*, even if its identity is constructed, traversed by power, and never fixed. Hence, a place has location, materiality, and is invested with meaning or sense of place (Agnew 1987; Gieyn 2000). Therefore, territory has both objective and subjective dimensions for the local people.

Geographically speaking, Manang is divided into three micro-ecological zones: Gyasumdo (Nhāson), Nar-Phu, and Nyishang (Spengen 2000) and 13 Village Development Committees (VDCs) (CBS 2014). On the other hand, there are many big cliffs mountains, rivers, forests, etc., that

serve as markers of boundaries among villages, VDCs, and districts. My aim of the paper, however, is not to describe operational environment that marks the territory and its boundaries, but to show how the local people make sense of one's own territories and sub-territories through performing rituals, telling stories and historical events, and connecting the place with everyday practices. The rituals, stories, historical events, and every day practices are more than a simple performance of activities for entertainment or telling of tales/events as jokes; they are the sources of awareness and recognition of one's own territory and its boundaries (Mauss 1976; Basso 1996; Rai 2013) in which practices unfolds (Bourdieu 1977).

Research methods

As I mentioned earlier, information for this study were collected for several times during 2012-14 while doing fieldwork for my Ph.D. dissertation in Nhāson. Extended period of residence and research at a community level (what Roncoli, Crane, and Orlove [2009] term as 'being there'), the dominant approach of doing research in anthropology, helped me to grasp the exclusive spheres of cultural meanings and practices associated with Nhāson's territory and its boundaries. During my ethnographic fieldwork with the people of Nhāson, I never asked them to mark or point out "territorial boundaries." But I hung around them and engaged in their socio-cultural life such as village rituals, feasts and festivals, marriage ceremony, and death rituals. I accompanied the villagers in visiting other villages and noticed the practice of offering three leaves of *titepati* (*Artemisia vulgaris*) on the stone by reciting the name of their village deity *Tön* while going out from the village. By engaging in their socio-cultural and everyday life, I observed their cultural practices and documented their myths or songs through which I could grasp subjective interpretation of territory and its boundaries.

The setting

Nhāson is the name given to the area in the southeast valley of Manang district. The settlements of this area lie along the Marsyangdi gorge and its tributary Dudh-Khola (Bista 1972, 189), forming a V-shaped valley

(Schrader 1988, 181). The term Nhāson consists of Gurung two words: *nhā*, which means "villages or settlements" and *son*, which means "three." Therefore, Nhāson traditionally denotes the three villages of Tache, Nache, and Tilche, and now the villages have been expanded into 16 villages. Out of them, 15 are located on the banks of the Marsyangdi River, and one in the Dudh-Khola. The villages were formed by two ways: after the arrival of the ancestors of Gurung and Kami from south (Lamjung) and Lama from north and northwest (Tibet and Mustang) in different time periods, and the construction of houses on the corridor of Annapurna trekking route after the expansion of tourism since the late 1970s.

Nhāson village is heterogeneous in terms of caste and ethnic composition. There are seven caste and ethnic groups; namely, Gurung, Newar, Tamang, Thakali, Bhote, Damai, and Kami. Gurung is the numerically dominant and the oldest group of the area (Messerschmidt 1976; Goldstein and Messerschmidt 1980; Gurung 1976). Gurungs are divided broadly into two clans – *char-thare* and *sohra-thare* – which are further divided into several sub-clans such as Sapri Ghale, Rilthe Ghale, Krome, Lam, Panchumaye, Thime, Krome, and Kromcheme. It is believed that these different clan groups came to Nhāson during different periods[1]. Besides Gurung, other caste/ethnic groups like Bhote, Tamang, Newar, Thakali, Kami, and Damai are also found in small numbers, ranging from one household to a few dozens, whose arrival history in the area range from a few decades ago to less than a century ago. The settlement patterns vary according to ethnicity. For instance, Gurung and Lama have their own settlements whereas Kami and Damai households are found within Gurung settlements. Kami is essential for making iron tools for agricultural work and Damai for stitching clothes, which are not done by Gurung themselves.

1 Oral history of Sapri Ghale, a clan of Ghale, narrated that their ancestor came in Nhāson in the 12th century and that of Krome in the mid-19th century.

Geographically, the village settlements are situated between 1,700 to 2,682 meters of altitude from the sea level (Gurung 1980). Thanchok is in the highest altitude and Tal (one of the sister villages of Nache village) is in the lowest. The livelihoods of the people are primarily dependant on agriculture, livestock, wage labor, hotel and tourism business, service, herbal collection, trade, and labour migration.

Social structure

The Gurung of Nhāson are divided into two broader *may* (clans) – *char-thare* and *sohra-thare*. The *char-thares* consider themselves as superior to *sohra-thare*. Myths and stories narrated by the Gurung tell about the superiority of *char-thare*. Sapri Ghales claim themselves as the offspring of the Ghale king[2]. Moreover, hierarchical social structure among Gurung is reflected in their socio-cultural practices, particularly marriage, and socio-political sphere. I found that there was restriction on marriage between *char-thare* and *sohra-thare* clans. For instance, a *char-thare* girl became pregnant by an illicit relation. At the eleventh hour, family/clan of the girl came to know about it. The family arranged a meeting to identify the man with whom she had the relation. Finally, she told the name of a boy. The boy belonged to the *sohra-thare* clan. But the girl's brothers denied accepting the boy as brother-in-law because of his family clan. During my fieldwork, she had given birth to a girl and was known as a 'virgin mother' and the boy had married another *sohra-thare* girl. This also spells out the hierarchical structure that exists among the Gurung.

In Nhāson, Gurung's socio-political structure is organized under the village headmanship. It was governed under *Jimmawal* system until 1987/88. *Jimmawal*, also known as *kro*, was the head of the village. In Nhāson, *char-thare*, especially Sapri Ghale, would be the village headman. In the absence of Sapri Ghale, the authority of village headship was given to *Krome*, another clan of *char-thare*. If *char-thare*

2 The kingdom of Sapri Ghale was located in Ngawal, in Upper Manang. It was reported that archeological facts are still found in the area.

Gurungs were not in the village, a man from *sohra-thare* clan would be the village head[3]. As the head of the village, he used to control socio-cultural, economic and political spheres. The *Jimmawal* was also given the authority by the state to collect tax from the villagers. At that time, each villager would provide one day of free labor service on the land of *Jimmawal*. It was called *luba*. Similarly, in Dashain festival, villagers used to visit the *Jimmawal* with a sheep head to receive *tika*. Likewise, in marriage ceremony of *char-thare* clan, *sohra-thare* would carry goods, but not vice versa[4]. The restriction in marriage between *char-thare* and *sohra-thare*, giving one-day free labour to *Jimmawal*, visiting to him at Dashain festival with sheep's head, and carrying goods in marriage ceremony of *char-thares*' sons were symbols of socio-cultural power of *Jimmawal* and his family and clans as well as hierarchical order among the Gurungs that almost ended after the expansion of government services, as Holmberg reports (2006).

Marriage ceremony and a practice of pulling a mature sheep

In Nhāson, the rule of marriage of Gurung is based on the principle of broader clan endogamy and sub-clan exogamy, which was also common among the Gurungs of Nepal (Pignède 1993; Macfarlane 2003). It means a *char-thare* boy marries with a *char-thare* girl, and a *sohra-thare* boy with *sohra-thare* girl. Within each *char-thare* and *sohra-thare*, marriage is prohibited within the same *thar*, i.e., a *Rilthe* boy is not allowed to marry with a *Rilthe* girl and a *Sapri Ghale* boy with a *Sapri Ghale* girl.

Cross-cousin marriage is common among the Gurung of Nhāson—like in other ethnic groups such as Tamang, Magar, Thakali, and other people of Tibetan origin (Hitchcock 1966; Bista 1972; March 1983; Holmberg 1989; Chhetri 1990), though they give primacy to parental cross-cousin which is both patrilineal and matrilineal. The practice, Macfarlane

3 In Unash and Nache villages, headmen were from *sohra-thare* Gurung due to absence of *char-thare* Gurung.

4 Jit Bahadur Gurung was the first person who refused to carry goods during the marriage ceremony of *char-thare.*

(2003) argues, is guided by principles of transmission of wealth within a family, through which it is possible to control the spread of property outside the family. Indeed, Macfarlane has described and interpreted the cross-cousin marriage of Gurung exclusively in materialist terms, i.e., on the basis of subsistence strategy. This is true in one aspect, but this interpretation is one-sided and incomplete in the sense that he ignored the fact that cross-cousin marriage and intra-ethnic marriage for the Gurung in Nhāson are also framed by the symbolic values; that is, in terms of peoples' expectation to live in heaven after their death. A woman explained the importance of cross-cousin marriage among the Gurung community as follows:

> Brothers and their clans give *piuri*[5] to women in their death rituals. In our culture, it is believed that a woman cannot go to *la* (heaven) without *piuri*. All the Gurung women, therefore, want to marry off their daughters to their own brothers' sons to make them happy with the aim of getting *puiri* in the death ritual and reach in *la*. (Annadakasi Gurung, 42)

In Annadakasi's statement, the three terms '*piuri*', '*la*' and 'cross-cousin marriage' are interpreted by embeddedness in Gurung's cultural milieu. In other words, we cannot separate one from the other. Indeed, cross-cousin marriage is bounded with the aim to live in *la*, which is only possible through receiving *puiri* in death ritual by the brother and their clans. This shows the importance of brother's clans for sisters.

In Gurung community, mother plays a key role in marrying the daughters off with their brothers' sons. Daughters are likely forced into marriage for the sake of their brothers. Nothing is given freely, however, as Mauss has said (1952). Gurung mothers do not freely offer their daughters to their brothers' sons. It is embedded with the concept of living in *la.* It is believed that the door of *la* will not open to them without *aasyon-piuri*, a white cloth given by brothers and their clans to a woman in her funeral ritual. Indeed, it is only possible through making their brothers happy

5 A piece of white cloth is given by brother clans to a woman at her death.

by offering their daughters. It is believed that a woman who does not get *aasyon-piuri* in her funeral rite will roam as evil spirit in her village and its surroundings environment. It is believed that such spirits are the causes of social and natural disorders such as diseases, drought, erratic snowfall, and famine. In this way, the Gurung people of Nhāson do not dichotomize nature and culture as separated entities.

If living in *la* is an ascetic ideology for a woman in Gurung community, then a most striking question can be raised: How does a woman who has no brother or one having brothers in faraway places get such life after death? From the point of view of Gurung, *maime banewa* (making a brother) ritual is a solution to the problem. In the ritual, a newly married woman visits non-brother clan's house [the house belonging to clan members outside of her brother clan as well as other non-brother clans] with *sel-roti* (cooked donuts in oil/ghee) and *pa* (local wine) for making *aasyon*. It is actually an offer for him to accept her as his own sister. The man cannot deny the gifts. Accepting of the gifts is a moral obligation for men. Here, the rule is based on the principal of reciprocity (Mauss 1952); that is, accepting the gifts of the woman means her parental clan will also accept the gifts offered by their daughters in their village and vice versa. In this way, a Gurung woman always wants to make new brothers after marriage with the motive of achieving *piuri* in her death ritual. The offering of a gift by a newly married woman to the non-brother clans and accepting it by them is an act of alliance making – the expansion of kinship, even a mirco-politics of kinship, among the people of Gurung in Nhāson.

During my work in Nhāson, I observed a territorial endogamy marriage practiced in Nhāson. It means most of the marriages were held within Nhāson territory among different clans[6]. The territorial exogamy marriage practice among the Gurung in Nhāson is embedded in the local socio-cultural and economic milieu. From the ritual point of view of Gurung,

6 I observed eight marriage ceremonies in mid-November to mid-December, 2012. Out of them, six couples were from Nhāson and two were between Nhāson and beyond it.

as I mentioned earlier, the brother's clan or *mo*[7] is essential in the funeral rite of sister. I have heard from my informants that if a daughter marries within the village or in a nearby village*, mo* (son-in-law) can be present in the funeral. I also noted that *mo*'s clan fulfills a series of functions in funeral rituals. They carry the dead to cremation place, arrange firewood for cremation, offer *puiri* to the dead, and cremate the dead. They stop the entrance of bad sprits into the house with the soul[8]. In *argau*, the soul delivery ritual of Gurung, they invite the soul to live in the house from heaven and finally deliver the soul to *la*, and so forth. The importance of *mo* or brother's clan in funeral rite explains the indispensability of having brothers and their clans in the small village or nearby villages so that they can offer *puiri* to their sisters at their death and participate in different events in death ritual. In Nhāson, marriage practice is not always limited within the village and neighboring villages of Nhāson. Sometimes it crosses the lower boundary, symbolically marked by *khapte-dhungo* (two stones jointly standing together)[9]. The stone is not simply a physical object; their socio-cultural life is embedded in it. For instance, crossing the boundary for marriage is taken as violation of intra-territorial endogamy marriage by groom and his family. A family that violates this marriage rule is defiled as an offender. A bride family/ clan pulls a mature sheep and local wine from the groom's family if the

7 In Gurung community, one marries the daughter of one's father's sister. Thus, a woman address her brothers' sons as *mo* (brother-in-law), rather than brother, as is done in many caste and ethnic groups where cross-cousin marriage is not in practice.

8 In Gurung community, it is believed that soul does not die and cannot be burnt by fire. After cremation of the body, Kyapre (Gurung priest) invites the soul of the dead person with him to live in the deceased person's house. At that time, it is believed that bad sprits also try to enter into house with the soul, but *mo* guards and stops the bad spirits from entering into the house.

9 The borders of the village of Nhāson in Manang and Chipla in Lamjung are marked by the *khopte dunga*. People from both of villages had taken oath with the name of ancestors and gods/goddesses by offering blood of goat to the stone and had promised that they and their successors would not cross the border in the future. It is believed that if someone crosses the border, their clan/offspring will be ended forever.

groom and his family violates the customary law. It is called *chhoba sya, rumba pa*, meaning 'eating fat meat and drinking hard local wine.' Indeed, the practice of pulling of a mature sheep by the bride's clan after crossing the intra-territorial boundary in marriage ceremony has two connotations. Firstly, it localizes marriage relation within one's own territory, and secondly, it is a way of delineating territorial boundaries with others.

A territory has location, materiality, and is invested with meanings, as Agnew (1987) and Gieyn (2000) say. Placing a stone is materiality or physical marker of territory; taking oath and offering blood on the stone is subjectivity or cultural construction of territorial boundaries; and pulling a mature sheep from groom and his family in marriage ritual within two communities – Nhāson and the lower Gurung villages – gives legitimacy to their territorial boundaries like their ancestors did.

Feeding water to the soul of a deceased person in death ritual

In Gurung community, death is believed as the separation of a soul of the death person from body. The dead body is either buried or cremated (Pignède 1993). It is considered to respect towards the dead person. After cremation of the body, the Gurung of Nhāson arrange a ritual to deliver the soul to the *la*. It is known as *argaun* or *paye*, but there is no fixed schedule for it. Sometimes it is carried out immediately after cremation or burial, and sometimes after a few months or a year. It depends on economic status of the household as well as leisure time available for community to participate in the ritual.

Argaun or *paye* among Gurung is done in two ways – *khuipaye* (single day *paye*) and *rahopaye* (three-day *paye)*. The arrangement for *paye* depends on the economic status of a household (Tamu 2056 BS). A wealth-off family generally arranges *rahopaye*, whereas a poor family performs *khuipaye*. This indicates economic stratification among the Gurungs.

Sons, daughters, sons-/brothers-in-law, maternal uncles, and priests are essential in the death ritual of Gurung. They carry out different functions from the beginning to end of the funeral rites as well as during *argaun* (soul transmission ritual) (Tamu 2056 BS). Sons are, for instance, responsible for lighting the first fire to the dead person. Sons-/brothers-in-law are responsible for cremating the corpse and performing various rituals throughout the purification rites. Brother's clans and maternal uncles are for offering a *piuri,* a gate-keeper for opening the door of a heaven for the deceased person. *Pachyu* or *kyapre*, Gurung priest, is responsible for delivering the soul of the deceased person to the *la*, the *Ople-kön*. In the absence of them, the process does not go ahead.

Here I do not intend to describe in detail about the process of death ritual, but simply try to explain how territory and its boundaries are understood by them through death rituals. Immediately after the death of a person, Pachyu recites in this way:

> Now your soul has left your body.
> We all are gathered here to deliver your soul to a mountain.
> We are going to deliver your soul to a mountain.
> Come with us.
> Please, do not follow an inauspicious or evil power.
> Please, stay a few days and months in a mountain, the holy place.
> Then, we will deliver to you to the ancestral place, the Ople-kön.

This recitation by *pachyu* before delivering the dead body is aimed at separating the soul from the Yamaraj, king of death. Then, the dead body is delivered in the place for burial or cremation. Sons light fire on the dead body and the villagers assist to arrange firewood for cremation. After lighting fire on the dead body, sons and villagers come back to home. Sons-in-law remain there until the task of cremation is finished.

In *argaun*, the final ritual of death, they invite the soul of the dead person from the mountain again to the village through *pye,* an oral text. They recite in this way:

We are going to perform the transmigration ritual for you.
Please come down to the house during the ceremony.
Here priests, family, relatives, and the villagers are ready for your arrival.
We are ready to welcome you and send you to the Ople-kön.

In this ceremony, the priests request the soul in this way:

Please come down, if you want to see the hundred of vultures in the sky.
Please come down, if you want to see the hundred of snakes on the ground.
Please come down, if you want to see the killing of the hundred of sheep, goats and yaks.
Please come down, if you want to see the hundred of pots of local wine.
Please come down, if you want to see the hundred of pots of cooked rice.

In the song, *Kyapre*, kin, and villagers recite the names of different places like mountain, *pon* (grazing land), *nhon* (forestland), *pro* (hill), *syon* (springs/rivulets), *kyan* (roads/trails), *mro* (farmlands), and finally the *nhāsa* (settlement). It is believed that the soul comes to the village. They invite the soul at the house and finally put it in *chinho*, an inner part of the main house, for a rest. This is not merely a song sung by the Gurung of Nhāson in the death ritual; it is a way of recalling their environment or territory and showing their sense of attachment with their environment.

Before taking the soul into *chinho,* the Gurung perform a ritual called *namsi khuiba* or *mon-taba.* It is believed that Yamaraj, the king of death, comes with the soul of the deceased for taking the soul of another person from the house. To prevent it, a hen is hung in the threshold of main entrance at midnight. It is believed that the hen can see the arrival of the Yamaraj. The hen makes sound when the Yamaraj reaches at the threshold to enter the house, and then *mo*s (sons-in-law) swiftly close the door. It signifies stopping Yamaraj to enter the house. Then, the *mo*s deliver the soul in *chinho* and keep there until the day of delivering it to *la*.

In *argaun*, kin and villagers gather on the courtyard of the deceased person's house and spend time there by singing and dancing with beating *madal*, a traditional musical instrument. This singing and dancing is called *serka* dance. It has 32 rhythms. All of the villagers, visitors, and kin participate in the singing and dancing ritual. The singing and dancing express their sympathy to the bereaved family and pave the way to *la* for the dead person.

The theme of the musical instrument and song is:

> You are dead.
> Now, we all are gathered here to deliver your soul to the *la*, the *Ople-kön*.
> Come with us.
> Please, go to the heave and live there.
> Please, do not follow an inauspicious or evils power.

In the Gurung community, there is a practice of offering clothes, foods, and cash in the name of the dead person. While offering these things, one of the in-laws recites:

> You are offering this cloth.
> Please put it on while feeling cold in the mountain.
> You are offering these foods.
> Please eat them while hungry.
> You are offering these drinking items.
> Please drink them while thirsty.
> You are offering the cash/money.
> Please use them when it is needed on the way.

These offerings show that even after death people treat the deceased as a person (human) and treat him/her as if he/she is still "living" but in another world. Otherwise, they would not have offered it. The offering is not chaotic. Initially, sons offer foods, drinks, and clothes to the deceased, then by clans of the deceased, and followed by daughters, in-laws, maternal uncles, and finally by villagers and visitors. Needs editing. In principle, the rule of offering foods, drinks, clothes, and cash in the

name of the deceased shows the nearness of relationships with the dead person. For instance, the primary kin offer things first to the deceased, followed by secondary and tertiary kin, and finally by neighbors/non-kin. By offering things to the deceased, kin and non-kin are connected to each other through mutual obligation, which also reflects the structure of social bonds among the people of Nhāson.

The final day of *argaun* is more important. It is the day for delivering soul to *la*. On that day, they arrange two rituals: *ple khaba* and *larparba*. But there is a paradox in these two rituals. *Ple khaba* explains that soul will want to live with kin and villagers whereas *larparba* tells that the soul will live in *la*. To identify the desire of the soul, sons and daughters-in law, brothers, maternal uncles, and villagers sit in a circle with foods and drinks in front of them to feed a sheep. They leave an uncastrated sheep in a circle. The sheep roams around the participants and eats foods and drinks and shudders. The eating of foods, and drinking of liquid, shuddering in front of him/her is interpreted by the participants that the soul of the dead person chose the family to live.

The second ritual, *larparba,* is the ritual to deliver the soul to *la*. *Pachu*/*kyapre* with kin of dead person and villagers again begin to deliver the soul of the deceased individual to *Ople-kön*, or the *la*. The priest and relatives of the dead person, men and women, sing and dance while turning in an anti-clockwise direction. During this time, they request the soul in this way:

> Now, we all are gathered here to deliver your soul to the heaven.
> Come with us.
> Please, do not follow an inauspicious or evil power.
> We will deliver you to the ancestral place, the *Ople-kön*.

The participants bring the soul out from the *chinho,* the ancestral place of house. They reach *phainsu* (*hearth*) and rest there for a while and go ahead and reach *parkhu* (main pillar of house). They cross the *bhraksun* (door), *syoka* (balcony), *thanti* (eaves), and courtyard. They start to

deliver the soul from the village and cross the *syon* (springs/rivulets), *kyan* (roads/trails), grazing land, and different places and finally reach the Bhratang-bhir.

When the soul reaches *Ople-kön*, which is located above the Bhratang-bhir, the soul stops. It is believed that the soul refuses to go ahead leaving his/her kin in the village. The soul speaks with *Kyapre* in his language. The *Kyapre* tries to convince the soul to move away on, but he fails in the beginning. Finally, *Kyapre* pretends to feed some water of Bhratang-bhir. It is believed that the water has the power that can erase the memory of the dead person's soul. Thereafter, the soul cannot recall his/her past at all. But the soul knows the cleverness of *Kyapre* and does not drink it. At last, *Kyapre* invites a bird (*khelngima*) and requests it to shower in the water. After its shower, the bird sprinkles its feather to dry itself up. The drop of sprinkled water enters the mouth of the death person. After that, the soul of dead person forgets all the things and *Kyapre* and villagers deliver it to the heaven, or *Ople-kön*. The performances in the ritual reflect the attachment of the people with the place: even the death cannot break the relations that it has with people and places. Conversely, forgetting disconnects a person from his/her place and the social relationships mediated by the place.

All these activities performed during the death ritual are public like a burlesqued wink of Geertz (1973). In other words, they are not simply a cultural practice that people perform for entertainment or other purposes; they carry and convey multiple meanings and interpretations. While singing and dancing during the soul delivery ritual, the people of Nhāson recite the names of various places like mountain, grazing land, springs/rivulets, roads/trails, Bhratang-bhir, and finally *Ople-kön*. Reciting the names of places during the death ritual is, indeed, signifies senses of place. Senses of places attached to the landscapes unfold in languages, names, stories, myths, and rituals (Basso 1996; Kahn 1996; Cruickshank 2005). For the people of Nhāson, funeral song is many things. It is a way of understanding the natural landscapes like mountains and water. It is also about recalling of the ancestral homeland or meaningful memory

of their past, shared history, as well as a way of delineating territorial boundaries subjectively. For instance, requesting the soul of deceased individual to sit in mountain immediately after the death of a person and delivering a soul again to mountain are not just cultural practices. It is a way of cognizing the mountains. For the people of Nhāson, mountains are described as a habitat or rest place for soul. The place is holy for them. Even today, they believe that their mountains are pure and climbing the mountain by human beings as unethical/sinful acts.

Similarly, denying the soul of the dead person to cross the border of Bhratang-bhir, the act of feeding water to the soul with an aim of erasing living memory of the dead person, and leaving the soul to *Ople-kön* mark territorial boundaries, as well as narrate about ancestral land and original homeland of the Gurung people. It is a way of recognition of the history. Stories and cultures are closely tied up with the place (Basso 1966). Silko (1981) argued that the stories cannot be separated from geographical locations, from actual physical places within the land… and the stories are so much a part of these places … (cited in Basso 1996; 64). As Silko says, the people of Nhāson, ultimately, personalize their relationships with Bhratang-bhir and *Ople-kön* through their cultural practices. By recalling *Ople-kön* in funeral rites, the people remember their ancestral land (Tamu 2056 BS).

Placing deities in village entrances as a symbol of delineating territorial boundaries

Nhāson is a single territory unit as far as death ritual and marriage practices are considered. However, it is divided into sub-territorial units. This is clearly reflected in resources use practices as well as several rituals and religious practices. For instance, each village has its own village deity: *Tön* for Tache, *Aakhekutu* for Nache, *Praprapro* for Unash, and *Paigune* for Tilche. Likewise, all the Nhāson people do not enjoy the use rights on the resources like grazing land, forest products, and agricultural land found in Nhāson territory. The use rights are defined by membership known as *kuriya*. *Kuriya* is defined in terms of their equal participation and contribution that they have made in socio-cultural

practices, particularly in ritual and religious activities. My focus, here, is how the people delineate their territory within the broader Nhāson territory.

When I hung around them and engaged in their socio-cultural life such as village rituals, feasts, and festivals, the people of Nhāson accounted the springs, the trees, the stones, the mountains as the habitat of the deities as well as deities themselves. As Ingold (2000) and Cruickshank (2005) say, the Gurung of Nhāson reported that the springs, the trees, the stones, the mountains can take action and respond like human beings. They are sensitive to human activities and they can listen. They can make moral judgment and punish the wrongdoers. Therefore, villagers are more sensitive toward their deities. For making the deities happy, people arrange rituals. They are offered foods and drinks, sacrificial animals and blood and head, a heart of a living deer, and dancing and singing activities are performed for the deities. In response, it is believed that the deities protect them and their livelihood from natural calamities and disasters, evil eyes, and sprits. This denotes the reciprocal relation between the people of Nhāson and their deities.

In Tache village, there are three main entrances. Deities have been placed in each entrance. *Phopche* deity has been placed in the western entrance of the village. A ritual for this deity is performed on the day of *Maghe Sankranti* each year. In the northeast entrance, there is a big pine tree having seven branches separated from the main stem. The tree is worshipped as the *sat bhai* (seven brothers) deity, each branch representing a deity. *Tön* deity, the village supreme deity, is located in the main entrance nearby the main village. The villagers offer the heart of a living deer to the deity in each Baisakha, the first Nepali lunar calendar. In addition, the villagers offer mug-wort leaves to the deity while going out from the village, even to neighboring villages like Bagarchhap, Danaque, and Ghyalanchok.

The different entrances containing the deities are not simply functional places for arranging rituals and religious activities for the people of

Tache; they tend to indicate that the people of Tache culturally construct the boundaries of their physical space. Similarly, offering three leaves on the stone by reciting the name of *Tön* is a general and normal behavior for Tache villagers. They do it in their everyday life. However, this normal or general practice that the villagers do in everyday life is, in fact, a cultural reality (Young and Goulet 1994; Nadasdy 2007) through which local people have been marking and delineating one's own territorial boundaries. By doing this, the people of Tache are claiming that it is 'our territory,' not 'your territory.'

Conclusion

Many disciplines in social sciences describe territorial boundaries of a community based on physical landscapes such as rivers, mountains, rocks, and forests. Place or territory and its boundaries are not always physical and political entity. Cultural practices, myths, and stories tell about the territory and its boundaries. For example, the songs and the practices of feeding water in death ritual among Gurung in Nhāson tell about the upper limit of Nhāson's territory. Pulling a mature sheep from bridegroom family in marriage ceremony delineates the lower limit. However, culturally constructed territorial boundaries are not always concrete and fixed entities, but placing the deities in different places also show how people actually make their territory concrete. May be, the question is not whether a territory is concrete or fluid/unbounded but how and when people make their territories bounded or mobile.

Physical features found in the landscape such as cliffs, rivers, mountains, trees, and stones are physical objects or things that serve as a marker of territorial boundary to outsiders. But, the local people, including in Nhāson, have invested meanings on those markers for delineating boundaries of their cognized territory. They are deeply rooted in their mythology, i.e., *pye* for the people of Nhāson, and expressed by singing and dancing in death ritual, offering foods/drinks to the soul of dead, engaging in conversations with souls and birds, acting of feeding water to the soul of the dead person in trans-migration ritual, pulling mature sheep in marriage ceremony, taking oath by offering blood on stone

etc. Ritual, therefore, is text, as Geertz (1973) says. As a text, it gives multiple meanings, including resonating the boundaries of the cognized territory.

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Pellam: A Cultural Way of Making Yamphu Themselves Self-sovereign People

Hom Prasad Rai Yamphu*

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine Yamphu oral culture known as *pellam*/*mindum* as an avenue to explore how an indigenous group, like Yamphu, objectifies their collectivity and how they transform themselves as sovereign people in Upper Arun Valley of Northeast Nepal. As a Kirati group, Yamphu have their own distinct knowledge system. This knowledge system has its origins in metaphysical realm and emanates as *mindum*/*pellam*. In this sense, Yamphu *mindum*/*pellam* is a unique cultural way of making themselves sovereign people to the lands. Thus, *mindum*/*pellam* is the fundamental basis upon which indigenous politics of identity must be analyzed. In doing so, I will show that the oral culture of an indigenous people like Yamphu is an important way to understand and conceptualize cultural politics, indigeneity, and indigenous sovereignty, which are at the core of the cotemporary *adivasi janajati* movement in Nepal.

Yamphu are primarily farmers and represent one of the indigenous Kirati groups of the Upper Arun Valley. They inhabit Pathivara, Pawakhola, Num, Makalu, Matsyapokhari, Barabise, and Diding VDCs. These seven villages are on the border between Pallo Kirat (Far Kirat) and Majh Kirat (Middle Kirat). Yamphu are one of the very least known

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groups across the country even among the diverse Kirati groups[1]. This is because since long time they are put under the ethnonym "Rai." In the present day, however, Yamphu identify themselves as Yamphu or Yakkhaba, which is the more correct denomination of the group." The total population of Yamphu was recorded in the census as 6,933 but total speakers as 9,208 (CBS 2012).[2]

In the 1770s, Gorkhali kings granted Kiratis *kipat* through the Royal Order because "the Kiratis, being vigorous beef-eaters, did not readily submit to the Rajputs" (Hamliton 2007, 50[1819]). By virtue of being Kirati, Yamphu used to have *kipat*. Even today, they identify themselves as *kipatiya*. *Kipat* was a traditional land tenure system where an individual could derive "rights by virtue of his membership in a particular ethnic group, and/or its location in a particular area" (Regmi 1978, 534). The *kipat* system was the basis of cultural autonomy of the Yamphu; it symbolized history and the political identity of Yamphu (Yamphu 2007; Forbes 1996). For Yamphu, Ann Forbes writes, "as a symbol expressing the past glory of their ancestors, *kipat* was part of a narrative that links the Yamphu Rai to their past and to the lands on which that past has unfolded" (2006, 39). Forbes further writes, "*Kipat* specifically refers to regions of the country over which the government had no control, land the government could not touch" (2006, 44). The *kipat* was in operation

1 Kirats were mostly mountain dwellers, particularly in eastern part of Nepal. According to Hamilton (2007[1819]) once their kingdom was extended up to the plain of Kamrup and Matsya. Even after the subjugation of their territories into the Gorkhali kingdom in the 1770s, they enjoyed a greater degree of cultural and political autonomy. Though they were subject to Gorkhali kings, the kings "did not presume to act as masters to invade their (Kiratis') lands or violate their customs" (Hamilton 2007, 08[1819].

2 Here we see inconsistency in the number of population and speakers; the cause of this inconsistency in population and speakers might be that some Yamphu reported themselves as "Rai" to the enumerators as their ethnic name but mother tongue as Yamphu.

in Upper Arun Valley until the cadastral survey was conducted in 1994. Having *kipat*, Yamphu enjoyed their cultural autonomy even after their territories were annexed into the Hindu Kingdom by Gorkhali kings.

Though Yamphu enjoyed their autonomy until the 1990s through *kipat*, today they are marginalized economically, culturally, and politically. As a result, they are absent from the national discourse of identity and federalism that has been taking place since the last few decades in Nepal. They are largely outside the purview of state recognition. Because of this given situation, much of their social and political history is still unknown and undocumented.

Kirati people are rich in oral culture, which is very crucial in their social, cultural, and political life. Yamphu is no exception. Yamphu have a well-practiced oral culture by which they claim to be the first settlers of the present territory. By means of oral culture, Yamphu weave their history, cultural themes, and ancestral glory in the land. This is how Yamphu have been able to hold onto and sustain their culture and history through *pellam*. Here, I have used the term "oral culture" instead of oral tradition because Yamphu regard *pellam* as sacred text and any distortion of the sacred words will be taken as dangerous. Then *pellam* is lived experience, the totality of Yamphuness. This oral culture is known in different terms among Kiratis. Yamphu, for example, refer their oral cultures as *mindum* or *pellam*, Lohorung call *mundum or pe-lam*, Mewahang call it *muddum* (Gaenszle 2008, 5), Limbu call *mundhum* (Chemjong 2003[1963], 18), Kulung call *riddum* (Nicolette 2006, 35), Thulung call *dumla* (Allen 2012), Chamling call *mundum* or *rishiwa* (Chamling 2014), and Yakkha call them as*mutum* (Russell 1995).

Previous studies of Kirati culture and mythologies have placed a strong emphasis upon Malinowskian (1948) ideas of myth. Malinowski portrayed myth as the charter of a tribal group that codifies and sanctions overall

socio-cultural activities and controls the moral and social behavior. For example, Iman Singh Chemjong's Limbhu *mundhum* is an exemplary work that reflects a Malinowskian concept. Chemjong considered Limbu *mundhum* as *riti riwaj* (manner and custom) or *thuturi bed* (Veda of the tongue). He argues that "The word *mundhum* means the power of great strength and the Kirat people of east Nepal take it to be a true, holy and a powerful scripture" (2003 [1963], 18). Studying Lohorung Rai, a neighboring Kirati group of Yamphu, Hardman concludes that "The *pe-lam* is precisely this: (the way of) patterns or examples to be repeated, the past as a template for the present" and "it is full of symbols that evoke life as it should be" (2000, 105). She argues "*pe-lam* for Lohorung people means *riti-lam* where *riti* means custom, ceremony, manner, or way" (2000, 103-04). In the similar vein, Martin Gaenszle has, in the case of Mewahang *mundum*, argued, "It is seen as a coherent whole as "the Tradition" and because of this integrity and comprehensiveness which affects all aspects of cultural life it is "a great thing" (2002, 34). Mewahang Rai is also a neighboring Kirati group of Yamphu. Gaenszle conceives Mewahang *muddum* "as a comprehensive body of rituals" and portrays it as "the Tradition"of Mewahang cultural life (Gaenszle 2002, 34).

These examples show that the previous studies on Kirat people have sought to capture how Kirat mythology has shaped Kirat cosmology and worldview. In this paper, however, based on my research, I will extend the concept and practice of *mindum* from symbolic and imaginary meanings in the social and cultural life to indigenous politics in the context of contemporary Nepal. Gaenszle noted that Kirati *mindum* demonstrates a common theme: the historical continuity of each group in the present territory (2000, 224). In my previous study of Yamphu *mindum*, I found that *mindum* is a unique way of expressing Yamphu indigeneity (Yamphu 2012). Therefore, my concern is that *pellam* should not be understood

only as a religious corpus, ancestral knowledge, or voices that have symbolic and imaginary meanings in the social and cultural life of Kirat people. Rather, *pellam* is a key way of connecting Yamphu history to the present, as this paper will discuss, a way of describing Yamphu history that gives a *sense of place* and *self*.

To foreground these dimensions of *pellam*, I am inspired by the anthropological works of Keith Basso (1988), Vansina (1960), Morphy, (1988), Santos-Granero (1998), Stewart and Strathern (2003), and others on oral tradition (naming place) and making *sense of place*. Anthropological studies on oral traditions remind us that *naming place* in myths and narrations shape human thought process, making a live connection with the ancestors. Keith Basso (1988) pointed that in any community people appropriate physical environment through *naming place.* Such theoretical formulations help us to explain how *pellam*, as “testimonies of the past" (Vansina 1960, 45) inscribes past history into the present landscape and hence produces a Yamphu *sense of place*. Drawing on these concepts, I argue that Yamphu lands and territory explained in *pellam* symbolize ancestral past and thus Yamphu land ownership and authority in the region. Therefore, for Yamphu *pellam* is, as Guo’s argues, "a key component of how people perceive, memorize, and represent history and a key way to establish the authenticity of a group’s 'history' 'for' the claims of ownership (2003, 196).” By such understanding, I suggest that *pellam* is more than a collection of ancestral voices and actions. Singing *pellam* is a not only evoking ancestral voices, but it is also a cultural way of projecting the ancestral past into the present. Moreover, it is *pellam* through which Yamphu have produced and reproduced their societies. By means of *pellam*, Yamphu objectify their collective identity in their present territory. Therefore, the significance of *pellam* goes beyond Malinowskian view on myth as the charter of society to inscribing histories as lived reality.

Moreover, unlike previous studies, I will examine the poetics of *pellam,* which is connected with indigenous philosophy. I will analyze the poetics of *pellam*, particularly to see how it connected to Yamphu concept of indigenous sovereignty, territoriality, and indigeniety as a "political strategy" (Muehlebach 2001). This is to suggest that while maintaining a sacred relation with ancestors, how Yamphu make themselves sovereign people in relation to the land. I have tried to show how indigenous sovereignty emerges through oral cultures. My analysis of oral culture from this perspective will add additional perspectives to the concept of indigenous sovereignty and cultural politics on which the moral and spiritual powers of indigenous peoples' right struggles are foreground. To examine these concepts embedded with *pellam*, I follow Maurice Godelier's concepts of the social origins of sacred (Godelier 1999, and 2009). In Godelierain perspective (1999, 171) *"....the sacred is a certain type of relationship that humans entertain with the origin…"* In this relation "when a supernatural origin is imagined for the social sphere, the social becomes sacred, and society is legitimized as sacred it stands" (1999, 124). In his view, human beings not only live in society but they produce the society in order to live. While doing so, the real human replicates with imaginary human (ancestors) where the real human disappears. Then, the social sacred emerges from the relationship with imaginary representation that "facilitates communication with such powerful, invisible beings constituted an essential component of the exercise of sovereignty over a territory, over the resources found and exploited and often the human groups living there" (Godelier 2009, 146).

The main purpose of this paper is to examine a cultural way of making themselves sovereign people over the lands. I will show that Yamphu objectify their collective identity and thus legitimize their sovereignty over the lands by means of *pellam*. To analyze the concept of sovereignty

I draw on the works of native scholars. In their view, sovereignty is the inextricably intertwined relationships between people, culture, and lands to maintain the cultural existence of Yamphu. The idea of sovereignty "comes from within people or culture" (Kickingbird et al. 1999, 2). Joanne Barker explains sovereignty associating more closely with indigenous histories, cultures, and identities. In her view, "Sovereignty is inherent; it comes from within a people or culture" (2005, 20). Sovereignty encompasses spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical aspects of native people (Thrope 1998/1999). Explaining Native American concept of sovereignty, Dagmar Thrope, a Native American scholar, writes, "If we speak of sovereignty from a Native perspective, this is not limited to the physical boundaries of our reservations. The concept of sovereignty encompasses all of those things, which represent our lives as Thakiwaki – spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical. We can influence but cannot control those things external to us. They belong to the other world" (1998/1999, 484-485).

The meanings of sovereignty have been much debated and have multiple meanings within indigenous movement. However, their concerns relate to spiritual, emotional, cultural, and historical aspects of indigenous peoples. In this sense, native concept of sovereignty fundamentally differs from the Euro-Western concept of "sovereignty" that "only exists in the fabrication of a truth that excludes the indigenous voice" (Alfred 2002, 469). Michael F. Brown etymologically links sovereignty "to the idea of "sovereign," "a leader imbued with both secular and sacred power"(2007, 172) and argues that "Sovereignty is reimagined as a condition of autonomy from other cultures and political entities – an autonomy inseparable from a hoped – for return to primal authenticity" (2007, 173). Taaikaie Alfred argues that "Native philosophy of sovereignty is that "they wish to preserve a regime that honors the autonomy of individual conscience, non-coercive forms of authority,

and a deep respect and interconnection between human beings and the other elements of creation" (2002, 470). In his view, "Indigenous thought is so often based on the notion that people, communities, and the other elements of creation co-exist as equals – human beings as either individuals or collectives do not have special priority in deciding the justice of a situation" (2002, 31). For, Wallace Coffey and Rebecca Tsosie (2001, 196), "the notion of sovereignty that transcends the merely political; sovereignty is an almost mystical state that arises spontaneously within the social life and traditions of a people." Whatever the case, "sovereignty is inseparable from the people or their culture" (Kickingbird et al. 1999, 2), which is the concept of sovereignty I have used in this article.

Concept, practice, and power of *mindum*/*pellam*

As noted earlier, Yamphu are typically ancestor worshippers. Ancestors have given Yamphu everything – life, lands, prosperity, glory, and wisdom. The dominant concept among Yamphu is that ancestors are more powerful than the real humans are. For Yamphu, ancestors are gods who still live among them and shape their way of life. Therefore, for the continuity of their existence, Yamphu worship and communicate with their ancestors by means of *mindum*. Now the question arises, What is *mindum*?

To know about the concept of *mindum*, let me present Khasinimba's *mindum*. Khasinimba is a *yadangba* (tribal priest) and he is supposed to be a knowledgeable person about *mindum*. In November of 2012, I along with my uncle went to see him in Sawara, where his cowshed was located. We went down and down until we saw a small cowshed, letting hearth's smoke from the top. As we reached his cowshed, we found him busy with collecting fodders for his cows. He seemed to me in his eighties and looked very alone in the isolated and wild place. He

welcomed us. We offered him some *raksi* (alcohol) that we had taken with us. My uncle introduced me to him since it was first meeting with him. He started talking about cows, availability of fodders, and so on. Later on, he inquired me why I was there. I explained my purpose to visit him. After a while, he started to talk about *mindum*; he looked at me, smiled, and chanted the following *pellam*.

> *□aŋbi □ube?□* (Shiva) created humankind in *khokwaluŋ* (underground?)
>
> *iei* we came over here by following River path
>
> *i ei poppo* on this *pitta sambok* (Dubo 'N'), mankind was created;
>
> after creating mankind, death was also created;
>
> *i ei ei □aŋbi □ube?□* created humankind in the underground (?) (*khokwaluŋ*)*;*
>
> he also created knowledgeable and stupid human as well*;*
>
> in *palumdem*, *ei ei* humankind was created in *khokwaluŋ chpchik dem;*
>
> *iei* mankind was created.
>
> Listen! This is *mindum*: Our origin (*pukma* 'Y,' *utpatti* 'N').

As we can see in the *mindum* above, Khasinimba indicates that *mindum* is the origin of Yamphu and other Kirati groups as well. He says, "*Mindum* means *pukmaya*" (*utpatti* 'N') that tells us our origin: where we are from, how we have come to this place, and how we should live here. In his view, the ancestors of Bantawa and Athpahariya (other Kirati groups) split from Yamphu. He continues, "So they don't have Wan; you know what Wan means? Wan means, they did not follow River path." It is obvious then that *mindum* informs how Yamphu are in the world. The foregoing narration of the *mindum* explains Yamphu origin that for the

first time Shiva created human (Yamphu) in *khokwaluŋ,*[3]a place of the creator.

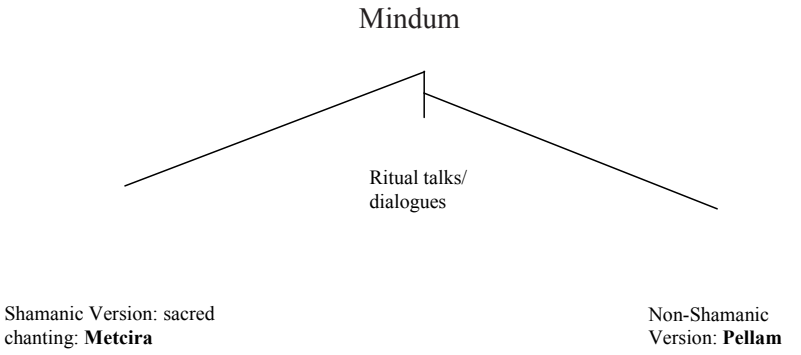
As can be seen in the Khasinimba's concept of *mindum* above, it is related to Yamphu history, their relationships with other Kirati, and ancestral places. For instance, Bantawa, Yamphu, and Athapahariya share common ancestors. *Mindum* clearly states that Yamphu followed Arun Path, but Bantawa and Athaphariya did not. Therefore, Yamphu have Wan – Yamphuwan - as inherited territory from their ancestors – and hence they think they have right to possess the lands. On the other hand, Bantawa and Athapahariya do not have their own Wan – territory – because their ancestors did not follow the River path. As such, *mindum* constitutes a spiritual and historical ground upon which Yamphu authority and sovereignty over the lands and territory is constructed. We can say that defining Yamphu authority and sovereignty over the territory can be taken as a struggle for the recognition of Yamphu cultural worldview. This is the basic concept of *mindum*. As already noted, Lohorung Rai also possesses the concept of *mundum*. With regard to Lohorung *mundum*, Charlotte Hardman writes:

> It is one of the key ways Lohorung maintain their boundaries and express and experience their own distinctiveness in relation to other groups. It sets them particularly apart from Hindu groups and brings them closer to neighboring Kiranti (2000, 104).

3 The notion of *khokwaluŋ* is found in other Kirati groups but known in different terms (See Gaenszle, 2000; Nicolette, 206; Hardman, 2000). The ancestors started their journey from *khokwaluŋ*, the place of origin and departed from Barahachhetra. Some Yamphu believe that *khokwaluŋ* is located under the soil. According to *pellamdangba* and *mangba*, it is situated under seven levels down the soil. Some informants use *khokwaluŋ* to refer to Kashi and so does other Kirati. However, Yamphu are not certain of where the *khokwaluŋ* is exactly located in Kashi. There exists ambiguity among them.

Based on my interaction and discussion with Yamphu elders, *mindum* can be divided into two categories: shamanic and non-shamanic versions. We can categorize Yamphu *mindum* as follows:

Figure 1: Yamphu Mindum



Shamanic versions of *mindum* contrast sharply in a numbers of ways to non-shamanic versions. In this paper, however, I focus only on *pellam* of origin and migration, which is a non-shamanic version-*pellam*.

Now, let me describe the concept further about *pellam*. By convention, *pellam* is a collection of sacred texts. It neither is talked about much nor is communicated publicly since *pellam* is highly adored as a sacred knowledge. Yamphu believe that *pellam* has a great strength and power. Chanting *pellam* without a purpose and context can sometimes be dangerous. Thus if a person, without in depth knowledge about *pellam*, chants *pellam*, s/he may go mad. A person who chants *pellam* should know proper way of chanting *pellam*. Therefore, people do not express their knowledge about *pellam*; even those who are presumed as knowledgeable persons about *pellam* act as if they know nothing about *pellam*. Therefore, Yamphu perceive *pellam* as a sacred corpus

of knowledge which possess great power. In one occasion, my mother told me:

> The *pellam* must be chanted solely in Yamphu language and a failure to complete acquisition may threat wellbeing of the person or even threat his or her life. P*ellam* must be sung in Yamphu language. Otherwise, the sacred words may lose their evocative power, as it is believed that the ancestors cannot understand the chanting. Individuals who chant *pellam* without a proper way of learning or without complete knowledge may go mad.

On another occasion, my maternal uncle told me the following narrative, which describes the actual power of *pellam*:

> May be five or six generations back, there was a female Yamphu from *kesha* clan. She possessed very good knowledge of *pellam*. It is said that when she chanted *pellam*, she had power to join the tips of two bamboo poles, which were horizontally erected meters apart. With the same power, she could make the joined tips fall apart. However, today we cannot find such people who can chant *pellam* in that way. *Pellam* has lost its originality and hence its power. A knowledgeable *pellamdangba* can even lead the soul of a dead person who has died of unnatural death, for example, a person who died in an accident.

Yamphu believe that a *pellamdangba* (a person who knows *pellam*) can even have control over a *mangba* (shaman) through the power of *pellam*; he can even point out and correct *mangba's* mistakes. A *mangba* may not be able to call his guru (deities) in his night performance if a *pellamdangba* wishes to control the *mangba*. A p*ellamdangba* can pose obstacles to *mangba's* way of ritual performance by means of *pellam*. In this regard, an informant, Tek Bahadur Yamphu, told me the following narration:

> When I reached the house where the *mangba* was to perform, the *mangba*'s assistants were setting up the altar. As they finished their work and set up

the altar, the *mangba* got ready for the night performance, wore all his apparel, his bead necklaces, a waistband of bells, and *washing* (made up of feathers). Then, he began to chant *mindum* by beating the *dhyangro* (drum). But to the astonishment of all of those who were present, the *mangba* was not able to shiver and tremble. "*Deutai ayena*," (I could not call my deities) said the *mangba*; he became disgraceful.

The *mangba* tried and tried again; he tried his best; then, he began to feel something has been done wrong; he felt very uneasy, as he was not being able to call his *guru*. The m*angba* seemed restless. Still, he tried to begin the process but all went vain. Finally, he shouted, "What is happening today?" Joining his both hands together (Namaste 'N'), he turned towards his audiences and bowed to them saying, "Among you, there must be one, may be *pellamdangba*, *sakmiyongba*, or *lekhuba* (knowledgeable persons). Forgive me if I have failed to pay due respect to you unknowingly." He further pleaded and said, "Forgive me if I happen to make any mistake. With all my reverence, I request you to come forward."

This event made the spectators feel amazed. People who had come to see the night performance wondered and started to look at each other in suspicion. In the meantime, from the spectators a middle-aged man stood and shouted, "Who could be such a person, among us?" While almost all the spectators were in confusion, suddenly we noticed an old person sitting quiet and calm at the corner. He was wearing a shawl; and his eyes were looking towards the floor as if he was unaware of all these happenings. Some of us talked about his silence. After a while, the *mangba* got up, went to the old man, and bowed to him. Then, the old man admitted what he had done it to the *mangba*. After that, he threw some *akchhyata* (uncooked rice kernels), and everything became normal. The *mangba* started to shake, tremble, and became able to call his *guru*. For the first time, n my life, I witnessed such an incident and realized the power of *pellamdangba*.

By the above narration, it is evident that *pellam* is a powerful knowledge and contains a sacred power, power of ancestors. *Pellam* is Yamphu

knowledge through which they communicate with ancestors; it is Yamphu way of connecting the living with their ancestors. The effectiveness of *pellam* depends on correct spell of sacred words and on one's capacity/ knowledge on how well s/he can communicate with the ancestors. In this sense, the ancestors are still living with Yamphu people in the lands; they can hear the Yamphu and can give power.

Singing *pellam* often takes place in marriage, in household ceremonies, and in social gatherings in the form of folk songs.[4] On these occasions, the purpose of singing *pellam* is recreational. Though people sing *pellam* for recreational purposes. It contains the concept of the origin of human beings, Yamphu worldview, ancestral knowledge, local clan history, creation of the world, and ancestral migration. Culturally, singing *pellam* takes place between two parties (males and females) in which one party requires to respond to the other and vice versa. In such context, each party would ask and respond to the fundamental questions: Who are you? Where are you from? When and how have you come to this place? What is your *chawa* (a spring where ancestors first drank water) and *samek* (from which directions your ancestors have come here)? Why do we follow a certain ritual? Would you tell me your clan history? How are we different from other ethnic groups? And so on. For Yamphu, the concepts embedded in such questions have great power because such questions seek to explore Yamphuness. Great linguistic competence is a must; otherwise, it is impossible to take part in singing *pellam*. On the other hand, in some rituals such as performing *tangdupha?wa* (guiding dead spirit to the ancestral world), singing *pellam* is indispensible. In such rituals, *pellamdangba* sings *pellam* to escort the deceased soul to the ancestral world (Yamphu 2014).

Pellam: A cultural way of making sovereign people

On April 8, 2012, I went to meet Krishna Bahadur with the purpose of recording his *pellam*. Our meeting was actually set up a few days back

4 For instance, the *pelam* of Limbu is well known as Limbu folk songs. Limbu say *palam* in Dhan Nacha.

as I happened to meet him attending a ritual (*panchauli* 'N') at the bank of Arun River. When we (one of my brothers and I) reached his home, a woman of around 60 came out from the house. She was in typical Yamphu ornaments (*dhungri*, *mundtri*, and *bulaki*). As we greeted her, she inquired us in Yamphu language, "Where are you both from?" We introduced ourselves to her and told her that we came to meet Krishna Bahadur. She informed that Krishna had gone to collect fodder for the cattle in the nearby jungle. She made us seated on the veranda and said, "Wait, he will come soon." She walked back to continue with her household chores.

After a few minutes or so, Krishna Bahadur returned from the jungle carrying fodder on his shoulder; he put the fodder to the cattle. We exchanged greetings. He looked at me and said, "How long has it been since you have come here?" I told him, "Not so long, it has been just few minutes." Immediately, he asked his wife to make millet beer and to serve us. Sitting in the veranda, he began to talk bits of local news; meanwhile, his wife served us millet beer. With the sip of the beer, I politely announced the purpose of my visit in detail. Actually, I found him familiar with my work. He smiled at me, and then with slight laughter over the sip of beer, he asked me to be ready for recording. One excerpt of the *pellam* he sang is as follows:

> They (Limbu, Khobmbu, Yamphu, and Koch-Meche) gathered in *yangli* (Tarai 'N') and started their journey northwards[5]. They continued their journey, hunting and searching for good places to live. The five brothers and two sisters reached at Barahachhetra.[6] They rested there for some days. During that time, the two sisters were said to have gone down to Tarai to fetch oil. At Barachhetra, the four brothers divided the River tracts as their

5 People use different terms to denote the place of origin such as Khokwalung, Kakchrilung, and Kashi. In Yamphu concept, this place is located down below in the plain area, Kashi, where first human was created by *okwayu □aŋbi □ube?□ pʌppa*.

6 A famous pilgrimage site located in Sunsari district near the confluence of the great Seven River. It is also known as Chatara.

> shares: *Tummi wawa* (eldest brother) got the Dudh Koshi and Sunkoshi as his share, *Hangsarumba*[7] (second eldest brother) got Tamor and Kabeli Koshi, and *Rungsarumba*[8] (third eldest brother) got Arun River. As they divided, the elder brother (Khombu) followed Dudh Koshi and Sunkoshi River and established *Khombuwan*. *Hangsarumba* (Limbu) followed the course of Tamar Koshi and established *Limbuwan*. *Rungsarumba* (Yamphu) waited for their sisters, and followed the course of Arun and established *Yamphuwan* (present territory). *Yungsarumba* (the fourth-born son) went to foreign country (out of these river courses) and became *Nepahang*.[9] For some reasons, the *Syakpa* (the youngest) returned back to Yangli (Tarai) and followed the course of Mechi and settled around. The two sisters followed their Yamphu brother. These two sisters got married to *Chupchihang* at Chupchikmi dem.[10] While following the course of the Arun, the *Kashi Papa* (Yamphu) came straight up to *Sambahang dem* (Lhasa in Tibet).

After chanting *pellam*, Krishna Bahadur summarized it as follows:

> Listen, this is our place, Yamphuwan; Limbu's place is Tamor Khola-Limbuwan; Khombu's place is Dhudhkoshi-Khombuwan; Koche-Meche are also our Kirati brothers, who are in Tarai. We have distinct territory like this. Our ancestor divided and occupied since time immemorial.

Lohroung and Mewahang Rai also have similar *pellam* (Geanszle 2000; Hardman 2000) that explains their ancestors followed the Arun. Yamphu,

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7 Who was the second brother? The version of Khasinimba differs from Krishna Bahadur's. Khasinimba, a *yadangba* and also *pellamdangba*, claims that Yamphu is the second eldest brother and Limbu is the third.

8 However, myths of Lohorung and Mewahang tell that they followed the Arun (See Gaenszle, 2000; Hardman, 2000). Actually, in my observation, whoever followed, they are the descendants of a common ancestor who followed the Arun.

9 Became the king of Nepal.

10 When I asked Krishna Bahadur where Chupchikmidem is situated, he did not give me a clear answer, but he guessed it would be located near Leguawa Khola.

Mewahang, and Lohorung are the three Kirati groups of Arun valley. They have distinct territories: Yamphu live in the Upper part of Arun valley; Mewahang live in the northwest of Arun. Lohorung settlements are found in the south of Yamphu. Though each of them has their own language, they are mutually intelligible. They have a common word *Yakkhaba* that gives a common identity for them—we are Kirati.

Then *who followed the Arun?* As we have noted above, Yamphu claim that Yamphu ancestor followed Arun path and occupied the territory first. In contrast to Yamphu claim, Lohorung *pelam* claims that Lohorung ancestors followed Arun path and occupied the present territory (Hardman, 2000). Similarly, Mewahang claim that their ancestors followed Arun path and occupied the present territory (Gaenszle, 2000).[11]. Gaenslze concludes and writes, "Mewahang is the forefathers of the Rai groups of Arun Valley" (2000, 274). Gaenslze further argues, "The fact, we repeatedly came across indications that the Mewahang are closely related to the Yamphu and Lohorung, and many details support the supposition that the former split off from the latter, and not vice versa" (2000, 279).

However, it is hard to say one group is the ancestor of another because comparative studies of these groups is yet to be carried out. However, there is no doubt that they are the descendants of a single ancestor who

11 Gaenszle writes: Mewahang kept following the course of Arun, engaging all the while in hunting. In this way he finally reached the lands of Tibetans (Bhote Muluk 'N'). There he met a Tibetan girl (Bhoteni) and the fell in love with each other and stayed together. One day they stole a *phuru* (a wooden drinking cup) from the Tibetans. The women took it and threw it in the river, where it floated away. "Wherever this *phuru* turns up is our *kipat* shall be," she/he said. They looked and looked for it, until they found it in Hedangna. Immediately they settled down there (2000, 278-79). He codes a narrative told to him: After (Mewahang) reached the upper Arun Valley and married the Bhoteni there in the land of the Tibetans, he returned and obtained numerous offspring. The Yamphu Rai, the Athpahariya Rai, Lohorung Rai split off, marrying here and there and remaining in the various locations (2000, 278-79).

followed the Arun. The split occurred between them at a later time after following the Arun path. At the time of primordial split off at Barahachhetra, there was only one ancestor. In later generations, they split off and over the years, their clans dispersed. The dispersed clan groups cleared and laid claimed over a number of areas of the virgin lands of the Arun Valley.

As per their *mindum*, all three groups claim themselves as descendants of the primordial ancestor who followed the Arun path. Now, the question is, “Why does each of them claims that the first ancestor who followed the Arun belonged to them?” This is a good example of cultural politics. This is an argument about politics and power, not an argument about seniority or about primordial identity: Who represents the primordial name? One of the messages that each of them wants to convey is, "Hey, we are the senior, represent the primordial identity, and are the first owner of the territory." Let us quote Khasinimba once again: "So they don’t have *Wan*. You know, what *Wan* means? *Wan* means, they (Bantawa and Athapahariya) did not follow the River path." Placing oneself as the senior (descendants of the primordial ancestor) to other groups has some symbolic significance of seniority and social status. Among the Kirati groups, senior people have special benefits in social functions and rituals.[12] However, this argument has contributed both to assert local difference and to forge unity.

With regard to Yamphu origin and migration, I have recorded another version of *pellam*. On March 29, 2012, I recorded the following excerpt of *pellam* from Gurungnimba. He is also well-known *pellamdangba* from Gairi Gaon, Hedangna:

12 Senior people are taken care of and taken with great respects among Kirati people. For instance, they are placed first in the row or given first priority while serving anything. In other words, being senior, an individual gets first priority to exercise his or her rights, e.g., a younger brother cannot marry a girl before his brother gets married. If he wants, he is expected to get approval of marriage from his brother.

In *kho□waluŋ*, *Kho□wa Papp□* created *minangsa* (first human);

This *minangsa* gave birth to Sudahang; and Sudahang to Maguhang;

ei Maguhang gave birth to Sabahang, and Sabahang gave birth to three *minagsa* (humans);

ei ei the eldest son established Maha China;

ei ei Sarumba (the second eldest son) went to the East and established Japan and Burma;

ei ei seven sons were burn to Yangsarumba;

ei ei he gave birth to seven sons; two of them departed from *Saikhuwa and Sadiya;*[13]

ei ei ei the youngest two sons stayed in the Tarai region, Koche-Meche;

ei ei the eldest son took Dhudha Koshi as his share and followed Dudh Koshi and established Solukhombuwan;

ei second eldest son took Tamor as his share and followed Tamor and established Limbuwan;

Yansarumba (the third eldest son-Yamphu) got Arun as his share, followed Arun and established Yamphuwan.

In the second part of his *pellam*, Gurungnimba sings the journey of the ancestors back to the present territory from *sambalung dem* (Kharta, Tibet).

In Kharta, Tibet, Yamphu married Mayakni (a Tibetan girl) and got two sons. Then he decided to come back[14] and set off their journey to south.

13 Gurungnimba did not say where *Saikhuwa and Sadiya* lie.

14 Here the informants contradict on the matter of how long the ancestors lived in Kharta. For instance, Krishna Bahadur argues that the ancestor who reached Lhasa lived only for some years. Krishna Bahadur argues that if he and his decedents had stayed for that long period, there would be *chawa*. But Gurungnimba believes that the ancestor lived in Kharta for five to six generations and among them two sons decided to return back.

From Kharta, they came to Popti,[15] where they did some rituals and took the oath that they would stay in the place where they would find two things: *samʔma* and *phuru* (stick and dozing mug, which they had carried along with them). They did *hyanjrungma* (prayed to god) in Rudanŋ pond at Popti; and let the *samʔma-phuru* be carried away by the stream. Immediately, the *samʔma-phuru* vanished.[16] After that, the two brothers went on in searching for the *samʔma-phuru*. From Khartalung ʔem,[17] they arrived at Poptiyuŋ ʔem, Pangdok ʔem, then Damdamuk ʔem, and Oktiŋa ʔem.[18] In Oktiŋa ʔem, they saw the *sam?ma-phuru* spinning around in a pond of Okteŋwa spring; they looked around the area whether it was suitable for them to inhabit. They did not like the place.[19] Again, they did *hyanjrungma* praying *Taŋdutuba-Taŋdumaʔma* (Paruhang and Sumnima) for another place, and solemnly pledged themselves to stay where the *samʔma-phuru* would reappear. The two brothers kept following the *sam?ma-phuru*. They came to *asiŋyak dem*; from *asiŋyak dem*, they further came down to *goŋgu ʔem* (above Baklek village); from *goŋgu ʔem*, they came to *nokluŋna ʔem*[20] where the two brothers built a memorial in their parents' name (see Figure 3 below). After building the memorial, the two brothers split off at that point. The elder brother Seppa went southwest, where he demarcated the present territory attached with Noklung *chawa*, and founded present

15 According to Gurungnimba, Popti is located above Honghong.

16 There are different versions regarding what the Yamphu ancestors sailed from Rudaŋ pond. An informant from Shyaksila said that while coming down from Tibet, Thikkepa (ancestor of Yamphu) could not cross the Arun River. So, they threw their *Toklang* (stick) into the river. Later, Thikkepa found their *Toklang* shored up in Rudaŋ and they decided to settle down in Hedangna.

17 According to Gurungnimba, Kharta is located in Tibet.

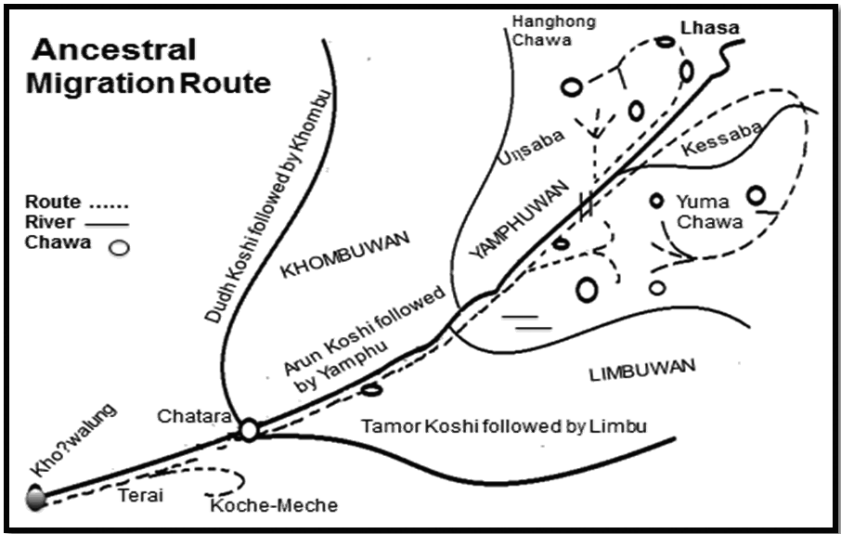
18 It is located in Shyaksila, a village of Hatiya VDC.

19 I visited Syaksila in December 2014. Compared to Hedangna, the place is very steep, not good for dwelling and farming.

20 Today, people call this place as Mani Danda. However, in *pellam* according to Gurungnimba, this place is called as *nokluŋnaʔem*, where the two brothers made *Mani*. The *Mani* still can be observed in the site. But the Bhote (Lhomi and Nukpu) people from Hatiya and Hongong and surrounding call this place as *Seppalamjoŋ*.

Seduwa village. The younger brother *Mennawa* came straight down to Rudanŋ (now Hedangna); in Rudanŋ, there was no human presence; Rudanŋwas was covered with thick forest, which used to be the home of tigers, so the younger brother was scared. Therefore, he climbed up a peepal tree (*pyapoliŋ* 'Y') and seated on a branch like *ʔukuwama*, looking around for *samʔma-phuru*. He saw the *samʔma-phuru* at Rudanŋ pond, which was just under the peepal on which he had climbed. He saw the *samʔma-phuru* spinning around on the pond. Then, he looked around the area whether it was suitable for him to settle down; he found the place suitable and decided to settle down in this place (in Hedangna).[21]

Figure 3: Yamphu Territory



When Mennawa was about to settle down there, other four clan groups also arrived there. They were Khombuwa Tyangsa (Sunakhari Lambuwa Chawadangba)[22], Prithya Tyangsa (Kripanwa Chawa apphokdangba), Mangbakhim (Shovaya Noklung Chawadanba), Tingyak and Miring

21 The old name of Hedangna is Rudaŋ. Bhote from Hatiya and other areas still call Hedangna as Rudanŋ and people of Hedangna as Rudanŋa.

22 According to Gurungnimba, Sunakhari Lambuwa *chawa* is situated at Gadi.

(Phembulawa Chawa Apphokdangba) and Mennawa (Pyakkhim Chawa).[23] They were heading toward the north (Tibet) from Tarai.[24] After meeting Mennawa, who had returned from Tibet, they also decided to settle down there. They became *hanghang* (very happy) when they got together. Since then, they became five clans *tubaji* (ancestors) of Yamphu. They danced and sang with joy. After that, the Rudaŋ spring was named *Hanghongchawa*, the common *chawa* to five clan groups. The five ancestors laid out the paving five stones and five ponds for each to mark their arrival as the first occupant to the land.[25] Then, they performed *chawa* ritual delightfully for peace and prosperity and carried up *charawa* (the tokens of prosperity) in a basket to the *Maktokhim* (house). The mother at the *Maktokhim* (house) received the *charawa*, and she placed them upstairs, in the attic, where the rice storage was located. They sprinkled millet beer around the ancestor shrine. In this way, the five ancestors settled down and had a good time.[26]

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23 However, according to Man Bahadur Yamphu, Pyakkhim Chawa has been claimed by four different clan groups: Cha Mennawa, Yungsaba Mennawa, Khakkura, and Khikkura.

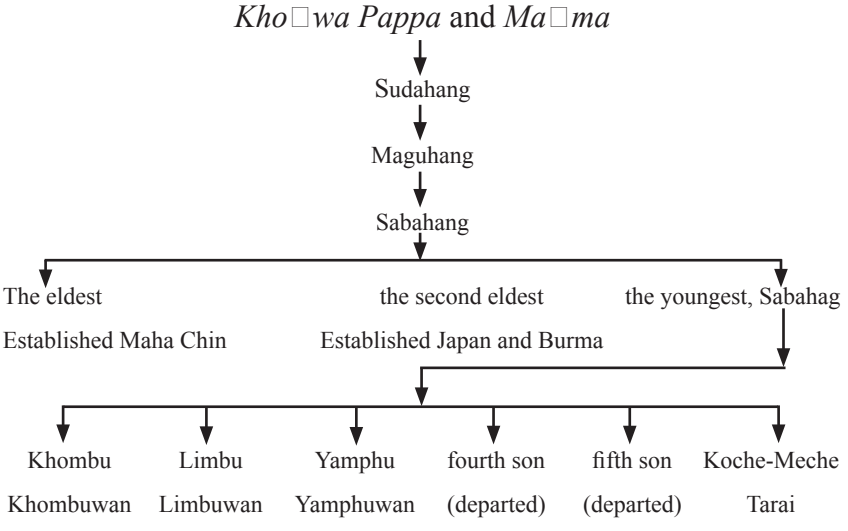
24 As the *pellam* tells, immediately other four clan brothers also came there to claim the land of Hedangna. Here, Gurungnimba was not clear who came first in Hedangna. Most probably, according to him, the four clan groups were already there. Regarding who came first, we get very conflicting information.

25 These five stone pillars and five small ponds still can be observed in the site.

26 Here it is important that among the five ancestors, the Mennawa who came down from Lhasa is known as Ungsaba Mennawa. Therefore, his descendants are known as *ungsaba* Mennawa today. Other four ancestors and their descendants are known as *kessaba* since they did not reach Lhasa. Similarly, the Seppa who established Noklung *chawa* and Seduwa village is also known as *ungsaba* as he returned back from Lhasa. The descendants of the two ancestors Mennawa and Seppa are considered Lhasa-gotra, and the descendants whose ancestors did not reach Lhasa are considered Kashi-gotra. Such category of Lhasa-gotra and Kashi-gotra seems to be a common feature among the Kirati groups. The term *gotra* comes from Khas Nepali. For Yamphu, it is *samek*. Generally, the Yamphu who belong to Lhasa-gotra call themselves as *ungsaba*, and *Lashahangba* and the Yamphu who belong to Kashi-gotra call themselves as *kessaba*, *Kashihangba*.

The *pellam* above contains several themes/meanings: arrival at the present territory, group split and dispersal, occupation of the lands, local boundaries, foundation of Yamphu society; the *pellam* also explains the origin of *chawa* and *khamang* (household shrine). The *pellam* states that Limbu, Khombu, and Yamphu are the descendants of a common ancestor; it demarcates territories of Kirati groups – Yamphu, Limbu, and Khombu. Interestingly, Gurungnimba put the Kirati of Nepal under the broader Mongol identity: Chinese, Japanese, and Burmese.

Figure 2: Kirat Genealogy in *pellam*



As can be seen from the *pellam* above, it describes that Mennawa and Seppa came down to the present territory from Kharta, Tibet. Other four Yamphu clan groups – Khombuwa Tyangsa, Prithya Tyangsa, Mangbakhim, Tingyak, and Miring – arrived at Rudanŋ, Hedangna, from downward plain area. When these five ancestors of Yamphu arrived in the present territory, it was unoccupied; there was no human presence; Rudanŋ was a thick forest, home of tigers and wild animals. The five ancestors cleared the jungles, made the land habitable, laid claim to the

lands, and founded Yamphu society; they laid out the paving five stones and five ponds for each to mark their arrival as the first occupant to the lands. This is why Yamphu think that they have absolute power, a power inherited from the ancestors over the ancestral lands. This shows that *pellam* itself speaks for Yamphu authority over the lands.

The place names, rivers, Rudaŋ *chawa*, five pillar stones and water ponds reflect "historical events and serve as "a key component of arguing the authenticity of Yamphu "'history' for' the claims of ownership" (Guo 2003,196). For Yamphu, Rudaŋ *chawa*, ponds, and stone pillars have become key symbols since they demarcate local boundaries, codify the memory of the past, and signify Yamphu ancestral lands. In other words, these places have become "lived history" (Munn 1992,113) that gives a Yamphu *sense of place*. *Pellam* is, therefore, a cultural way that intertwines Yamphu and lands meaningfully. Having being connected in such a way with lands and ancestors, Yamphu transform themselves as sovereign people to the lands. This is how Yamphu spatialize their identity as *jimi-bhumi* ('N') into the present territory. By this Yamphu and their lands appear, as Basso tells, "virtually as one" (1984, 122). Then the lands become inseparable from Yamphu identity, and thus destruction of the lands is considered as the destruction of Yamphu existence.

Therefore, the idea of Yamphu authenticity, legitimacy, and sovereignty over the lands do not seem only to be rooted in the notion of first settlers, but on the idea that land is the basis of cultural identity that emanates from *pellam*. *Pellam* reinforces the idea of coexistence – ancestors coexist in the society and thus their presence has made the lands sacred. Therefore, the lands for Yamphu becomes, borrowing Muehlebach's words, “inherently moral – that is, nondestructive” (2001, 426).

The concept of *chawa* is also crucial in order to understand Yamphu relationship with their ancestors and lands. As we saw, *pellam* describes

the origin of Rudanŋ *chawa*. It also recites names of different *chawa* such as Noklung *chawa*, Pyakkhim *chawa*, and Hanghong*chawa*. Yamphu believe that *chawa* is the origin of *pellam* and vice versa. Literally, *chawa* is a source of water where ancestors drank water first. Similar notion exists in Lohorung Rai. For example, Charlotte Hardman writes, "*Chawa* is both the 'first clan watering place' and the territorial name which identifies and binds together a clan, identifying the spring to which the clan first spoke when its members claimed the land" (2000, 121). The five Yamphu ancestors became *hanghang* (very happy) when they got together at Rudaŋ spring. They danced and sang with joy. After that, the Rudaŋ spring was named *Hanghongchawa*, the common *chawa* to five clan groups. Since then *Hanghongchawa* stands as an emblem for the clan history and lands ownership. In this sense, *pellam* provides authentic narrative of how Yamphu, their lands, and present territory have come to be in existence. By means of *pellam*, Yamphu sings how the ancestors began to set ancestral orders in the lands for Yamphu existence. For example, we can take *chawa* rite. *Pellam* explicitly describes why and how *chawa* rite came to be a core concept in Yamphu culture. Yamphu conduct *chawa* rite every year to worship ancestors, and they are obliged to request the ancestors to bring prosperity and fertility in the entire village. Among Kirati groups, this rite is known as *Ubhauli* festival. During the *chawa* rite, Yamphu perform *kellang* (Yamphu ritual dance) with great joy, as their ancestors did in the past. At the end of the rite, they bring *charawa* (prosperity) given by the ancestors in a basket. Yamphu think that there will be no prosperity and peace in the village without the grace and favor of their ancestors. To put it in a nutshell, Yamphu live under the ancestral authority. This ancestral authority in Yamphu society is reinforced by the concept of *chawa* as we see in Man Bahadur's following narration of *chawa*.

> *Chawa* is our root (*madaŋ* 'Y'). Without *chawa*, there is no way to talk about social life: what and how to speak? Therefore, *chawa* is vital while

> introducing one *Yakkhaba* to another *Yakkhaba*. *Chawa* is inevitable to make a link with ancestors and to communicate with them. You know, the ancestors cannot hear and recognize you until you recite your *chawa.* Without *chawa*, we will not be human, but we become like animals. Imagine what will happen if there is no kinship and social relations in the society? How do you communicate with each other? How do you identify yourself? Who is who? Therefore, *chawa* is recited in every lifecycle ritual. For us, life is not possible without *chawa*. Life cannot be imagined without *chawa*. It is with reference to the *chawa* of each person and each clan/ group, Yamphu establishes relations between the individuals and groups.

Man Bahadur's narration signifies that *chawa* is at the core Yamphu society. *Chawa* provides a set of frameworks and values through which every Yamphu sees and acts. Yamphu worldview is grounded upon the notion of *chawa* by which they conceptualize how it is to be human and then Yamphu. *Chawa* acts as the source of Yamphu thought and ideology; it symbolizes Yamphu's spiritual attachment to ancestral lands and stands for ancestral order and authority in the present; and it legitimizes kinship, marriage and other social relationships among Yamphu. Therefore, *chawa* is inseparable from Yamphu life because no Yamphu individual exists without *chawa*. Yamphu life cannot be imagined without *chawa*. It is *chawa* through which Yamphu acquire names, lands, history and identity. This is why Yamphu call *chawa* as *pukmara* (creation). In other words, it can be argued that *chawa* is the theoretical framework for Yamphu society, which has shaped and made Yamphu life possible. We can conclude that *chawa* is inalienable possession of Yamphu. It is associated with Yamphu origins and thus governs Yamphu society. It is inalienable because it constitutes an essential part of Yamphu *sense of self*.

Moreover, *chawa* has important role to play in bringing progress, intelligence, and wellbeing for an individual as well as groups. Yamphu think that an individual favored by *chawa* would become bright and genius. In Yamphu belief, *chawa* serves as an internal force in the

development of personality of an individual; only with the favor of *chawa*, an individual can become a *mangba*, *yadangba*, *pellamdangba*, and *sakmiyonba* (knowledgeable persons). *Chawa* is the source of prosperity, peace, and good harvest in the entire village. As a vital ancestral force, *chawa* comes to act in every aspect Yamphu life. Therefore, as Yamphu think, without *chawa* Yamphu life and society is not possible. The *Hanghongchawa* cannot be alienated from the five clans groups because it continually places and connects them to their ancestors, lands, and history; more importantly, it reinforces the concept of the origin and ancestral presence. Thus, Yamphu existence, and cultural identity are rooted in the lands by means of *chawa*. Over the time, generations have passed and people have migrated from their ancestral lands to other parts of the country and India as well. Many Yamphu have migrated to Morang, Sunsari, Ilam districts of Nepal and even to Darjeeling, Sikkim and other parts of northeast India. Nevertheless, they still associate with their original *chawas* to maintain their socio-cultural life.

The vitality of *chawa* manifests in every aspect of Yamphu life. For example, while choosing a mate, a boy can only marry a Yamphu girl who is from a different *chawa* than his own. Man Bahadur says, "Everyone has *chawa*. Before *mangani* (asking for hands of a girl), we must know *chawa* of the girl and boy. If the *chawa* is different, marriage is possible. But if the boy and girl belong to the same *chawa*, they cannot marry no matter how many generations before their ancestors departed. Likewise, in the funerals while guiding the dead soul to the ancestral world, *chawa* becomes vital. Without invoking the name of the *chawa* of the deceased person, it is impossible to guide the soul of the deceased to the ancestral world.

Further, to understand the inherent relations of Yamphu with lands, I want to relate the concept of *chawa* with *kipat* system. Cadastral Survey conducted in 1994 abolished *kipat* in Upper Arun. However, it is still very useful to analyze how Yamphu existence is inextricably rooted in the lands. In the past, the state recognized the sovereignty of Yamphu

along with other Kiratis through a royal decree in 1774. Within the *kipat* system, the land was non-salable to members of other ethnic groups. Regmi writes, "…Kipat land generally could not be sold outside the community" (1999, 89[1977]). During the *kipat* system, each Yamphu had to be associated with a particular *chawa* in order to have *kipat* right. Individuals having a particular *chawa* would only be able to assert his *kipat* right over the lands and resources attached to it. Forbes writes, "Political boundaries designating, who could and could not hold land in the village thus coincided with the cultural boundaries delimited by the *tsawa*" (Forbes, 1999,134 glossed in the footnote).

Of course, today the time has changed. *Kipat* has become a past remnant. Ever since the abolition of *kipat*, the government converted *kipat* into *raikar* (state-owned land). Land has become the private property and become alienable. All the lands are registered under tax-paying office. Many non-Yamphu have encroached in Yamphu lands. Yamphu know that overall authority of their lands have been shifted to the government. In a nutshell, anyone can acquire, use, own and sell the lands by law.

However, Yamphu imagine themselves as the sovereign people of their lands. Yamphu sovereignty intends to maintain and protect the spiritual existence of lands since their history and cultural existence are fused with the lands. Loss of lands has threatened Yamphu existence. In the case of Limbu *kipat*, Lionel Caplan aptly writes, "….assault on kipat is seen as a threat to the very existence of the Limbus as a separate community within the society. Thus cultural identity becomes political identity in the context of the struggle to preserve kipat system" (2007,174[1970]). He argues that the abolition of Limbu's *kipat* is to deny Limbu's "claim to the past" and for Limbu, to lose *kipat* "is to lose part of who one is in the present." Therefore, he concludes that the loss of *kipat* lands, for Limbu, is the loss of "sense of self" (2007, 147). This equally applies to Yamphu. Since the lands sustain Yamphu "spiritually and emotionally" (Rappaport 1985, 28), since the lands "stand for their way of life and thus symbolize the cultural vitality for the community" (2007, 210[1970]), it

becomes Yamphu's moral responsibility, a sacred duty to preserve the lands. To live as a distinct people, Yamphu must live in their ancestral lands with the ancestors.

These are the basic premises upon which Yamphu notion of sovereignty originates. Therefore, the sources of this sovereignty are spiritual and cultural. Yamphu sovereignty denies any unwanted intervention to their cultural life; it is, as they see, their fundamental collective rights. Such Yamphu ideas of life and lands provide Yamphu with a framework for contemporary attempts to achieve cultural autonomy in their territory. They still imagine that they are the real owners of the lands to maintain their cultural integrity and independence. Here, Yamphu sovereignty comes for, to quote Vine Deloria Jr., "continued cultural integrity than political powers" because in her view, "to the degree that a nation loses its sense of cultural identity, to that degree it suffers a loss of sovereignty" (1999, 213). Therefore, the essence of sovereignty includes not simply legal aspect, but includes "the notion of a distinct people, separate from others" (Deloria Jr. 1999, 111).

Figure 4: Seppa Lamjoŋ. It is believed that the two brothers, Seppa and Mennawa, split off from here. The Manis ('N') in the photographs are believed to be built by Seppa and Mennawa.

Conclusion

Yamphu *pellam* is an important element of Yamphu culture. *Pellam* as a cultural framework enables Yamphu to maintain their unbreakable connection between lands and the ancestral past. By means of *pellam,* Yamphu spatialize their identity as *jimi-bhumi*. To keep *pellam*, for Yamphu, is to keep, "a feeling of the past-in-the present"(Turner 2000, 83). Thus, Yamphu *pellam* is a cultural process through which ancestral past unfolds in the present. The process of unfolding of ancestral past takes place in such a way that cultural identity of Yamphu and lands become virtually one. At this point, ancestors as supernatural power beings are imagined as the true owner of the land. Exactly, at this point Yamphu notion of sacred emerges, and "society is legitimized as sacred it stands" (Godelier 1999, 124). In Godelier's view, special relationship between supernatural beings constitutes "an essential component of the exercise of sovereignty over a territory, over the resources found and exploited and often the human groups living there" (Godelier 2009, 146). In this sense, *pellam* is a cultural process that gives Yamphu a *sense of sovereign people* to the lands. This Yamphu sense of sovereign people comes from Yamphu culture and ancestral lands, from the ancestral world. Yamphu sense of sovereign people originates from ancestral authority that governs Yamphu society. Yamphu notion of sovereignty is grounded on the belief that the land was created by the ancestors. Thus, ancestors are the true owner of the lands. Therefore, Yamphu are bound "with special responsibilities within the areas they occupy, linking them in a natural and sacred way to their territories" (Alfred 2002, 471).

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Everyday Life of Betel Nut Carriers: State and Border in the Eastern Nepal

Anup Rai*

Introduction

I have spent a long time of my life in Kakarvita border and experienced daily life of borderland before I came to Kathmandu valley for opportunities of all kind. This has made it easier for me to understand the distinction between empirical border regions and the "border" imagined in the national interior (Heymen and Symons 2012). I remember my past experiences of crossing border from Kakarvitta through Mechi River Bridge, which connects Nepal and India, to the Indian side of Panitanki, a small bazaar. I used to cross the bridge without a sense of hesitation, fear, and doubt, as it was a part of my quotidian act. It was an everyday experience for me, like for other many border people, to take the border for granted as part of my lived everyday habitus. But the act of border crossing is not always as simple and natural as I used to think of it, particularly at a time when one is carrying betel nuts, an item banned by the Nepali government to export from Nepal to India. One can imagine how sensitive and uneasy it would be if one tries to cross the border carrying such "illegal" goods concealed in one's body. While conducting fieldwork among the betel nut carriers in Kakarvitta border region in 2014, I had been suspected of being 'undercover police' by the betel nut carriers, while some of them took me as a member of their own group. Amidst the confusion, I studied the daily activities of betel nut carriers at the Kakarvitta border. I focused on the relation between border guards and betel nut carriers at the border check points. This

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provided me with an important insight into the social, economic and cultural process that goes into making of an international border.

Betel nut carriers are groups from different social and cultural backgrounds. It includes individuals from different age, sex, caste, class, and nationality. Betel nut carriers comprises of individuals from both nationalities, Nepalis and Bengalis. From my observation, I could assume that the number of women betel nut carriers was grater than the male carriers. The number of betel nut smugglers from local population exceeds thousands of individuals from both nationalities. Cross-border smuggling of different contrabands occurs in Kakarvitta border and smuggling of such contrabands require huge amounts of money. Betel nut carriers are individuals who generate livelihood from cross-border smuggling on a daily basis. Before a decade or so, betel nuts smuggling was not as strictly controlled as it has been controlled and regulated at present. The local dealers, who were few in numbers, used to cross betel nuts in large quantities loaded on trucks, and they had direct contact with smugglers on the Indian side of the border. Now the government has deployed a large number of police to control its border against cross-border smuggling and criminal activities like human trafficking, robbery and murder. These changed conditions on the border have compelled the local dealers to rely on individual carriers to cross betel nuts. A number of local shops has also sprung up within a few years after the presence of government authorities at the Kakarvitta-Panitanki border. The individual betel nut smugglers buy the goods at these shops and sell it at a small market, Panitanki, on the Indian side. Thus, betel nuts smuggling has become one good source of earning a living, wherein individuals can either invest their own money in small amounts or carry the betel nuts of local dealers on a contract basis.

In this paper, I have attempted to explain the concept of border and its production focusing on everyday interplay of state agencies and people living in the borderland between Nepal and India. The focus of this study

is on the everyday act of border crossing by the betel nuts smugglers. These betel nut carriers subsist and earn their livelihood by engaging in what the state sees as an "illegal" activity – physically transporting the nuts from Nepal to India. Scholars have argued and shown how the everyday experiences and imaginations of border by the people and communities living in and along the national boundaries differ from the ways in which borders are understood, for example, by political leaders or people living in non-border cities, such as the capital city of Nepal. More specifically, even among the border communities, people's understandings of 'border' are likely to vary depending on how they interact with the state authorities regulating these borders on an everyday basis. In an attempt to highlight the process of border crossing by betel nut smugglers, this paper seeks to understand the strategies they enact in resisting and accepting state regulations governing the border. This theoretical perspective is assumed to provide important insights into the social and cultural process of international border and its production.

A border is not simply fixed physical demarcations such as those represented in the political map of the world between two or more than two nation-states. Borders become 'real boundaries' of nations and retain their political meanings through social-cultural processes and interactions between and among various state agencies and social groups. The state apparatus and structures such as custom, physical markers of boundaries such as fences, security check posts, barricades, as well as the administrative and bureaucratic practices, and the variegated institutions involved in the regulations of borders such as the police, military and revenue officials, play important role in producing political borders on everyday basis. Similarly, individuals who use and cross borders for various purposes and their interactions with the state agencies not only reaffirm the territorial sovereignty of nation-states, but also make visible the rigidity and porousness of national borders.

Given these complexities and dynamics of borders, in actual practices, the case of betel nut carriers is unique and insightful as they derive their subsistence by crossing the border every day, even multiple times a day, in a context where these activities are considered illegal by the state. But the betel nut carriers have devised various strategies to evade the state authorities of Nepal and India, and thus, they 'break' the fixity of borders. They have created their own borders by acknowledging its existence through their strategies of co-opting and manipulating the state agencies (hence state power) of the two countries. I draw an example from recent anthropological studies on border to discuss the production of border in everyday lives of the people who interact with the border on a daily basis. My ethnographic examples will further reveal how *making and unmaking of borders* become a constituent everyday ritual for these betel nut carriers. This paper has been divided into two parts. In the first part, I will locate the focus of my paper in the anthropology of border study by way of brief critical review of relevant literature on border, state and everyday lives of border crossing. The second part of the paper presents ethnographic data and its discussions in order to substantiate the major arguments I have put forward in this paper.

Border, people and state: An anthropological perspective

The anthropological study of border, in many ways, began with Fredric Barth's seminal ideas of ethnic boundaries (Hasting and Wilson 1998 and 2012). Many anthropologists have approached international border study with historical contexts of nation, nationalism and national politic (Alonso 1994) globalizations and migration, history, territory and state formations (Cole and Wolf 1999; Shalin 2012; Anderson 1997), state agencies at border and border as historical zone (Heyman 1994), legality and illegality, and permeability of border, identity and ethnicity.

As Hasting and Wilson write, 'Border peoples, because of their histories, and objectified and subjectified cultures, not only have to deal with the institutions of their own state, but with those institutions of the state or

states across the border, entities of equal and sovereign power, which overshadow all border relations' (Hasting and Wilson 1998). The study of international border tends to simultaneously relate to the study of nation and nationalism, state, sovereignty, and identity. Hasting and Wilson (1998, 4) suggests that the anthropological study of the everyday lives of border communities is simultaneously the study of the daily life of the state, whose agents there must take an active role in the implementation of policy and the intrusion of the state's structures into its people's lives. They further write that anthropologists thus study the social and economic forces which demand that a variety of political and cultural boundaries be constructed and crossed in the everyday lives of border people.

How state power affects the daily life of border community is well understood by Mitchell's (2006) ideas of 'ideological effects' of state. According to him, mundane social processes create the effect of the state not only as an entity set apart from economy or society, but as a distinct dimension of structure, framework, codification, expertise, information, planning, and intentionality. The state appears as an abstraction in relation to the concreteness of the social, a sphere of representation in relation to the reality of the economic, and a subjective ideality in relation to the objectness of the material world. In this sense, the state is viewed as a process always at making in the discourses of corruptions, which delineates the everyday life of state and its representation (Gupta 2006). The existence of states' power constructs borders as being fixed and controlled. In this sense, border is an agent of state's security and physical record of state's present and past relation with its neighbor (Hasting and Wilson 2012). Everyday lives of the state may be distinct to the border communities from other groups of people within a nation. Everyday life of border communities may be well defined and understood in term of interplay between state and people.

Borderlands are sites where multiple identities, social cultural and political, converge, coexist and sometimes conflict and can act on the groups, encouraging the development of separate identities (Zartman 2010). Borderlands also represent identity of both sides of border, based on language, culture, ethnicity, history, nationality and race. Trans-border identity is forged by the border community in responses to changes in the internal social and economic structure of local community, or due to political and social transformation of whole nations and global geo-political and economic relation. Flynn's (1997) study of Yoruba-speaking Shabe region of West Africa shows how border people responded by forging collective identity by asserting 'we are the border', in reaction to the changing dynamics of border economy and state policies toward the international border. Her approach to trans-border identity is seen as an adaptive strategy of local community to the changed social and economic opportunities in the region. Collective identity, as cultural, social and political phenomena, might have connections to the broader process of ethnic movement, political changes, as well as making distinction between border community and other groups within a nation. They are meeting areas of diverse political, economic, and cultural systems; they provide unique insights into the ways in which identities are constructed. These borders are signs of the eminent domain of state and are markers of the secure relations it has with its neighbors, or they are reminders of the hostility that exists between states.

The transformations of contemporary world due to globalization and neoliberal capitalism have engendered a renewed emphasis on international border, and border studies has emerged as multidisciplinary field of study. Social science perspectives from sociology, anthropology, political science, geography, history and international relations have attempted to conceptualize border in terms of national security, state, daily lives and experiences of border people, identity, and illicit act of border crossing. How border is associated with the desires and aspirations

of border people is best explored by High (2009) in her ethnographic description of border between Cambodia and Thailand. Border, especially citizenship, creates differentiations like race, age, ethnicity and class based inequality. Borderless world, she argues, is accessible to the rich people around the world, and the movement of Cambodian labor migrants to Thailand, what she calls 'mobility of migrant', is a case of border crossing, with imaginations and aspirations. Her study explains the reason behind the illicit act of border crossing and border stands for the division of the rich and poor citizens.

Theoretical underpinnings of border studies, whether it is a process or product, or conceptual or material reality, seem to be unresolved questions in the literature of border. Green (2012) suggests border as having non-indexical properties, which makes it possible to sense border as making realities both for empires and people going about their everyday life. In this sense, border not only designates the physical place that appears but also serves as classification system that brings together people, places, things and ideas in historically, politically, economically, and spatially specific ways (2012, 586). Anthropological theories and methods enable ethnographers to focus on local communities at international borders in order to examine the material and symbolic processes of culture. This focus on everyday life, and on the cultural constructions, which give meaning to the boundaries between communities and between nations, is often absent in the wider perspectives of the other social sciences (Hasting and Wilson 1998).

Everyday life of betel nut carriers in Kakarvitta border

After reviewing the theoretical parts of the border studies, let me now relate this to my own study of border communities, i.e., the betel nut carries. As said earlier, thousands of people cross Kakarvitta border check-points for different purposes every day. While crossing border they have to go through the 'rituals of border crossing' (Hausner and Sharma 2014) encompassing joys, excitement, fear, checks, control and

customs. Among them, the story of individuals or a group of individuals engaged in crossing border for economic purpose is different. There are variations in the ranges of such categories of people whom I would prefer to call border communities rather than what Heyman and Symons (2012) call 'border-region dweller' (Heyman and Symons 2012, 541). Such border communities include shopkeepers, betel nut carriers, rickshaw pullers, and occupational groups such as agents of travel agencies, hotel, and transportation company. The list of such communities is very large, but I only focus on the daily activities of the betel-nut traders and carriers in order to understand the patterns, processes and state-people relations at the margin of the state. Betel nut is one of the major goods for border economy in northern and eastern border of Nepal. The dynamics of cross-border trade of this stuff also has implications for the local, national and international political economics which needs to be explored in future research. In the cross-border trade of betel nuts, there is local perception of a series of opening (in the sense of co-option, negotiation and maneuverings between administrative and local traders) and closing of border. There is no officially estimated data of people who are involved in this trade, but local people estimate that the number exceeds more than five thousand from the Nepal side and equal number from the India side.

In recent decades, betel nut has become one of the major commodity items which are traded across borders between Nepal and India. It is estimated that each day more than thousand kilograms are transported to India from Kakarvitta. The large amount of betel nut is imported from Southeast Asian countries to Nepal, surprisingly, not for local consumption but for exporting to Indian markets. The political economy of betel nut revolves around tripartite relations between India, Nepal and local traders. The betel nuts have been one of the main sources of income for local traders in Kakarvitta border for a decade or so. In the past, there were few agents who exported the goods in large quantity

to the Indian markets. When the Indian government strictly controlled its border against the foreign betel nuts, the traders depended on the individuals to carry the goods. Now there are thousands of individuals (both Indians and Nepalis) who are involved in this trade. They begin their day with hope, expectation, and estimation of crossing Kakarvitta-Panitanki border (around six hundred meters long distance) as many times as possible. Every day nut carriers watch security guards at the border check points and negotiate with custom agents and police personnel. The daily lives of nut carriers are intricately entangled within the state policy of its border, border guards, local dealers and people's perception and attitude of carrying nuts across the border. When the border guards strictly control its border check points, the nut carriers wait for favorable situations to cross the goods. When the favorable conditions do not occur, they spend their time by listening to Hindi songs, chewing *Gutkha* and tobacco. Depending upon the situation, nut carriers carry the nuts in large quantity, ranging from ten to twenty kilograms of nuts at a time. Their earnings also depend upon the number of times they can carry the goods, across the border.

Betel nut carriers face all sorts of problems. They also follow all means of supply. Humiliation, humbleness, struggle, uncertainty, as tactical strategies, are the prime features of the daily lives of betel nut carriers at Kakarvitta border. They say that if they have a good fortune, it is easier for them to negotiate with police officer. During my field visit to Mechi Danda, I found a Bengali woman expressing her good fortune. She stated that she once met a gentle police officer who did not do anything to her, despite the fact that the police officer caught her with five kilograms of betel nuts. Instead, the police officer suggested her to run away with the goods. So she was successful to take the betel nuts across without many difficulties. But another time, she encountered a police who was very strict.

The betel nuts carriers have to negotiate to cross the border with border security guards through the mediator (middle man). The negotiations with the border guards at both Nepal and Indian side are carried out in both Nepali and Bengali language. It is a profitable job as the mediators deal with the security guards and get a certain amount of money as commission from each nut carriers.

Everyday act of crossing border is known as *Wari Pari*[1] in Kakarvitta border. Some betel nuts carriers think that *Wari Pari* is a very tedious job in the border. There are thousands of individuals engaged in doing *Wari Pari*. But people do not consider *Wari Pari* as prestigious as other sources of living. People perceive this job as vulgar and disrespectful. I have heard Laxmi, a middle aged widow, saying that she had to quite this job. As her daughters have now grown up, and have university degree, she no longer desires to continue this job. According to her, if she continues with this job, it would have a bad impact on the career of her daughters. I also talked with Bimala, a middle aged Nepali woman, who had not worked as a cross border trader. I asked her why she did not do so, since this was a lucrative business. The woman told me that she had to go through different people, including very junior people, for this business. She feels humiliated to accost the custom police, who are younger than her. It would be annoying for her to yell the police on a daily basis. Rather, she shared me her idea that the police should let one individual with certain quantity of goods once in a day. Upon my query as to the desired quantity, she guessed around sixty kilograms per individual. I further asked her how the police personnel could identify each individual as there are thousands of such traders. She had a simple answer: the police should give identification tag for every individual involved in this trade. However, the ideas of this particular lady may

1 *Wari Pari* is an informal talk people use to refer to the act of crossing border in Kakarvitta border.

well go beyond the legal provision, but it depicts what she actually aspires from the police vis-à-vis the betel nuts.

The people talk about the activities of traders in terms of how they should act, when to make a move and what sort of techniques and skills they need to handle the business. Bengali women depend on the Nepalis in order to recognize the police. However, I have not heard Nepalis derogatively talk about the Bengali people; nationality does not count much in this trade which requires crossing borders. The border economy exemplifies how nationality gets blurred and is supplanted by a new identity, for it is common place to hear women say that this is their business, and it is important for the lives of their children. The similarity and unity of the people in this trade is based on the similar identity of border people. When the police forcibly try to take away the betel nuts from them, they unite and resist the police force.

Who are more *Taskar*[2] than us? : Ways of accepting and resisting state agencies at border

The legality, illegality and state-people relations are mutual process of negotiations in the border region. And I argue, such negotiations also create borders. To be '*Taskar*' is to be unfit to the state's category of legal, but the duality of legal and illegal is often both contested and constructed at the border. As Galemba (2013) concludes, 'the relation between legality and illegality in the margins is often fluidly interconnected; not a static division' (Galemba, 2013, 282). Most of the nut carriers want to have friendly relations with the border guards for business purposes, but such relations tend to be antagonistic as well as intimate depending on the situation. One of my ethnographic experiences also provoked me to think of relations between state agent and nut carriers from perspectives of legality, illegality and power relations. For this, I will cite an example from a Muslim girl of the border area.

2 *Taskar* is a Nepali term equivalent to a smuggler in English.

Kali, a Muslim girl, is famous for her work as mediator even among the border security guards. One afternoon, I found her discussing with an Armed Police Force (APF) in Gaireegoan, a village that is located on the eastern part of the Kakarvitta Bazaar. In the midst of their conversation Kali asked the APF, who could be labeled as more *Taskar* than them. The police answered that if they took bribe, they were the *Taskar*. She confidently said to the APF that they were in zero point. In order to understand what she meant by zero point, I asked her, to which she replied, 'it means we are occasionally involved in the trade but the APF are always there.' When APF goes on to explain the meaning of *Taskar*, she stops him by saying no more discussion, we had enough discussion. As soon as the APF added his point of argument in order to reinforce his point to show her as being the *Taskar*, she defended herself by claiming that no one had noticed her carrying nuts. But the APF argued that both who carry and make others carry the illegal goods are *Taskar*. Even then, she was claiming that the APF had not seen her carrying the goods. The APF stated that they were the mediums and there they were. Finally she agreed being one among the many women who assisted in carrying the nut across the border. This is a kind of tactic; the girl told me in other occasion that she uses to keep the border guard busy so that her friend could pass their goods across the border.

The border provides a space in which legality, illegality and state is discursively created in the process of negotiation, informal relations and casual talks. In other words, state-people relation is a mutual process of acceptance, to some extent, if both accept and reconcile respective desires and intentions. For example, Kali's relation with the border guards is instrumental in nature, but for border guards, Kali works as a mediator between the nut carriers and guards, who on their behalf negotiates the bribe amount. When people come into contact with the state at border, the state presence may be observed in the process of negotiation, acceptance and resistance. The representation of the state

becomes visible if state is defined in terms of discursive construction (Gupta 2006) in every day practice. To quote Akhil Gupta (2006, 230):

> I focus on the modalities that enable the state (and, simultaneously, that which is not the state) to be discursively constructed. Looking at everyday practices, including practices of representation, and the representations of (state) practice in public culture helps us arrive at a historically specific and ideologically constructed understanding of "the state." Such an analysis simultaneously considers those other groupings and institutions that are imagined in the processes of contestation, negotiation, and collaboration with "the state." There is no reason to assume that there is, or should be, a unitary entity that stands apart from, and in opposition to, "the state," one that is mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive of the social space.

The active presence of state, specifically, at borderline, has a very short history at Kakarvitta border. *Bhansar Gasti*[3] was deployed to control cross-border illegal trade only before two decades or so. It was the Nepal government's policy to deploy APF in 2007 at the border, thus increasing the number of guards at border check points. Nepal Police and APF jointly control the areas where there has been an increase in human settlement along the boundary line, and such increase has also been taking place close to the no man's land in Kakarvitta. Here the physical presence of the security forces creates a condition of suspicion, doubt, terror and contradiction, not only between security guards and betel nut carriers, but also for common people as well. During my field visit, I have been suspected sometimes of being nut carriers by security guards and some other time as *civile* (police in civil dress) by nuts carriers as well as common people.

3 *Bhansar Gasti* was recognized and deployed as custom security force to control illegal border crossing of goods. Kakarvitta custom used to recruit retired army personnel as Bhansar Gasti. They were responsible for capturing illegal goods and to hand it over to the custom.

Moreover, in the peripheral areas of the state, the ideological effect of the state (Mitchell 2006) turns into more physical and visible experiences of everyday lives of the state. The expression of social groupings such as farmers, professionals, students, and shopkeepers suggest that the continued presence of security forces in their areas have ensured peace and security of their house and property on the one hand, but occasionally, unnecessary and unwanted raid in their houses by undercover border guards have also engendered annoyance and anger. There are several events of illegal capturing of innocent people in Gaireegoan. One of the incidents represents how state presence at the border community is full of tensions and contradictions. One day I arrived at the village in the evening when a police raid was being carried out in the houses. Border guards on patrol were hurriedly searching betel nuts in the local houses. As I came close to the place where they had piled up the betel nuts, one officer shouted at me to not come close. After I introduced my purpose of doing research in the border issues, in a pleasing tone, he asked me what he could do for me. Then I looked around. People were awkwardly looking at the border guards from a far distance. Later I came to know that traders hide their stuffs inside houses, which have been taken on sort of a rent, and they only cross the border with the stuff when there is a favorable situation. When the guards left the place, people were complaining about patrolling border guards entering into houses that were not involved in the trade without any permission.

State-people relations are full of contestation and struggle at international border. Ghos's (2011) study of cross-border interaction in the Bengal borderland raises the issues of state's indifference to people's perception of state policies and cross-border interaction in their quotidian lives. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork in the border district of North 24 Parganas in West Bengal, India, she concludes:

> Borderlands are sites of anxiety for the modern state: the state's astigmatic view of borderland activities, the gaps between peoples' perceptions of

> their activities and the state's, inconsistencies in legalities all make the borderland a space where state authority is contested, interrupted and qualified in everyday life (Ghos 2011, 58).

In the case of betel nut traders and carriers, state's harsh presence and people's fierce resistance and struggle is observed in the no man's land of Kakarvitta border. The areas may be taken as the marginal liminality for the ritual act of border crossing. Every betel nut carrier knows that the place is devoid of border guards and beyond legal control of their movement. They want to reach to this place, hiding themselves and their goods from border guards. The symbolic presence of border pillar at marginal areas also inscribes the story of state-people contestation and struggle. For example, there are different centers for transaction of money and goods on Indian Territory that is close to border pillar. The betel nut traders and carriers call it *thek*, where they sell the goods to buyers from India. When border guards attempt to reach the no man's land chasing the betel nut traders and carriers, they actively resist or sometimes fight the guards by forging collective identity as 'We are the border' (Flynns 1997).

Border is just like this: people's perception of border

Regarding the border between Nepal and India, Gellner writes that "the Indian border with the Nepali Tarai is far more relaxed, though here too, alleged Indian land grabs, water diversions, and border police incursions are the occasion for outraged newspaper comment and political protests in Kathmandu" (Gellner 2014, 15). The political border of Nepal and India is not as stringent as India has with other south Asian countries. The relative openness or porosity of Nepal-India border has implications for the people living in the borderland, as well as for the border scholars. The physical experience of border as open or weakly regulated makes the lives of people relatively easier, as compared to the harsh everyday lives in enclaves on border between India and Bangladesh (Jones 2010). The historical, social and cultural relations that Nepalis people

have with the people across the border (Nepali 1995; Pandey 1995) is a distinctive character of border practices in South Asia. Since the price of commodities is relatively cheaper across Indian side, each day many people in and around Kakarvitta cross the border to buy foods and other household items for their daily use. Similarly, Nepali shopkeepers rely on the Indian market to buy cheaper goods and sell them in Kakarvitta to earn extra profit. Their everyday practices of movement between Nepal and India are relatively unrestricted and hassle free, unless they bring large quantities of goods or taxable items such as television. Many Bengali people come to Nepal to work in construction and for buying seasonal cash crops.

The open border between Nepal and India is a specific and distinct case for scholarly discussion of the historical development of border in south Asia. The present status of Nepal-India border may be useful for understanding specific context of the development of individual borders. To paraphrase the ideas of Passi, the meaning and historical development of border are context-bound phenomena. Due to the specific social, cultural, political and economic processes, practices and discourses, it has contextual features and meanings that changes, as there are changes in state-related societal relations and conditions (Passi 2011). In the past, before the construction of modern political boundaries, the ancestral territories of many Tarai indigenous groups included the lowland areas, which now have become parts of Indian and Nepali state. In the case of these indigenous groups, everyday social interactions and mobility across the present day border regions predate the formation of the modern nation-states of India and Nepal. The existence of kin relations and marital exchanges between Indian and Nepali indigenous people is a historical process, which they continue to practice till the present time. In the past (before 1950s), people's perspective of the border and their sensibility towards the divisions of political boundaries were less visible than the ways the border is viewed at present. The monumental pillars

that divide the territories of the two independent states gave people a sense of being different in the national context, but they are united by sense of being together, especially in the case of betel nut carriers. The betel nut is the main source of earning for the carriers. They rely on process, persons and friends for crossing the border. For example, what rules and regulations the mediator suggests (in terms of proper time, amount of bribe money), collectively waiting for the signal to cross the border, collection of bribe money and collective resistance or struggle with the border guards are examples of crossing border together. During my field work, I never saw a single individual who had attempted to cross the border alone. They cross the border with the betel nuts in groups. The group efforts minimize the risk of loss to their investment if border guards catch them and being in group also helps in negotiations.

The changing perceptions of border become evident in the expressions of people regarding their lived social worlds in and along the Kakarvitta border. Three decades or so before, Kakarvitta border was notoriously vulnerable place for the people who dwelt in inner cities. This notoriety, as I was told by one of the key informants, was about the frequent dacoit attacks upon the illegal traders and frequent criminal acts of murders along the border regions. But things have changed now. For example, while I was talking to Chotu, a middle man and betel nuts smuggler, about the act of border police and asked him if he was afraid that he lived in border. Without delaying a second, he hurriedly replied, "Why should I fear? Is it the Pakistani border?" and added, "This is open border, I would be afraid if it was the border of Bangladesh. In the meantime, I asked Chotu what he thought of the border. He first answered that border was just like this. Then pointing to the place where there were guards on Nepali border side and the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) on Indian border side, he said, "That is the border". For him, the physical presence of these security people, who also represent their respective states and exercise state authority within their state territories, make the borders

'real' and visible. I understood his brief and succinct response to imply that more than the geographical demarcations, the visible and concrete presence of the states and performances of their sovereign power create borders. Green (2012) reminds us that "borders do not independently exist as self-evident entities in the landscape, in that they are fashioned out of particular epistemologies that vary across time and space" and "once constructed (which includes all the various associated bordering practices, both formal and informal), borders can take on thing - like qualities, both in practice and in people's imaginations" (Green 2012, 580).

She further writes concluding remarks on the sensing of border in everyday lives of people:

> The aim here has been not to establish what borders are, but rather how different senses of border (borderness) have been the subject of ongoing ontological projects, those of empires as well as people going about their everyday lives. What borders locate, in that sense, is stories so far, which might be moving along slowly, quickly or not at all, but which are always in one way or another relational, both in terms of the classificatory logic that makes borders visible as such, and in terms of the coming together of people, places, things and ideas in historically, politically, economically and spatially specific ways (Green 2012, 587).

There are no points of disagreement with the statement of Green that the border should be taken as historically, politically, economically and spatially specific phenomena.

The border may be defined in terms of the aspirations, imaginations, attitudes, and perception of people as it arises in their interaction with the border on an everyday basis. We can discern this in the expression of people, for example, in the answer of Chotu when I asked him if he thought that the work was illegal. He simply replied that there was no

proof of the products, since one could not tell if it was the product of India, Nepal or Indonesia. He also added that the police could not stop the transaction of this stuff and they needed to survive as well. And in terms of who could be labeled as a *chor (*a thief), Chotu averred that since the police took bribes they were the *chors,* and if the police really wanted to stop these nut carriers, they could do so easily. In other words, the nut carrier implicated that what he was doing was for survival, and the police, whom the state deploys at the border to stop the "illegal" activities, also benefit through such illegal transactions. Hence, for him and many other nut carriers, the question of "illegality" of what they do for survival is less relevant. After all, it is only when the Indian and Nepali state make such transactions of betel nut "illegal" and tighten their control on border, the need and role of betel nut carriers become important for the traders. Perhaps, betel nut carriers preferred stricter regimes of border regulations, because such practices would allow them opportunities for earning more income. Chotu expressed such prospects of better income when I asked if he preferred an open or more regulated border. He told me:

> If the border is sealed, there would not be enough goods in the markets. The shortage of the goods raises the price per kilogram. We can earn more money than what we are earning now. For example, we are earning ten rupees Indian coin now; if the border is closed we can earn eighty rupees per kilograms in the markets.

The logic of profit provided by the informant reflects his daily interaction with and reliance on the border. The existence of border and its regulations by the states actually open up economic prospects for many people like him. They risk being caught or even jailed; they deploy various micro practices of dealing with or avoiding the state officials from Nepal and India to make some money. Thus, the border may be differently harnessed, experienced and produced by people from various backgrounds.

Conclusion

In the case of everyday lives of betel nut carriers discussed above, three points are noteworthy. First, the border is differently perceived and harnessed by people living in close proximity to the border. Even if the government has strictly banned the cross-border trade of betel nuts, people have, for decades or so, been earning a livelihood by exporting betel nuts from Nepal to India. A border has polysemic meanings for people who engage with it on an everyday basis; their meanings and experiences of the border differ from the ways in which it is viewed and approached by political leaders and other non-border people, such as those living in the capital city, Kathmandu. Secondly, border represents an area of contestations, struggle and conflicts. The legality, illegality and state-people relations are mutual processes of negotiations in the border region. Everyday lives of the state at border reflect its ongoing process of construction, including intense interactions of people who come in contact at the border. The betel nut carriers frequently negotiate, co-opt and manipulate state power at the margins of the state. By the process of mutual contact and maneuvering state power, the everyday interaction of the betel nut carriers produces border. Border in this sense is not physical objects such as customs, police, pillars, neither is it any arbitrary construction. Border represents the everyday life experiences of similarity, togetherness and unity that the betel nut carriers feel while crossing border in a group.

Finally, the border is not fixed and static. Neither is it a physical object like or pillars border guards. From the case of everyday interaction of betel nut carriers at Kakarvitta border, we can infer that border is fluidly constructed. Border people like betel nuts carriers are actively engaged in the everyday process of border breaking and border making. In their everyday lives, the betel nut carriers have to break the border so as to earn their subsistence. The patterns, strategies and process of border crossing provide the betel nut carriers with the sense of exiting border.

In this process of border making or producing, betel nut carriers and state play active role, giving border the qualities of being porous. In this regard, I would like to conclude with the quote of Carsten (1998, 233):

> For it is the very permeability of the border, the impossibility of making hard, permanent distinctions between the similar and the different, between the inside and the outside, which gives social life its flexibility. Boundaries are drawn only to be erased or redrawn in another place and this has been at the heart of historical processes of expansion, encompassment and change.

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Health and Medical Anthropology

Medical Anthropological Researches and Public Health Policy Development in Nepal

Prakash Upadhyay*

Prelude

For anthropologists, diverse cultural assumptions of people, are hidden on tradition, language, customs, religions, and numerous cultural biases concerning cultural norms for diseases, health, and mate selection, concepts of justice, totems and taboos on health, are crucial. Hidden assumptions about culture and health are embedded in human cultural discourse and institutions, which are expressed through diverse rituals and activities. Such assumptions shape how folks perceive health, diseases, and social and cultural realities embedded with them. It is imperative to see cultural and social realities embedded with health issues through anthropological lenses, to acknowledge, understand, and question the assumptions people have about health, diseases, and cultural milieus.

With increasing professionalization and specialization of separate disciplines, today physical anthropologists often collaborate closer with biology and medicine than with cultural anthropology (Borofsky 2002). The abandonment of ethnography by medicine happened when social anthropology adopted ethnography as one of the markers of its professional identity and started to depart from the initial venture of general anthropology. The divergence of professional anthropology from medicine was never a complete break. The relations between professional anthropology and medicine remained constant during the 20th century, until the development of modern medical anthropology

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in the 1960s and 1970s. However, medical anthropology and sociology was not developed as fully-fledged disciplines until 1950s even in the world context. It was only towards 1970s that medical anthropology and sociology was named as such (Saillant and Genest 2007).

Before World War II, anthropologists often accompanied colonial explorers and military in order to facilitate their work; this is often referred to as the handmaiden era in the history of anthropology. In this position, anthropologists acquired the fervor of natives using their linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness in order to assist the colonial powers in the implementation of policies that in due course led to further oppression and disempowerment of natives, but also led to a significant redirection of anthropological thought and theory. Social and cultural anthropology curved towards a more critical, reflexive, and holistic approach. This reconstruction of anthropology resulted in an increase in criticism of those structures that had previously been assumed as right and naturally good. Scheper-Hughes (2000) has stated how social scientists have typically been blind to the unequal power relationships and calls for anthropologists to take a critical stance against structural and institutional violence and to focus on human sufferings and human experiences of hardship, pain, and sickness that are influenced by the historical and cultural contexts in which they arise.

As an interdisciplinary branch of anthropology, medical anthropology deals with aspects of health, illness, and diseases, physical and mental sufferings. It devises and addresses both theoretical and applied problems, with the goal of conducting research that contribute to the social sciences and to different fields of health care. This application of anthropology to the study of illness and health brings the field into discourse with scholars and practitioners in the medical sciences with medical anthropology as biological and socio-cultural aspects of health behavior, mainly with the ways in which the two interact and intermingle in influencing health and diseases. Medical anthropology portrays a

bipolar process, whose one pole is biological in which one studies human growth and development, role of disease in human evolution, and study of diseases of ancient man. The second is socio-cultural pole where one studies traditional medical systems, illness behavior, doctor-patient relationship, introduction of western medicine to traditional societies, and in between this there is epidemiology and cultural ecology. It helps to understand the disease prevalence and susceptibility to the genetic make-up of a human belonging to a particular race or ethnicity, impact of disease on human evolution, ecological impact, and the impact of inherent ethnic, racial and geographical differences on the functioning and acceptability of health care and health policy.

Freidson (1970) affirms that medical anthropology is the cross-cultural study of medical systems and the study of bio-ecological and socio-cultural factors that influence the incidence of health and disease now and throughout human history. It is one of the areas of applied anthropology and is a subfield of social and cultural anthropology that examines the ways in which culture and society are organized or influenced by issues of health, health care, and related issues. An enormous institutional complex has emerged directed towards further development of medical research tradition (allopathic medicine, biomedicine, modern medicine, western medicine, or cosmopolitan medicine) and training of practitioners qualified to prescribe treatment to health-seeking clients. The western medical tradition involves both knowledge about how the general environmental interactions (for example, food habits and hygienic practices) affect the body, and facts about how a specific treatment (prescription of medicines and surgical operations) may counteract particular disease.

In the global context, diverse research studies have been made on ethno-medical studies of health and healing attempting to discern the insiders' viewpoints in describing and analyzing health and systems of healing, ethno-science, ethno-pharmacology that can enrich public health policy

development. Medical anthropological research is well-positioned to play a key role in informing health policy to address diverse health issues. The changes that have occurred in medical anthropology and the anthropology of public health allow it to be a modern and significant contributing discipline to public health. The unique perspective of medical anthropology can contribute to informing public health policy decisions. However, in the context of Nepal, medical anthropology needs to do a lot and go a long way before it can contribute significantly and pragmatically to the discipline of public health.

This paper converses on how medical anthropological research, its understanding, and the use of distinctive perspectives of medical anthropology can contribute to enlighten public health and public health policy development in Nepal.

Methodology and conceptual framework

Pedestaled on qualitative secondary data obtained from journals, literatures, books, booklets, articles, and websites, the conceptual frame draws on medical anthropological research conducted in Nepal and the quandary of cultural representations and social-cultural practices along with the role of medical anthropology in public health and public health policy development in Nepal.

Medical anthropological researches in Nepal have traditionally focused on folk-illness/soul searching and healing with less attention to people's genuine health problems, lifestyle and livelihood pattern, health practices linkage, and social sufferings of varied types. The semantic technicality differentiates between anthropology in policy (reminiscent of clinically applied anthropology, anthropologists who assist policy makers) and anthropology of policy, those who critically appraise the work of policy makers and their policies' unintended negative effects upon the target population. Health as a process in human development is associated with socio-economic-cultural-political developments that need to be endorsed while formulating public health policies.

Medical anthropological research in Nepal

Enamored by the fascinating Shangri-La image of Nepal, the tradition of medical anthropological research was started in Nepal by western scholars during the early 1960s. Beginning of such work in Nepal is not very delayed in comparison to the development of medical anthropology in the global context because western anthropologists have contributed in this field since the mid-1960s. At that point, in Nepal, studies were carried out primarily by western scholars focusing on shamanism, on health and culture of the society in general and on the socio-cultural and spiritual dimensions of health in particular. It is noteworthy that one of the initial seminars in Sociology and Anthropology at Tribhuvan University held in 1974 focused on spirit possession in Nepal.

Early research on shamanic practices were conducted by Hitchcock 1967, 1976; Hitchcock et al. 1976; Höfer 1974; Michl 1974; Paul 1974; Stabeiein 1974, 1976; Jones 1976; Winkler 1976; Macdoland, 1976. Efforts were put to understand and analyze shamanic practices among various castes and ethnic groups of Nepal by Reinhard 1976; Perters 1979; Blangero, et al. 1995; Desjerlais 1989, 1992, 2000; Dietrich 1998; Gellner 1994; Guneratne 1999; Kristvik 1999; Maskarinec 1990, 1992,

1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1998, 2007, 2009; Miller 1997; Pigg 1996; Robili 1994.

Pedestaled on shamanism and tantric healing, The Rulings of the Night*:* An Ethnography of Nepalese Shaman Oral Texts by Maskarinec (1995a) is based on extensive fieldwork in a blacksmith community of Western Nepal that enriches the complex of Dhaulagiri shamanism by a caste perspective and invites a wider comparison both with other Himalayan and with Siberian forms of ritual healing. Casper J. Miller's Faith Healers in the Himalaya (1997) is a classic anthropological study of the shamans of Nepal. Miller shows the healers in dramatic action, beginning with their participation in an annual pilgrimage for power to a sacred mountain top and scene of magical battles in the past.

Given its conventional preoccupation with the ideological-spiritual realms manifested in ethnic contexts, it comes as no astonishment that the very legitimacy of the research on medical anthropology in Nepal hovers on by the shadow of soul-searching and healing question. One critical trepidation is how research in medical anthropology justifies itself when the basic problems facing the common Nepali at large relate to health, food, clothing, occupation and fulfillment of other basic needs. Unraveling local people's lifestyle and health practices linkage and social sufferings of varied types need serious attention. Labor migration of youths abroad for job has created somber trauma in Nepali society. In the aftermath of massive earthquake of 2015, the health and livelihood stipulation of earthquake victims is dismal. Medical anthropological researches need to address health concerns and health policies related to the lives of common Nepali. An understanding of the perspectives on medical anthropology can help to logically identify the health practices and problems of common Nepali dwelling in different regions and can add to informing public health policy making decisions.

In a broad spectrum, the general categorization of the areas of medical anthropological studies conducted so far in Nepal can be categorized under the following areas: (a) shamanism, (b) medical pluralism, (c) cultural model and schema, (d) development discourse, (e) health politics, (f) medicalization, (g) ayurveda and herbal medicine, (h) social suffering, (i) mental health and trans-cultural psychiatry, (j) demographic transition, (k) health seeking behavior, (l) illness and culture, (m) health and medication, (n) pharmaceutical, (o) modern medicine and healing behavior, (p) health, (q) education and culture, (r) food and nutrition, (s) health bureaucracies, and (t) others.

Although shamanism is the most widely studied field in Nepal in medical anthropology, medical pluralism, cultural model and schema, development discourse, and health politics are some of the areas that have been studied at length. There are some other areas studied such as herbal medicine (Gartoula 1999a, 1999b), Ayurvedic medicine (Edwards 2009; Maureen 1988; Cameron 1996), mental health (Kohort et al. 2005), pharmaceutical (Harper et al. 2011), and disabilities (Khanal 2007 and Dahal 2011). Some foreign and Nepali anthropologists have taken initiatives to study multiple therapeutic practices among the Nepali communities (Durkin-Longley 1984; Coon 1989, 1994; Acharya and Subedi 2003). Similarly, anthropologists Beine (2003) and Pigg (2001) have focused their studies on the cultural model and schema, peoples' perceptions on modern medicine, and illness interpretations in pluralistic cultural settings. Following shamanism and healing behaviors, HIV/AIDS and Primary Health Care (PHC) and healing behaviors have also become a trendy subject matter for study in Nepal. Scholars like Beine and Pigg explore further on cultural model of HIV/AIDS and knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices regarding HIV/AIDS. Development discourse and health/health politics are other areas where many foreign and native scholars have made significant contributions (Adams 1998; Judith 1986; Subedi 2011 and Dahal 2012). Justice (1986) contributed

on policies, plan, and people related to health. Precluding shamanism and ethnic healings, many of the research studies conducted in various fields have proved beneficial for public health policy development in Nepal.

Theoretical conduits in medical anthropological research in Nepal

One of the key aims of medical anthropology is to contribute to and improve the efficiency of public health campaigns. In the past, disease under this scope was understood and treated as paradigmatically biological and unchallenged by anthropological inquiry; however, since not long, the verve of anthropological knowledge on the role of culture and society has been widely endorsed. Different theories of medical anthropology explaining culture, society, and health nexus have been carried medical anthropological research has also been conducted on such issues in Nepal. Some of the major theories espoused in medical anthropological research studies in Nepal are as follows.

Ecological approach

The evolution, demography, and epidemiology of humans are subject to ecological forces, as are other species. Ecological approach sees illness representations as cultural beliefs. Culture in this perspective plays an adaptive role in relation to disease. Medical systems within this approach are understood as the sum of cumulative socio-cultural adaptive strategies, while culture is conceived as a set of adaptive responses to diseases. Anthropologists using an ecological perspective to understand disease patterns view human populations as biological as well as cultural entities embedded with ecological diversities. The milieu of ecological divisions—*Himal* (mountain), *Pahad* (hill) and *Tarai* (plain) and the local cultures of Nepal act as resources for responding to environmental problems, but genetic and physiological processes also carry equal weight. Heterogeneity in Ethno-ecological Knowledge and Management of Medicinal Plants in the Himalayas of Nepal: Implications for Conservation by Doyle McKey et al. (2005)

conversed on the heterogeneity and complexity of local ecological knowledge in relation to its practical and institutional context with respect to management of Himalayan medicinal plants.

Cognitive approach

Illness representations in this perspective are seen as perceptions, as a domain structured by language and culture which convey the apparent order in the natural and social world (Good 1994). Culture would explain conceptions and beliefs around health and illness, which in turn explains human behavior. Disease was considered to belong to the medical domain till the late 1950s. In the 1960s, cognitive influences of the psychological sciences in medical anthropology were expressed as ethno-sciences and ethno-semantics and anthropological projects started dealing with disease classification, ethno-theories of illness, and the structure of illness narratives. Robert I. Levy's (1990) Mesocosm: The organization of a Hindu Newar city in Nepal is based on cognitive standpoint that explains the organization of Newar society from an anthropological perspective. It is an ambitious and exhaustive study of urban community and a culture shaped in a thoroughgoing manner by Indic traditions, predominantly Hinduism. Mesocosm put up an overbearing overview, addressing multiple issues providing a wealth of thoughtfully assimilated data, along with intelligent, perceptive interpretations of Newar urban life, including health.

Political economy of health approach

Concerned with the macro societal determinants impacting health, the political economy of health approach places its attention on the economic and political structures lying at the base of the social production of morbidity or the rate of disease incidence in a population group. Political economy of health approach is a macro-analytic, critical, and historical perspective for analyzing disease distribution and health services under a variety of economic systems, with fastidious stress on the effects of stratified social, political, and economic relations within the globalized

world economic system. It addresses the process of development and expansion of the capitalist world-system and the way biomedicine operates within this context. Both systems, capitalism and biomedicine, are seen as having concomitant logics—the profit making orientation caused biomedicine to evolve into a capital-intensive endeavor heavily oriented to high technology, the massive use of drugs, and the concentration of services in medical complexes (Baer 1997). This standpoint takes into account the economic and political interests involved in administration and provision of health services under capitalist system. The expansion of the capitalist system is recognized as the most significant, transcending contemporary process and increasingly shaping and reshaping social life. Macro-economic transformations in different countries including Nepal have resulted in the economic and social exclusion of large social groups which is in transition, manifested in their marginal access to economic and social resources, security, housing, and health

The perspective of political economy of health shows shortcomings when used within the anthropological analysis. It emphasizes on societal large-scale forces that has resulted in a tendency to depersonalize the subject matter and the content of medical anthropology by focusing on the analysis of social system and things, and by neglecting the particular, the subjective content of illness, suffering and healing as lived events and experiences. Not only particular and subjective experiences need to be addressed but also the different identities of ethnic and caste groups have been considered less when scrutinizing how a subordinated position impacts their health. These differences often become visible along lines of gender, ethnicity, and national identities in Nepal. Pedestaled on health politics, Sree Subedi and Janardan Subedi's (1995) work Dominance and elitism: The modern health care system of Nepal in global perspective on health care is based on this perspective. They provided socio-cultural aspects of medicine examining how modern medicine must find its place

in pre-existing social structures and with pre-scientific beliefs about the human body and its pathologies.

The social suffering approach

Kleinman (1978) and Farmer (1999, 2000) have explored ways in which structural violence and social suffering construct social relations of everyday life. Social suffering is considered as ensuing from what political, economic, and institutional power do to people and, commonly, from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems. Aftermath of a decade-long horrendous insurgency, post-conflict political crisis, impunity, massive earthquake of 2015 killing thousands of people and devastating millions of homes, Indian blockade, economic recession, widespread unemployment, and labor migration have added to sufferings and social relations of everyday life of Nepali people, consequently leading to a rapid growth of mental health and psychosocial problems, including post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Suffering, hence, is a more all-encompassing concept taking the form of grieving, frustration, desperation, impotence, desolation, as well as other forms of human suffering. This perspective interrogates aspects of human experience that are usually considered separately and bring together conditions that simultaneously involve health, welfare, legal, moral and religious issues.

The social suffering approach challenges dichotomized approaches to the mental and physical, or the individual and the collective. It highlights the interconnections needed to grasp the political, economic, and social origin of illness as well as other forms of human sufferings. Category of social suffering differs in every kind of human problem that creates pain, distress, and other trials for people to undergo and endure. This approach provides for a grouping of human problems and seeks to understand causes of suffering as collectively rooted, making it a social experience. In his study Widowhood, Life Situation and Suffering: A Medical Anthropological Perspective, Kapil Babu Dahal (2010) has

used the lenses of social suffering approach. Hopes on the Horizon: Integrating the Identification and Referral of Persons with Disabilities in the Local Health System in Nepal (2011) by the same author is based on this approach. Culture and Transformation of Suffering among the Gurungs of Nepal by McHugh, Ernestine L. (1993) is based on social suffering approach. Robert Desjarlais's *study Sensory Biographies, Lives and Deaths among Nepal's Yolmo Buddhists* (2003) is pedestaled on social suffering approach. His study is a heavily bound set of narrative answers to the question, how do a person's ways of sensing the world contribute to how that person lives and recollects his/her life. Desjarlais delves deep into the ethics and aesthetics of worldviews. In so doing, he shows and tells us that sensory distinction is central to his argument, especially what it means to live life, and approach death from a Yolmo perspective. Ernestine McHugh's work Culture and Transformation of Suffering among the Gurungs of Nepal (1993) is pedestaled on social suffering approach as well.

Interpretive approach in medical anthropology

Kleinman (1978) argues that disease is not an entity but an explanatory model. Disease, hence, belongs to culture, in particular to the specialized culture of medicine, and culture is not only a means of representing disease but is essential to its very constitution as a human reality. The interpretive activities involve interaction of biology, social practices, and culturally constituted frames of meanings, through which clinical realities are constructed. Interpretive tradition examines the construction of interpretations in different social contexts. That is: how meaning and interpretive practices interact with social, psychological, and physiological processes to produce distinctive forms of illness and illness trajectories (Good 1994). Achievements are made on understanding of how meanings and symbols attached to symptoms compress a reflection and, at the same time, both motivate experiences of illness and social relations. Within the interpretive theoretical orientation emerges the

viewpoint of personified experiences. The departure point of this perspective is that sickness is present in the human body as traces of history and social relations dealing with problems of adequately representing illness, suffering and experience in ethnographic accounts. Research work Confronting Maternal Mortality, Controlling Birth in Nepal by J. Brunson (2005) is pedestaled on this approach. Based on women's social positions and maternal health in a semi-urban community of Hindu-caste women in the Kathmandu Valley, this study deduced that local acceptance of a biomedical model does not necessarily lead to utilization of services if neither women nor men are in a culturally-defined position to act.

Although there are numerous studies conducted by different scholars locating themselves in the wider dimensions with a focus on various aspects of Nepali culture, health, and society at different levels, it is noteworthy to mention that majority of studies have been dominated by anthropological perspective and the studies through sociological perspective are scant. In recent days with vital processes of internal specialization taking place in the field of medical anthropological research, the budding fields that are vital to be considered in Nepal are:

a. the development of comprehensive systems of people-oriented medical knowledge and medical care;

b. the patient-physician relationship in a new mode and the integration of alternative medical systems in culturally diverse environments;

c. the dichotomy between modern and folk medicinal practices and practitioners;

d. the interaction of social, political, environmental, and biological factors which influence health and illness both in the individual and the community as a whole

e. the critical analysis of interaction between psychiatric services and migrating populations;

f. the impact of biomedicine and biomedical technologies; and

g. the socio-psychological and cultural status of the people and the health linkage.

Additional issues imperative to medical anthropological research in Nepal are violence and social sufferings well as other issues that involve physical and psychological harm and suffering that is not a result of illness. There are fields that intersect with medical anthropology in terms of research methodology and theoretical production, such as cultural psychiatry and trans-cultural psychiatry or ethno-psychiatry. It is noteworthy that the cases of mental disorders and depressions are at sharp rise in Nepal.

Quandary of cultural representations and social-cultural practices in medical anthropology

Culture extends to issues of power, control, resistance, and defiance, and anthropology seeks to understand the links between social stratification (gender, ethnicity, and social class), access to material and immaterial goods (food, water, health services, and education), illness representations, cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity, attitudes to health promotion, and health behavior. Describing the relations between these elements is called a thick description (Geertz 1973). Thick description explains not just the human behavior but its context as well, such that the behavior becomes meaningful to an outsider; hence, cultural representation and version becomes vital.

In an attempt of liberation from the shadow of soul-searching and healing traditions in anthropological research in Nepal, lately there has been a much more sophisticated understanding of the quandary of cultural representations and social practices related to health, disease, medical

care and attention, illness representations, cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity, approach to health promotion, and health behavior. These have been understood as being common with very diverse local forms articulated in transactional processes from shamanism studies to other issues that led the anthropologists being involved in many areas. These include: involvement in the development of community health programs; evaluating the influence of social and cultural variables in the epidemiology of certain forms of psychiatric pathology; studying cultural resistance to innovation in therapeutic and care practices; analyzing healing practices; and studying traditional healers, folk healers and empirical midwives who may be reinvented as health workers. However, Nepali culture's oriental medical beliefs (though regarded fascinating) have sometimes been viewed as superstitions, and anthropologists have sought to encourage compliance of these cultures with biomedical practices. As an upshot, medical anthropological research occasionally portray the patient as a constellation of unknown meanings, which it was up to the doctor to decode, using the elicitation of patients' narratives as the method of inquiry as opposed to the use of tests. Biology has been considered fundamentally universal, while culture is regarded as external to disease and biology. While placing emphasis upon the socio-cultural nature of illness, such an approach tended to imply that folk illness and soul searching and healing was an inferior version of real biomedical illness as diagnosed and treated by doctors and described in medical texts of the west.

Medical anthropology in informing health system and public health policy development

Anthropologists have been involved in public health for many years in developed countries. However, Scheper-Hughes (2000) argues that prior to critical medical anthropology, many medical anthropologists played the role of cultural brokers, often involved in mediating between populations and policy makers in much the same

way in which medical anthropologists mediated between clinician and patient, or social anthropologists between colonizers and colonized. Utilizing anthropology in this role in public health often inherently used techniques of victim blaming—that is, seeing the poor health of a population as the sole result of its culture, instead of looking also at their particular economic or social situation. Clearly, there was a need for anthropology of public health to adopt a similar perspective to that of critical medical anthropology. Willigen (2002) defines a dichotomy between anthropology in policy and anthropology of policy. This semantic technicality differentiates between anthropologists who assist policy makers (reminiscent of clinically applied anthropology) and those who critically appraise the work of policy makers and their policies unintended negative effects upon the target population. In Nepal, there has been a rise of anthropologists who assist policy makers as well as those who critically appraise the work of policy makers through their research and participatory works. Nevertheless, their contribution has been too late and too little appreciated and accepted in public health policy development.

With its new critical and reflexive perspective, anthropology has a lot to contribute to the development of health policy rather than focusing only on shamanic studies. The field of public health, and more generally policy development, requires research contributions from a multitude of disciplines. Williams (2001) notes that a multidisciplinary approach could best address the public health needs of a population. However, public health's primary concern is to improve the health of the public. This broad scope approach has brought epidemiology to be the most influential discipline in health policy because by using methodical sampling methods one can theoretically extrapolate conclusions about the state of health of total populations. Despite anthropology's potential for enlightening health policy, its actual contribution is quite small seeing that it is grouped with a half-dozen behavioral sciences as informants of

policymaking. The reason for anthropology's minimized role in health policy development is likely founded in its primary methodological approach: ethnography. Credit to an unabashed focus on individuals and small groups, many involved in the process of policymaking argue that the data generated by anthropological research is less valuable because it does not lend itself to broad scientific extrapolation, as does by epidemiological data. Soul searching and healing-based conformist preoccupation with the ideological-spiritual domain manifested in ethnic contexts of few ethnic groups has mottled and devalued the scope of medical anthropological research in Nepal and contributed unconstructively to public health policy.

Despite the criticism that anthropologists face in the public health sector, it is imperative to persist the work, since ethnographic inquiry has the potential to generate a great deal of rich information, which can influence health policy development in Nepal. Anthropology influences public health policy in ways that epidemiology or other methods cannot. Anthropology has the ability to see and to pick up on minute and seemingly irrelevant details of culture in its proper context in the social world and how culture affects all research. Anthropology's independence from biomedical goals and hegemony is permitting medical anthropologists to add a critical voice to the public health discourse and also the provision of objective, qualitative data in an otherwise quantitative field. There are various perspectives of medical anthropology that are practical in informing health policy development.

Integrative Perspective of Culture is a model in which there are a number of distinct factors that contribute to disease in the population. Culture is one of these factors, alongside many others, including genetics and environment. By involving anthropologists on a clinical level, it is possible to trim down the impact of the culture factor on disease prevalence in Nepali population. Medical anthropologists can contribute significantly to public health policy by providing this perspective (culture

factor) which provides an alternative to the entrenched factorial model of disease in the world of public health. However, Parker and Harper (2005) note that many medical anthropologists see this model of disease as outdated and inaccurate because it reduces the investigation of social and cultural aspects of disease to discrete, static, quantifiable beliefs held by the study population. This notion of disease involves the reasoning that factors of disease causation such as biology and environment are beyond the reach of culture. Even the most subjective and scientific issues are rooted in the culture and experience of those who interpret and publish the results.

Medical anthropology's focus on holism or inclusion of the whole is another crucial tool that has the potential to be of great use in health policy development in Nepal. Anthropology is involved in seeing the entire situation in a given community. This involves participant observation in order to capture the smallest details in the events of individuals' lives. This also involves study of the macro-level forces and structures that are acting on people that cause them to behave the way they do. The importance of anthropology's holism also relates to dispelling the notion of the factorial model that sees culture in isolation from all other factors. This type of reasoning can lead to what Helman (2007) calls victim blaming. The same pattern can be observed in public health policy if culture is considered isolated from political, social, and economic factors. While drafting public health policies in Nepal, it is imperative to utilize a holistic approach to illness in order to identify all pertinent factors that contribute to a given endemic. Anthropologists can focus on what is really happening and look at the root of where things come from, whether this root is at the level of social interactions between individuals, a cultural nuance, or macrocosmic structures that impact a population.

Critical perspective begins with the criticism of hegemonic structure of biomedicine. It lays emphasis on the connection of health related issues

with the economic order and social forces. However, this concern has gone beyond merely focusing upon modern capitalist orders to address the nature of health-related issues in indigenous and pre-capitalist societies, as well as socialist oriented-state societies. Morsy (1990) notes that the focus on linkages between individual actions and social/ structural determination is based upon the understanding of individual actions as culturally informed interactions between social actors and political economic relationships as dialectically related. The critical approach points to power relations and social interactions in which illness experiences is embedded. These dimensions are vital in the analysis of health issues in Nepal. A pivotal element of the problem is the connection between macro societal determinations and an individual's subjective experiences. This is a connection to which the critical approach adheres. The critical approach tackles the importance of understanding the experience of the sufferer in social contexts, which is a crucial aspect in post-conflict Nepali conditions. Scheper-Hughes (2000) argues that our work should be at the margins, questioning premises, and subjecting epistemologies that represent powerful, political interests to oppositional thinking. This type of oppositional thinking is important in generating new theories and in promoting necessary discourse to effectuate much needed change in public health systems. As a result of having to defend handmaiden of colonialism, anthropology has become very critical of hegemonic power structures that are involved in neo-colonial oppression of the afflicted and underprivileged. Biomedicine is a classic example of such a potentially oppressive structure. Several accounts exist that describe how the doctor has replaced the priest as the custodian of social values (Turner 1987). Anthropology's inward-looking critical perspective of medicine and public health, the data that it generates is valuable to the development of public health policy in Nepal. Scheper-Hughes (2000) argues that it is imperative to position ourselves squarely on the side of human suffering. Criticism is requisite to stimulate improvements in structures or programs that are already

firmly entrenched in Nepalese societies. To be in a good position to critique biomedicine, anthropology should maintain its distance from biases of western medicine, reflect, and act locally.

The significant contribution that anthropology makes to the development of public health policy is its qualitative approach to data collection. This is also unique to anthropology among all of the sciences that inform public health policy. The qualitative methodology of ethnography separates anthropology from all of the natural sciences and many of the social sciences. Quantitative analysis requires extensive categorization. Many of the categories that are used are in essence constructs of the investigators and do not even exist in the worldview of the informant. This creates a false perception of reality in the minds of policy makers that cannot be avoided through structured, quantitative analysis. Heavy reliance upon pre-designed questions, combined with spending limited periods of time in the field, inevitably structures the qualitative in terms defined by the researcher rather than the researched; and this may well be at the expense of understanding the very people they seek to assist. True ethnographic data strives to evade these misunderstandings and misrepresentations by coming to an understanding of the worldviews of its participants. This is in contrast to traditional public health research, which imposes a foreign view upon informants, or counts them, and in doing so categorizes them into culturally constructed groups that support the researchers' own agenda. Prior to developing suitable policy, it is crucial to gain a firm understanding of the situation and, more notably, how those affected, think and feel about the situation. This understanding can only be gained through ethnographic inquiry. A common critique is that ethnographic inquiries has been too romanticized and are not in line with realities of common Nepali.

In a broad spectrum, anthropology is well positioned to play a key role in the informing of health policy to address the issues and the changes that have occurred in medical anthropology and the anthropology of public

health that allow it to be a modern and significant contributing discipline to public health policy development in Nepal and other countries. It has the potential to be a great force towards informing public health policy that is focused on the macro-level underlying causes of poor health of Nepali people. Anthropology's distinct character as integrated, critical, holistic, and qualitative makes it a very persuasive force in encouraging public health policy development in Nepal in a critical but effective and pragmatic direction.

Medical anthropological paraphernalia in public health policy development in Nepal

There are high prospects for the use of medical anthropological paraphernalia (tools) in public health policy development in Nepal. Self-learning and the demystification process of medicine are vital factors in building up the capacity of individuals and communities to look after their health needs. With the emergence of new types of diseases, mediums for communication, and increase in the accessibility of new information technology and media devices, one of the most important issues is designing a relevant and comprehensive information, education, and communication strategy for health in various fields: (a) Etiological and contributing (social, cultural, ecological, political and economic) aspects of disease, especially those of public health importance; (b) Health related activities which may be instituted by people themselves in relation to this; and (c) Existing health care facilities and policies to prop up better utilization. In addition, both formal and non-formal education is crucial. Appropriate technology and media devices component are equally vital.

Anthropology as a setup for every scientific concept may be employed for observing or operationalizing the relevant phenomena of health and culture linkage. The anthropological holistic approach can be applied in the study of particular institutions. This is the principle of multi-measurement research. Such studies in Nepal have been done on the

level of illness and primary health care, and qualitative in-depth study has helped immensely in many researches along with quantitative techniques. In order to make intensive observation, field-work method is of great use in diverse ecological zones of Nepal, where day-to-day health and hygiene activities are practiced according to the traditional folk medicine as well as with the modern medicines.

Unlike in the pure science research tools such as hardware and gadgetry, social anthropology requires great sensitivity and self-awareness on the part of the researcher and the modern devices as computer, mobile phone, iPad, video uses requires sensitive and practical handling. For understanding the cultural factors inhibiting the development of awareness of rural people in Nepal, anthropologists should be constantly alert on the possibilities of developing new modes of observation to supplement the standard items. A series of practical understanding in every instance of field research, the techniques employed—whether questionnaires, modes of information interviewing—must be adopted by the field worker to the requirements of the local cultural context of Nepal. However, there are no expedient instruments which may be best one. How the information comes on socio-cultural realities has been less understood and practiced in planning health programs and policies in Nepal. Bureaucrats of Nepal have less understood the role of social scientists, especially the social anthropologist. Usually planners have preconceived notions, impressions, and misunderstandings about anthropologists. They are predisposed to thinking that anthropologists are interested in studying only traditional medical practices and practitioners. However, many anthropologists are sharing with planners an interest in providing effective health care within a cultural milieu and solving the problems faced by rural health workers. Also there is a fissure amid written intentions (that contain vague actions) and the actual procedures. There has been failure to deem socio-cultural information in

planning healthcare. There is a chronic gap between policy making and program implementation.

Anthropologists and planners can combine their expertise to make health care program culturally attuned with the local context. Local cultural beliefs, folk traditions, usages and practices should be viewed as resources to facilitate dissemination and acceptance of modern health knowledge. In attempting to incorporate Nepal's traditional medical practitioners into the program, primary health care has mistakenly regarded local cultures as barriers to modern medicine and assumed that rural clients passively believe and obey traditional practitioners. In fact, clients play active roles and are themselves in controls of the therapeutic process. People's traditional knowledge, perceptions and attitudes, the cultural knowledge of hygiene and sanitation are the basis for health policy development in Nepal. Hence, while having discourse on the adequacy of local knowledge of hygiene and health, it is vital to examine the notion of local culture that may be important for guiding developmental interventions on health. While addressing the problem of getting planners to interpret their concerns on to the understanding of local people, it is to be noted that policies cannot be successfully implemented and taken up by a people if they don't acquire positive meaning in terms of their local culture, institutions, sentiment, and tradition. These factors necessitate the use of key methodological aspects of holistic paradigm of anthropology.

Conclusion

Holism is an imperative hallmark of modern anthropology where culture has been rethought stressing the importance of always seeing it within its particular context. Contrary to handmaiden era and soul searching traditions in research, medical anthropological research in Nepal necessitates addressing people's genuine health problems, people's lifestyle, livelihood, and health practices linkage, and social sufferings of varied types. Public health policies need to be drafted addressing

the genuine health problems of the common people. Presently public health in Nepal remains at an intersection—hanging between modern (commercialization) vs. traditionality dichotomies. The option is between a narrow focus on health service issues and the health problems of individuals on the one hand, or a refocus on the fundamental causes, culture, livelihood, and consequences of population health on the other. The failure to consider socio-cultural information and genuine health needs of the common people in planning healthcare is a critical concern in Nepal. There is unremitting gap between policy making and program implementation. Genuine cultural awareness is crucial to the implementation of health policies with a major redirection of anthropological thought and theory and the adoption of a more critical, reflexive and holistic approach in medical anthropological research with a critical stance against structural and institutional violence with focus on human sufferings and problems.

Anthropologists and planners in Nepal can combine their expertise to make health care program culturally compatible with the local context. Medical anthropologists can contribute to informing public health policy decisions, especially in the development of systems of medical knowledge and medical care, the patient-physician relationship codes, the integration of alternative medical systems in culturally diverse environments, the interaction of social, environmental, and biological factors which influence health and illness both in the individual and the community as a whole. However, it is distressing that most of the participatory research practices in Nepal have erroneously concentrated on measuring tangible goods rather than helping people in the transformation process to create their own institutions and ideas. With the goal of humanizing the quality of life and fighting against diseases, medical anthropological research, strategies, and health policies need to be people-centered and implemented liberated from the shadow of soul-searching and healing question mark. Encouraging compliance of local

cultural beliefs with biomedical practices may occasionally portray the patient as a constellation of unknown meanings, biology considered fundamentally universal, and culture regarded as external to disease and biology. This can imply that folk illness, soul searching, and healing are an inferior version of real biomedical illness as diagnosed and treated by medical doctors.

Research studies on medical anthropology and health policies drafting will be vindicated only when they can sensibly understand, address, and solve the basic problems of health, culture, and livelihood pattern of the people residing in diverse ecological precincts.

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Traditional Healing Practices among the Hyolmo: A Case Analysis from Helambu, Sindhupalchok

Ram Hari Dhakal*

The Backdrop

Nepal is a multiethnic country having hundreds of caste and ethnic groups. Among them, one of the ethnic groups is Hyolmo, who reside in the Himalayan region, primarily concentrated in Sindhupalchok district of central Nepal. Hyolmo region encompasses the northwest of Sindhupalchok, the northeast part of Nuwakot and southeast part of Rasuwa. They live mainly in Helambu, a highland village of Sindhupalchok. It is about 100 kilometers northeast of Kathmandu.

They were misrecognized as Lama and Sherpa in the past. Later, they claimed themselves as Hyolmo. The name Sherpa means "people from the east" in Tibetan language. The region is also called Yolmo (as mentioned by the Buddha, Guru Rimpoche, Marpa, Milarepa etc.) or Helambu (by most of the Nepalese). Hyolmo are ethnically Buddhist people. In Hyolmo region, 99.78 percent people are Buddhists and only 0.22 percent Hindus (CBS 2001).

Their ancestors migrated in Hyolmo region between 13th and 15th centuries from the Kyerong region of Tibet to the forested foothills of the Hyolmo region in order to be free from religious persecution. They speak a Tibetan-derived language called Yolmo, which is very similar to Tibetan and consists largely of classical Tibetan terminology

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as used in religious scripts called *Pechas*. They claim themselves as *Yolmo wa* in Yolmo language, which means Yolmo people. One can find most of Yolmo words in almost every Tibetan dictionary. Linguists have identified this unwritten language as *Kagate*, a Tibetan dialect that acquired its name because it was first recorded as spoken among a group of *Kagate* or "paper-makers" in eastern Nepal (Desjarlais 2003).

Hyolmos are indigenous people rich in language, culture, and tradition that they have been practicing from time immemorial, giving them a unique identity. They have developed their own perception and understanding regarding different healers and medical traditions to deal with fundamental concerns of health.

Medical practices differ not only from society to society; it differs from culture to culture. Even a single society, caste, or ethnic group has different medical practices. Leslie (1978) says the existence of several cultural settings is an especially important feature of medical care in the developing world. Hyolmos have different traditional healing practices followed from the past and the healers' roles are changing with the development process.

These traditional healing practices include both the cognitive and social system of healing and treatment traditions. Cognitive tradition relates to a wide range of medical concepts, values, attitudes and beliefs that serve as guidelines for the health action and practices. Thus, it is easily possible that in one illness episode people have different theories of causality among the various medical traditions. The social system dimension refers to the different economic, institutional, and organizational aspects of treatment and health care delivery system. In looking at health care pluralism, it is important to examine both the cognitive and social aspects of types of health care available to the individual patient (Subedi 2001).

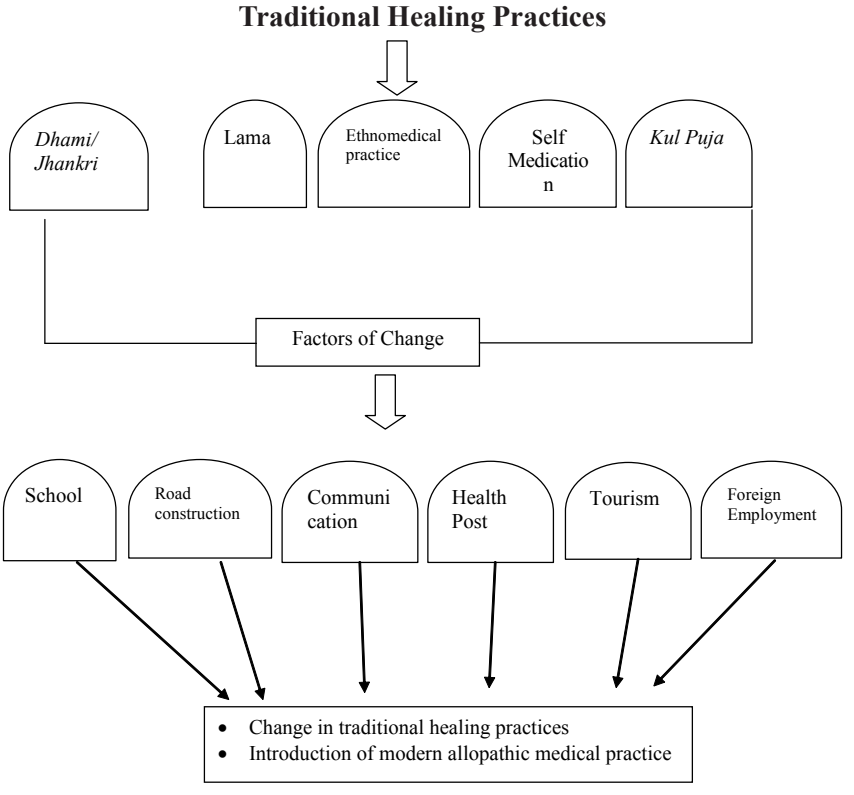
This study focuses on existing traditional healing practices and the changing role of traditional healers in Melamchi Ghyang, Helambu, with change of time. Hyolmos have particular ethno-medical and healing practices, but these traditional practices are influenced by various factors. Though such changes in medical behavior are observed, medical anthropological studies are inadequate in the Hyolmos' context.

Ethnographic fieldwork was carried out in the community in January 2014 by using a number of data-gathering techniques such as key informants interview, focus group discussion, and participant observation. Local teachers, nurse of local health post, political and social leaders, and elderly people were taken as key informants in this study. Interviews were also carried out with traditional healers, mainly with *Dhami/Jhankries*, lamas, and local herbalists. Necessary data were gathered through observation of healing procedures. Data gathered were thematically analyzed and interpreted, which are presented in the following subsections.

Conceptual framework

Medical system is an integral part of all cultures. It includes the totality of health knowledge, beliefs, skills, and practices of a cultural group. It incorporates all clinical and non-clinical activities, formal and informal institutions, and other activities that are even remotely connected with illness in a community. This study focuses on Hyolmos traditional healing practices and their changes with time. The following conceptual framework was developed to carry out the research about traditional healing practices practiced by Hyolmos for healthy life.

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework on Traditional Healing Practices



This paper focuses mainly on the existing traditional practices and the changing scenario of the role of healers and healing practices. *Dhami/ Jhankries*, Lamaism, ethnomedical practices, self-medication, and *kul puja* (ancestral worship) are the practices followed by Hyolmos traditionally to get health recovery. Traditional practices are changing due to various factors in the community. A government school was established nearly about three decade ago. A health post was established just five years ago. The area is connected by road transport recently. Nowadays there are communication facilities, mainly television and telephone. Tourism and foreign employment have also changed the lifestyle and economic status. These factors have brought remarkable

changes on traditional healing practices. We find changes on procedures and tools of traditional healers in one hand; on the other hand, the number of both traditional healers and followers are decreasing. As a result, allopathic medical practice is gaining popularity.

Analysis and discussion of empirical findings

The existence of several therapeutic traditions in a single cultural setting is an important feature of medical care in the developing world (Leslie 1978). Nepali medical practices have been influenced by many different traditions throughout the history. Most of the modern inhabitants of Nepal trace their ancestry to various waves of migrants who brought with them, from their origins, many beliefs and practices regarding illness (Beine 2003). The wave of migrants from Tibet brought with them Tantric Buddhist ideas about healing that are still popular today (Durkin 1994; Streefland 1985), and ethnic groups have developed their own medical practices in their own socio-cultural settings. As Hyolmos are followers of Tibetan Buddhist culture, they use Tantric Buddhist ideas of healing, including their own ethnomedical practice. In Hyolmo community, when patients feel uncertain as to what type of care provider can cure their illness, they tend to consult different medical therapists. Or they may decide that treatment of certain illness requires more than one type of assistance. Thus, in Hyolmo community, several traditional healing practices for different health problems are practiced.

Existing traditional healing practices

Dhami/ Jhankries

There exist various traditional faith healers in Nepal such as *Dhami, Jhankries,* and *jharphuks* since time immemorial. *Dhami/Jhankries* exert a lot of influence regarding health matters. Some research works have been done on use of such practices for health education, family planning, and treatment of diarrheal diseases. It is estimated that there were four to eight hundred thousand faith healers in Nepal in 1978/79 (Shrestha 1980)

The significant role of local healers has been widely noted in Hyolmos. Most *Jhankries* perform at night by chanting mantras and speaking, whispering, and shouting at the spirits to leave the afflicted body. They continue it until the spirits flee the patient's body. It is believed that they communicate with spirits, recite mantras, and cure the patients. Maskarinec (1995) also supports this finding that *Jhankries* are Himalayan shamans and intercessors who rely upon extensive training in oral text to diagnose and treat afflictions that trouble their clients. They tell of the origins of worldly disorder and the histories of malevolent forces, stories that explain why people suffer, grow old, and die. They tell of extraordinary events and exceptional individuals.

The sick persons in Helambu, who eventually visit the allopathic healers, consult the traditional healers first as the hierarchy of resort. There are two types of *Jhankries. Sano Jhankries* involve in *Jharfuk* and *Thulo Jhankries* worship ancestor god using drum. Firstly, the patient is taken to *Sano Jhankri* and then later to *Thulo Jhankri* in complex cases. The local Hyolmos go to *Jhankri* in case of heart pain, vomiting, and fainting.

Hyolmos believe that there is no difference between *Dhami* and *Jhankri*, but the local people use the term *Jhankri* or *Bhombo* to represent both of them. In this paper, I have used the term *Jhankri* to represent both *Dhami* and *Jhankri*. There are only five *Jhankries* in Melamchi Ghyang, Helambu. Among them, two are old *Jhankries* who had learnt it from the guru of Nuwakot. Between them, one is of age 83 and left this practice a decade ago. The other three were taught by the local old *Jhankries.* According to them, there were few minor *Jhankries* in the past. When crisis in peoples' and animals' health appeared after their death, new *Jhankries* learnt to fulfill the local needs. They refer patients to these gurus in major cases even today. They learnt healing first by using mantras and later by watching grains and observing pulse to diagnose the health problem. Nowadays *Jhankries* observe the body of an ill person by the witness of god/goddess, and the problem is asked to self.

They also have an interesting technique of measuring sacred rope to find what evil power has attacked against the ill person.

Jhankries use incenses, broom, ash, flour of rice, and other materials. It differs on the basis of problem. They beat drum and recite mantras by shaking their body. Generally, it is done at night. The process goes at least for two hours, and in some major cases it takes the whole night. In normal illnesses, *Jhankries* heal at any time except noon and around noon. They believe that their healing will not be effective at noon as the evil power becomes the most active at that time. There was tradition of animal sacrifice, mainly of cock, by *Jhankries* in the past, but now it is totally stopped. Animals are not slaughtered in the village. This is because the lama, Buddhist religious guru, suggested not sacrifice animals about a decade back. As all villagers are Buddhists, they accepted the suggestion given by the lama. Also of late, villagers do not slaughter animals, but those who want to eat meat bring it from the next village. If anybody is found to be involved in animal slaughter, the mothers group charges 5,000 rupees as penalty. The next reason for decrease in animal sacrifice is the decrease in the number of *Jhankries* along with the establishment of a health center in 2009, as claimed by Karsang Ghale Hyolmo. Also, as one of the informants claimed, animal sacrifice decreased also because of the decreasing animal husbandry.

Jhankries claim that they can solve every health problem caused by evil power. In most of the cases, a single attempt does work, but in serious cases more than one attempt is needed. One healer said that all patients have got well so far by his healing, but he accepted that a female patient died during his course of healing because she was brought only at the last stage of her life and that no one could prolong life when time comes.

Many local people choose *Jhankri* for their healing because they are easily available within the community and there is almost no economic burden with them. They do not take anything in return generally as they are also the members of the same community. Sometimes villagers pay

in food stuff such as rice and fruits from their own interest. *Jhankries* who do not have other occupation may take money. The rate of *Jhankri's* fee is not fixed, but they are given on the basis of duration they served when healing, repetition of visit, and distance from where they are called. If they are called to a farther place and have to stay a long time to heal the patient, they are given a reasonable amount. In major illnesses, if *Thulo Jhankri* is to be invited mainly from Nuwakot, they are given some tribute and money. The locals responded that the *Jhankries* were the only local alternative in the past and that they were satisfied with their healing. Hyolmos believe that *Jhankries* can treat illnesses which modern hospitals cannot diagnose. If the health problem increases gradually at night, with vomiting, heart pain, body pain, or headache; or if *Sindi* (the spirit of dead body) causes illness, the locals choose *Jhankries*

Jhankries' success compels one to think about the existence of some supernatural power which is beyond the knowledge of modern science. So, mainly the local elderly people have strong belief over *Dhami/ Jhankries*. The next reason to follow them is that they are not expensive, easily available, and culturally accepted. But the young and educated people, whose number is increasing due to effective treatment, prefer to go to health post and hospital.

Lamaism

Lamas are Buddhist priests who have learnt religious texts. They recite *Tripitaka*, the holy book of Buddhism, and worship in *Gumba* (monastery). They perform puja to make the god happy. They pray for success of new task. They are magico-religious specialists who use spiritual technique rather than biological. They never sacrifice animal. Before the last decade, the villagers used to sacrifice animals, but now it is totally stopped at the suggestion of a lama. Lamas are respected persons in the community whose advice is not disobeyed. Every villager has strong belief over lama's performance. Being Buddhist followers, every home has a decorated corner set aside for their gods. High places

are often areas of worship. There, flags with prayers written on them are hung in hopes that some god may hear their prayers.

There are two well-known local lamas who perform every religious activity and ritual. Senior lamas come from Bouddha and Swoyambhu, Kathmandu, occasionally. Nowadays many youths, including girls, are attracted toward lama education. Lama education is taught till grade five in religious schools. Interestingly, almost all informants shared that their religious performances have not changed so far. The villagers believe that the god will be angry if any worship process gets changed. But one of the informants answered that lamas have started deciding collectively about religious activities, which was not the case in the past. He further added that the holy book used by lama has also changed. They bought a new book after some pages in the old book with loose sheets were lost. The new book is in binding form and some text inside are changed. Also, there are some changes in worshiping.

Lama is an important person for every ritual. Naming ceremony is performed by lama in Hyolmo community. The name is given on the basis of the day of birth and also by the word which comes from the lama randomly. Sometimes the name of the child is joined with the lama's name; the locals believe that by doing so, evil power cannot govern the child's body and the child will be healthy for whole life.

Lamas perform *puja*, light the lamp, offer water, and recite *Tripitaka* to avoid bad time of the community and to make good omen in the beginning of any new task. They work for collective welfare for peace and better agricultural production. So, their role is more preventive than curative on health issues. But sometimes they heal the patient using mantras and light lamps for recovery of patients. The informants have strong belief that all their wishes are fulfilled, children study well, and grief and pain go away when lama worships. Lamas also perform ancestor worship *(Kangsu)* in each house for betterment of the new generation. Hyolmos believe that ancestral worship bring good days

to them. It is done after *Sonam Lhosar* wishing the better health and progress. Despite their involvement in healing, lamas are considered as more religious than traditional healers. There is no remarkable change occurring in this practice.

Ethno-medicine

Ethno-medicine or folk medicine comprises of knowledge systems that developed over generations within various societies before the era of modern medicine. World Health Organization (WHO 2008) defines traditional medicine as the health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral-based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose, and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being. Practices known as traditional medicines include Ayurveda, Siddha Medicine, Unani, ancient Iranian medicine, Islamic medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, traditional Vietnamese medicine, traditional Korean medicine, acupuncture, traditional African medicine, and many other forms of healing practices (WHO 2008).

Folk idea and practices concerning the care and treatment of illness available within particular (usually non-western) cultures that is outside the framework of professionalized, regulated scientific medicine is ethno-medicine. They commonly involve empirically based natural remedies, frequently from plants, and healing rituals with supernatural elements. Among the topics studied in this field are ethno-science, ethno-pharmacology, shamanism and use of alternative therapies, and medical pluralism. Ethno-medical analysis focuses on cultural systems of healing and cognitive parameters of illness.

The knowledge is based on traditional herbal medicine that stems from spirituality, customs, livelihood strategies, and available nearby resources. Medicinal herbs are main ingredients of traditional herbal medicine, and the traditional herbal medicine is considered as the main lifeline (Kunwar & Bussmann 2009). Hyolmos follow different

ethnomedical practices for the recovery of health. All the informants answered unanimously that they use *kutki*, a local herb, for many illness such as fever, gastritis, common cold, and cough. It is kept in hot water for three to four hours and is drunk. It is very bitter in taste but very much effective and useful for healthy life. Locals have strong belief in it. It is available in areas above 4,000 meters. Herders of cows, sheep, and yak bring herbs and give the locals as a present. There are many other important herbs (such as *jatamasi, nirmasi, panch aule, yarsa gumba, ban lasun, ban satuwa, ban karela, chiraito, bojho,* rhododendron) that can be found in the local jungle, which is part of the Langtang National Park. But many of the villagers do not recognize them, neither do they know about their uses. One respondent said that *panch aule* is used in the problem of diarrhea and *chiraito* for cough and fever. On the other hand, people are not allowed to enter the jungle area to search such herbs. One of the informants interestingly informed that she should not tell the name of medicinal herbs because she has a belief that medicinal herb does not work effectively if she utters the names of herbs.

Kunwar and Bussmann (2011) show that traditional herbal medicine renders primary health care needs of two thirds of the rural population of Nepal, which represents a largely unexplored source for potential development of new drugs. At Melamchi Ghyang, villagers also use traditional practices such as hot alcohol and hot water to treat common cold and cough. Hot alcohol will be effective for those who do not have the habit of taking it regularly. Because of the modern facilities and ignorance of the use of folk medicine, ethno-medical practices are decreasing. Now, this practice is gradually being replaced by readymade allopathic medicine found at local health post.

Self Medication

Self medication is one of the oldest practices of treatment that is still prevalent in societies. It is the use of medicine without consulting medical persons. The ill person uses household production for treatment which is in person's access, and practice of various forms of treatment

are connected to his or her social power in relation to other household members. Household productions of health examine how household members cooperate and compete for resource in order to restore, maintain, and promote health.

Self-medication is more common among women, young people, those living alone, individuals of low socio-economic status, sufferers of chronic ailments and psychiatric conditions. Poverty, high medicine cost, non-availability of doctors in rural areas makes health care inaccessible, and consequently, pharmaceutical outlets serve as the first contact point of health care (Pushpa, Ravindra, and Rohini 2012). Self medication is widely prevalent in Hyolmo community of rural Helambu. The reasons as they state are fees for medications, burden of analyses and examinations, transportation costs**,** remoteness, and loss of time for the patient and their assistants. Besides, it is their tradition, too. When self-medication is not effective, patients then go to the hospital for treatment.

Hyolmos use homemade herbal remedies and tonics, or sometimes allopathic medicine too, if it is available. They use herbs, massage and exercise, manual removal of obstructions, heat compresses, dietary restrictions, and prescriptions as the major self-medication practices. Their medical traditions and practices are based on religion and beliefs regarding cosmos. Generally, such medical problems are first treated at home with some remedies suggested by relatives and neighbors. When several attempts of self-medication fail, then they go to the specialist, either traditional or modern, for their treatment.

Ancestor worship (Kangsu)

Hyolmos have diverse healing practices. Besides the above-mentioned sectors, there are other traditions which are often practiced for treatment. Illness is diagnosed and cured by lamas or monks through prayers and rituals. Ancestors are worshipped in New Year, reciting *Tripitaka* at home. Illness is traditionally believed to be caused by supernatural attacks *(Iagu, lagu-bhagu).* Specialists who help to diagnose and cure

illness brought on by such attacks are commonly referred to as faith healers, including sorcerers (those who can cast and break spells and have the ability to communicate with the spirit world), shamans (those who go into spirit possession trances, can perform exorcism, and can act on the behalf of spirits), and mediums or *jannemanche* (those who can act as transmitters between the spirit world and the non-spirit world).

Kangsu is performed by the lama in each house. It is performed after Sonam Lhosar. The house yard is cleaned. Relatives are invited. Lamas light lamps, burn incense, recite *Tripitaka*, and make the ancestor happy. It is believed that the power of ancestors helps in the success of their generation. It is also performed for better and healthy life.

Changes in the role of traditional healers

Hyolmo culture is in transitional period due to development of transportation, communication, and tourism. Recently, Helambu has been connected to Kathmandu by road transport. A small hydropower from a local rivulet, *Fadung Khola*, has provided electricity facilities. They have good links with Kathmandu as many Hyolmos have homes and relatives in Bouddha, Kathmandu. Helambu was opened as a trekking area in 1960. These factors have transformed the Hyolmo culture into modernity, so is the case in traditional medical practices.

The major traditional healers (*Jhankries* or *Bhombos*) in Helambu are also changing their roles and attitudes. They shared that their number is decreasing. Until a generation ago, *Jhankries'* sons would become *Jhankries*, but this is almost discontinued now. Its causes are mainly high ambitions of new generation; their desire for other lucrative jobs, which this profession could never fulfill since *Bhombo* is more a social work than an economically rewarding affair. Trust on *Jhankries* is also decreasing along with the modern education and awareness. The health seekers prefer to go to health center first. The educated people refer people to go to hospital and health centers than to *Jhankries.* One interesting fact was found among *Jhankries* that they themselves

do not like to continue their profession because they feel bored to be ready to go and treat at any time and at any place. A *Jhankri* confided that sometimes he becomes restless. He should not deny the request in emergency situation but feels very uneasy to be ready immediately. *Jhankries* also have changed the custom of animal sacrifice. Now they do not sacrifice animals even if the case worsens.

Villagers know that *Jhankries* cannot treat any sort of problem. Due to the facilities of health post, the villagers' first choice is health post. Thus, the social status of *Jhankries* is also decreasing compared to the past.

Beine (2001) states, there has been an apparent change in the behavior of the *Dhami/Jhankries* in terms of their acceptance of western medicine and referrals to the hospital. They also expect medicine from health post. The *Jhankries* of Melamchi Ghyang also refer to the next *Jhankri* or health post and hospital in serious cases. Sometimes it was found that they went to local health post for their own treatment.

Lamas' role was found not to be changing in Hyolmo community remarkably. They are important persons to perform any rituals and religious activities. They follow the same procedure from the remote past. Informants shared that the rites and rituals performed by lamas should not be changed. As it has direct association with religion, the god will be angry and there will be unexpected bad events, if they are changed. They also do not want to lose their cultural identity, something which they are becoming more aware of. They further add that instead of changing their religious behavior, they are ready to change lama. But one of the informants claims that there is slight a change due mainly to lamas' experience and religious text. When the old and experienced lamas passed away and a new lama got the responsibility, then some changes in performance took place. Also, some pages of the old religious book which was followed in the past were lost, and a new book was brought in recent years. This also guided some change in their activities.

Some minor changes occurring in the tools and equipment they used could be observed, such as clay pot for lamp replaced by a metal pot. Some informants agreed to the slight change on naming, marriage, and death rituals. Lamas still play the role in both preventive and curative aspect. The locals have still strong faith over them. Lamas are the revered person in the community. Some youths are also interested in reading lama text and to become lamas in the future.

Hyolmos have their original medical ideas developed from time immemorial. They were very important practices for the recovery of ill health. Now the practice is decreasing. Many youths have no ethnomedical ideas due to the availability of western medicine and due to the lack of proper medical socialization. Many Hyolmos cannot identify medical herbs and their uses except for some limited herbs. The gap in the knowledge between youth and old people is very vast. The young people have started to ignore their traditional knowledge as they are getting more facilities from local health center.

The members of the consumers group shared that collection of the herbs in local jungle is totally prohibited. Langtang National Park does not allow locals to enter the jungle to get any resources. Only grass and firewood can be collected systematically.

Pasang Sherpa, 83, shares about the changes in herbal practices:

The tradition of transhumant herding is decreasing. Almost all the locals were animal herders till the 1970s. Most of the villagers were born in cow/yak sheds in jungle. The total livelihood depended only on jungle resources. Now the practice of animal rearing has decreased. There are only two yak and three cow cottage from the village. The local youth do not like to involve in such work, rather they like to go to India to work. Those who work in India spend six to nine month and they cannot contribute to animal rearing in the village. In the past, the cow herders used to bring various medical herbs. Now, only a few herders bring the

herbs to their relatives as a present. In this way, the local herbal practice is decreasing.

Self-medication is widely prevalent in rural areas of the Third World. As a rural village of mid hills, the locals here use self-medication. Hot water, hot alcohol, and Tibetan salty tea are used for recovery of common cold and cough. As the place lies in the cold Himalayan area, cold and cough is very common and these practices are also widely prevalent. The reason for self-medication is due to lack of medical experts. The geographical remoteness is also the next cause. In the past, herbal and home remedies were practiced; nowadays due to the availability of health post and medical shops, people take the western medicine as per their need. Rinki Sherpa, the nurse of local health post, shares that some ill locals send their family members to take medicine in health post even today. She remembers how a villager got angry recently when she denied giving medicine to a person other than the patient.

These all changes are occurring mainly due to the development of transport and communication, education, and strong attachment with Kathmandu and India. Hyolmo region is just connected with a gravel road in 2011. Most of the villagers have access to electricity and means of communication, especially telephone, mobile phone, and television. A small-scale hydroelectricity was produced from the local rivulet in 1986. Now it has stopped, and Helambu is connected with the main national grid of electricity. These changes have brought a change in their traditional healing practices. The Hyolmos, who depended only on limited medical practices, have now diversified and are inclined towards western medicine. This finding is supported by Desjarlais (2003) when he stated that the tourism from trekking expeditions through this region and employment in Kathmandu, India, and elsewhere has brought additional sources of material wealth. In the last three decades, a large number of Hyolmos families have settled permanently in Kathmandu, primarily in the Tibetan neighborhoods that surrounded the great Chorten in Bouddha.

The processes of migration, trekking, and tourism have brought modern influence in every aspect of culture and also in medical practices. After the people of Helambu were connected with Kathmandu, the capital city, by road transport, they started to prefer using allopathic medicine. Tourism has also contributed to westernize the medical practice as tourists bring some medicine with them when they travel. The establishment of health post has contributed to the use of allopathic medicine. The locals are feeling easy to follow health post as it is also referred by educated persons. The other reason to choose the health post is its availability; it is situated at the center of the village. This implies that traditional medical practices are gradually changing.

Conclusion

As an ethnic group, Hyolmos have developed different traditional beliefs and practices regarding illness, such as shamanism, Lamaism, ethnomedical and herbal practices for centuries to heal the patients. Both preventive and curative healing practices are prevalent, including the use of locally available medical herbs.

Nowadays, the traditional practices are gradually changing due to the awareness and education. The major factors which brought changes are establishment of school and health post. The other factors such as transportation, communication, overseas employment, and tourism also brought remarkable changes on healing practices. Now, the role of *Dhami/Jhankries* and lamas in healing practice is decreasing and the role of modern allopathic medical practitioners, mainly health post and hospital, is increasing because of the change in belief system.

A conflict between two categories of medication (traditional and modern) can be found. All these traditional healing practices are declining and changing towards allopathic practice. The young generations are found to prioritize allopathic medical practice, whereas, elderly local people still believe in traditional practices and follow shamanism, lamaism, and herbal practice. The strong influence of allopathic medicine on the

new generation has brought changes in traditional medical and healing practice.

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Identity, Ethnicity and Social Moement

Dimensions and Dynamics of Categorization of People in Nepal

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Introduction

The paper aims to present a brief overview of the dynamics and dimensions of categorization of people in Nepal in historical context. The paper is based on critical reviews of previous literatures by historians, ethnographers and the categorization practices used by the Nepali state, with particular emphasis on the terminologies used to denote various social groups. Categorization of people in Nepal can be said to have multiple dimensions and continuous dynamics of modifications over time and place. The review shows that there has been a gradual shift on the dimensions and dynamics of categorization of people of Nepal, even with numerous instances of discrepancies and overlapping. Given the nature and historical shift in the mode of categorization of human groups, it seems necessary to comprehend what the categories are meant for; otherwise the intention of categorization does not correspond with the usage of the categories.

Human groups around the world are categorized in number of ways in terms of various markers. The mode of categorization and type of categories are in part, universal, and in part, society and cultural specific. In short, human categorization processes seem to be fluid and multiple, largely influenced by social, political, and historical context of a given society. Such is the case of Nepali society as well since Nepal is a country of biological and ethno-cultural diversity. Presently, various human groups, representing varieties of physical structure, language, religion,

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culture in various regions are extant, all of whom have been understood and named as distinguished categories. This categorization of people in Nepal is not a new practice. In addition, the existence of such categories have not been fixed from the past. Historically, various human groups have settled in the land of present day Nepal, representing various "racial", cultural and regional origins. Various dynasties and rulers have paved ways for various modes of human categorization in Nepal and such multi-dimensional dynamics of categorization is still evident today. We can see various lists of different human groups documented in the history of Nepal. There have been a number of studies carried out during the past quarter century in Nepal. Many senior scholars, as well as, graduate students appear in the lists of those who have published works in Nepal. Some of these studies focus on contact, conflict and cleavage between groups. There are only a few Nepali scholars who have expressed an interest in looking into the process of integration among peoples of different ethnic, linguistic, or cultural backgrounds. This has often encouraged an emphasis on isolated exclusive views of communities, rather than a search for trends of openness, acceptance, adaptability, and social understanding. Not only the history of ethnic and linguistic assimilation, but also a great degree of tolerance between different religious groups can be seen here, as facts of life. All the major classical religions have undergone modifications here to a considerable extent and have been given a Nepali color (Bista 1982).

The major objective of this paper is to describe various modes of human categorization in Nepal, so as to document different dimensions of categorization in Nepal over different historical periods. For the purpose of the paper, the major texts or documents of human categorization in Nepal's historical context have been specially focused, among other things, namely – Censuses (1952/54, 1991, 2001, 2011), Bista's *People of Nepal* (1967), Hofer's *Caste Hierarchy and the Muluki Ain of 1854* (1973, 1979); Gautam and Thapa-Magar's *Tribal Ethnography of Nepal* (1994), NCDIN's *Nationalities of Nepal* (2000); *Nepal Foundation*

for Development of Indigenous Nationalities Act, 2002, Bennett and Parajuli's paper (2008) and CDSA's *Social Inclusion Atlas and Ethnographic Profile* (2014).

Concepts and categories

The social world, in terms of economies, polities, ideologies and cultural expressions are not only similar (or patterned) but also diverse and changing, the comprehension of which begins with categorization. A good concept and the categories made by utilizing the concept have to focus upon and capture practice, rather than ideology or norm. The concepts and categories of Hinduism and Buddhism, to the extent, must be reworked in popular practice not on liturgy and ecclesiastical features. Practice based stance for the formulation of concepts, which, in fact, merely means that we are being faithful to the empirical rather than the fictitious world (Mishra 2013). The incompatibility of the mode of categorization and their usage is apparent in Nepali context. Folk categorization at local level is found to be different from those made by the state. Given such instances, the process of categorization is complex and hence, their comprehension is more complicated, reflecting various intersections; in fact, sometimes abstract. As Regmi (2003) asserts 'social types' as abstractions, which are constructed by selecting and putting together some of the more conspicuous traits that are supposed to characterize a category of people.

Most nations are ethnically heterogeneous because of migration of people of different ethnic groups across national boundaries. Japan and Korea are best examples of ethnically homogenous nations. The ethnic situation in Nepal involves variations in language, religion, ethnicity, caste status, and region. Nepal's current ethnic composition reflects its location, given its proximity to the borders of China and India, and as such, immigration of people from these two nations (regions) in Nepal over the centuries. The label Nepali have two meanings in Nepal – first, in general sense, the names refer to all citizens of Nepal regardless of their ethnic identity; second, they refer more specifically to the original

inhabitants of Nepal, such as the Newar, Limbu and Khas (Levinson 1998). Social categorization involves the identification of others as a collective and also in collective self-identification of the group. Whereas social groups define themselves, their name, their nature, their boundaries, social categories are identified defined and delineated by others (Jenkin 2008). Diversity is extant in almost all societies, but the difference lies on how and who categorizes the people with differential emphasis on various markers. The ethnic heterogeneity in Nepal seems to be differently viewed by social scientists from abroad. In fact, the social categories are constructed, which is reflected by the dynamics of dimensions of categorization in Nepal.

In addition, not only the emphasis of markers is differential based on the party involved in such process, it is time specific, which is always dynamic and constantly changing. Dynamics is obvious and alterations in one aspect of society have implications in the other, i.e. various factors determine the dimensions of categorization, while at the same time, incidences of categorical entity shape the overall social structure of a society resulting in continuity and change of categorization process. In Nepal, forces of change have exerted pressure upon boundaries of the traditional structure (Bista 1989). For example, the traditional Nepali social structure, based on caste, untouchability and categories of alcohol drinkers have gone through a lot of transformations in modern context, as an effect of the movement of people across national and international borders in the context of globalization, increase in remittances, as well as planned development activities (communication, media, education, legal reforms), resulting in structural changes affecting prevailing hierarchy and socio-economic status of the various groups of people in Nepal.

Social categorization in Nepal: A historical chronology

The historical chronology is the beginning point for comprehension of the dynamics of dimension of the categorization of the people in Nepal. As Bista (1982) emphasizes the need for both synchronic and diachronic view to understand the process of Nepalization at all levels at all times.

In this line, various terms used to denote social categories used in various historical texts are supposed to reflect the contemporary dimensions of categorization of people, which have been discussed in the following paragraphs.

During the ancient period (900 B.C. – 880 A.D.), based on Gopalrajvamshali, the kingdom of Nepal was established under the Gopala kings, and the people who came to live here at the time where the Mahisapala (buffalo herder), Kirat, Sakya, Koli Vrjji and son. Kirat and Khas groups have been mentioned frequently by many Indian texts. Khas people, who entered into India between 1500 and 1000 B.C, were pastoral nomads, with cattle, sheep, and goats. Ailas (or Aryans that included Khas) entered India from the mid-Himalayan region, Tibet through Garhwal into India. Similarly, the Kirat people were connected with the people all along the eastern Himalayas and beyond it into China, who reared buffaloes and probably practiced some slash-and-burn agriculture. These two groups of people, the Khas (Caucasoid with Indo-European language) and the Kirat (Mongoloid with Tibeto-Burman language), not only originated at the two opposite ends of the Himalayas but also had distinctly different life styles, different in their appearance and spoke different languages. By the time they met and began to live close to each other in this common land of Nepal, there must have been a great deal of sharing, borrowing, and overlapping of languages and cultures. But there remains a possibility that the Gopalas (cow herders) were the Khas, and that the Mahishapalas (buffalo herders) were the Kirati people. Medieval Period (880 A.D. – 1768 A.D.) is typically characterized by the Newar society with a stratified hierarchy, thereby, making it impossible for further integration of new peoples into it. The Modern Period (1768 A.D. onwards) can be said to have begun with Prithvi Narayan Shah indicating the hard-earned country as a garden for people of all types, which involved a substantial majority of contemporary Hindus; the next largest group is Buddhist, followed by Islamic and Christian minorities, as well as less reckoned in the official

records, those who practice their own Shamanic and Bonpo religious beliefs, well outside of the classical faiths (Bista 1982).

The earliest found categories represented various "racial" groups from different place of origin with distinct life styles. There was no policy behind such categorization of people, but the practice based on fundamental nature of human comprehension of similarities and differences was always there. However, what is important are the basic social processes of acculturation, which can be attributed to the transformation in the dimensions of categorization, over time, resulting in the changes in the objective markers typical of the groups at that time, however, rigidity of boundaries existed.

Furthermore, according to Regmi (1965), the earliest settlers in the valley of Nepal, until the 14th century, were the Mundas, Kols and Bhils of today's South Bihar, India; then Dravidians during their northward expansion to the Gangetic plain; later the Kirat from North east India. Kirats, who were pushed into the hilly area of sub-Himalayan tracts by the Aryans (mostly belonging to priest and warrior classes, i.e. Brahmans and Ksatriyas), arrived from the Gangetic plain, were hardier in physique and came in masse with ruling aristocracy, artisans, traders, professions and a small section of the peasantry. Furthermore, Lichhavi, Malla and Khasas were also other emigrants to the valley, as well as, there is a likelihood of some Tibetans seeking shelter in the valley. In the 18th century, the term Thakuri conveyed a sense of purity of Ksatriya blood, originating from Rajputana, India, in contrast to the mixed blood of Khasa Ksatriyas of the indigenous soil. Later Malla (literally meaning 'wrestler') princes used Thakuri after their name. This medieval (879 – 1726 A.D.) categories mentioned above represent the major terms regarding races as being Indo-Mongols, Aryans, Dravidians, as well as a notion of composite race mentioned. Linguistic categories like Indo-Tibetan, Indo-Aryan and Tibeto- Burman are mentioned with Sanskrit and Newari as sub-categories.

Subedi (2055 B.S.), with reference to Tony Hagen, categorizes the people of Nepal into four major groups – Ancient Nepali Group (Gurung, Magar, Sunuwar, Rai, Limbu, Budha, Roka, Tamang, Tharu, Newar); Nepali group (Brahman, Kshetriya, Thakuri) speaking Nepali; Tibetan group (Thakali, Bhote, Sherpa) speaking Tibetan language; Indian group (Garhwal- Kumaon, Indians) speaking Abadhi and Bhojpuri. Further, with reference to Yogi Narahari Nath, Banmanchhe, Kushunda (are the Chepangs, who resemble Lho of Bhutan must be Mongolians according to their facial appearance) and Raute lived in forest and wandered around the forests of the Mahabharata. The Varna organization in 22 states (Baaisi rajya), by religion, was mostly Hindus. The communities- Byasi, Mugal and Humlis, all collectively known as Vanik (Jaad – keeping long hairs due to living in cold place), lived around the Tibetan border. Their surname varied like Bohara, Kathayat, Ayandi, Bista, Saud etc. Besides, Jhuma and Lamas lived in monasteries. Brahman, Chhetri and Sudra lived in large numbers in different settlements but Baishyas were almost negligible in that period.

Hofer (1979) has schematically categorized people of Nepal in terms of linguistic family, geographical region of the country and cultural affinity across border. Geographically, people living in high mountain (Tibetans or Bhotia) involving ethnic groups having Tibetan linguistic and cultural affiliation, such as Sherpa, Dolpo and Manange); midland foothills (Parbatiya, Hill Muslim and Hill Newar, who speak Nepali language such as Brahmin, Thakuri, Chhetri, Kami, Sarki and Damai), Mahabharata hills (ethnic groups belonging to Tibetanids, Kirati having languages of their own within Sino-Tibetan family, such as Gurungs, Tamang, Thakali, Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar, Magar, Hayu, Chepang, Kusunda, Raji or Raute, Newar of Kathmandu valley), Inner Tarai (Awaliya of the inner Tarai, linguistically close with Nepali and North Indian dialects, such as Tharu, Darai, Danuwar, Kumal, Majhi) and Tarai (speaking North Indian dialects with own caste hierarchy, such as Maithili, Brahmin, Rajput, Dom, Chamar, Muslim etc). Parbatiya as dominant portions of

the population, numerically and politically, identified, by their agrarian techniques, as well as Hinduism. The Newar from the Kathmandu valley, have their own intra-ethnic caste hierarchy and culture shaped by Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as Hill Newar, who immigrated to the midland hills and settled there as traders or peasants. Hill Muslim, as an autonomous group of the Churaute, renowned for their bracelet manufactures, from the other Muslims living in Nepal; Awaliya are peasants mainly identical with that of adjacent areas of Northern India. Hofer (1979) discussed the contemporary social reality of the then Nepalese society documented in the Muluki Ain, 1854, solely based on traditional caste hierarchy, which also included almost recent indigenous nationalities categories, except, currently known Madhesi category. The categories involve the cultural markers to a large extent, but the level of hierarchy is based on the occupational castes of each category, as well as, food taboo attached to the respective categories. It is relevant to quote the definition of the category 'indigenous nationalities' as "The aboriginal" stock of Nepal is most undoubtedly, Mongolian. This fact is inscribed in very plain characters in their faces, forms, and languages. Amongst the aborigines of Nepal are the Magars, Gurungs, Newars, Sunwars, Khambus, Yakkas, Yakthumbas, Murmis, and Lepchas, all of these are undoubtedly descendants from Mongolian or Tibetan stocks (Vanisttart 1896, 56 in Bhattachan 2003,11).

According to Bista (1987), Nepal had been closed not only to the outside, but there was no encouragement even for the Nepali themselves to travel inside the country because of the difficult terrain in the hills, the deadly malarial conditions in the plains, and the complete absence of any means of efficient transportation or communication. Because of the increasing mobility of different groups of people across geographic boundaries, the regional divisions indicate only the stereotypes, as indeed do many of the customs and cultural phenomena. With a few exceptions, the great majority of the Nepali people live in well defined, specific geographic regions. Tibetan speaking Mongoloid people live

in the high Himalayan regions of the North. Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan speaking hill and valley people, inhabit the mountain valleys. Various Indo-Aryan languages speaking Mediterranean type of people and some indigenous people such as Tharus and Dhangars (Dravidian language) live in the low river valleys and forest belts, an economically important geographical region. The people living near the borders of the north and south have easy access to the neighboring countries for trade and social intercourse are influenced by the respective neighboring countries, in matters of race, religion, language, culture, and economy. Until quite recently, every single cultural group spoke a different language or dialect, developed its own marriage and social rules, and became ethnocentric in almost every respect.

The word tribe (jat) used in the text is inaccurate from the sociological perspective, however, due to lack of a more appropriate term to denote a group of people, possessing a common language and culture, and due to migration, are not confined to particular geographical region and do not regard themselves as politically autonomous group. Tribe is a word, which we have found to be most suitable for them. Totemism is also seen to be prevalent in the tribes studied and this is equated to the gotra (Gautam and Thapa-Magar 1994). The main objective of this text was to help those laymen and beginners who do not have any social, anthropological and cultural exposure, to be able to pick up this book and read and enjoy the tribal diversity of Nepal. This work, as clearly stated by author, was intended to impart information on tribal ethnography, for laymen, as well as, scholars regarding the nomenclature, distribution and cultural characteristics of the groups, and presents a list of 50 tribal categories based on cultural markers, with many overlaps in both objective and subjective markers of categorization. Some categories differ from the lists made by other social scientists, as well as, one made by the state from time to time. Nevertheless, the authors have clearly talked not only about the tribes, but also, about the sub-tribes as well as sept (thar) to represent different group within and between. For example,

Kunwor is one of the tribal or jaat category that has been mentioned in the list, which was not found as a distinct category, in other historical texts regarding categorization. It is also not listed in the census' list; rather this is understood as a surname within Chhetri category. It implies that the category existed in the historical context in Nepal as a distinct category.

Ukyab and Adhikari (2000), on behalf of a taskforce formed by HMG/N in 1996, defined Nepal's nationalities as those who do not fall under the traditional four-fold Varna classifications of Hindu Varna system and listed 61 such groups having characteristics like: i) distinct cultural identities; ii) traditional languages, religions, customs and cultures; iii) traditional social fabrics based on equality; iv) own geographical and demographical areas in the country; v) written and/or oral histories of their own; vi) communities with notion of 'we/us'; vii) no pivotal or decisive role to play in polity and administration of modern Nepal; viii) indigenous or native people of Nepal and ix) who call themselves ethnic peoples.

It was the first time in Nepal, the state categorized the people of Nepal, in contrast to four fold varna classification. This was precipitated as a result of transformations in state political institutions, as well as the emerging concern for socially excluded, marginalized and minority groups in a context marked by restoration of democracy. National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN 2003), the only government body set up for the development of indigenous nationalities, modified the list of 61 to 59. The major difference in categorization and categories between these two subsequent lists is that the earlier list of 61 categories included Chimtan, Manangay, Syangtan and Thintan, whereas, the latter list of 59 contained Tin Gaunle Thakali and Yakkha, i.e. four previous categories omitted from the list and two new categories were included. The official list of human categories in the name of nationalities of Nepal is 59 excluding the castes of four-fold varna system, while the human categories in the name of caste/ethnicity

in Nepal is 125 including, all the caste groups. Within the domain of this document, listing 59 categories declared by the state and the 125 self-reported categories in the recent census of 2011, seems to be presenting contradictory information. For example, the 59 categories defined according to the criteria mentioned above are not found in the list of caste/ethnicity in the census, they are – Chhairotan, Tangbe, Tin Gaunle Thakali, Fri, Bankariya, Barha Gaunle, Marphali Thakali, Mugali, Larke and Surel etc. Such a discrepancy between the two documents was both produced by the state itself, though with different fundamental purpose, in 2002, and another in 2011. The listed ethnic categories declared as meeting the requirements to be indigenous nationalities of Nepal are supposed to be self-reported in the census's list. This reflects the fact that the categorization made by the state mechanism from above does not always correspond to folk categorization.

This categorization does follow the previous mode of categorization regarding general markers of ethnic categorization, regarding objective and subjective markers with less emphasis on racial and physical factors. More clearly stated, the terms as Aryan and Mongol have not been used here as distinct human categories, rather, they have been mentioned as one of the many characteristics of particular group. It reflects how a shift in the major markers of categorization has occurred in the historical context of Nepal from past to the present. Among other things, regarding culture, language, and ancestral origin, one major criterion of being the nationalities of Nepal is not being included in the decision-making power of the state. It was relevant in the context of emerging modern developmental issues of social inclusion. As Lukie (1972) asserts that the problems of nationalities become an issue, because of difficult economic conditions in a nation with multinational composition, and even if the bad economic state is the main cause of exacerbation of the nationalities question, it is by no means the only cause. In other areas of social life, problems also arise because of the multinational composition of the state, and they can lead to sharpening relations among the

nationalities. Another remarkable feature of this categorization is that it broadly categorized two classes of people of Nepal. On one level it was the people who could be included in the four fold Hindu Varna category and in the other the non-four fold Hindu Varna category. More clearly, two broad national categories are the caste based stratified group and non-caste relatively egalitarian groups.

Now having a discussion with the national censuses, a quote is worth mentioning. The censuses of Nepal have collected information concerning languages and religion of people. However, no attempt was ever made in various censuses from 1952/54 to 1981 in order to collect information, concerning ethnicity of the people. In 1952/54 information on 36 languages has primarily been collected but data were provided for 24 languages. In 1961, the census had obtained information on 52 languages but tabulation was made for 36 languages. In 1971, the census has made tabulations for 17 languages, leaving a residual of 487,060 persons in the 'other' category. The 1981 census provided tabulation on 18 languages, leaving a residual of 764,802 persons in the category of 'others/unstated'. In the four censuses mentioned, the names of human groups with different mother tongues are – Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tamang, Abadhi, Tharu, Newari, Magar, Rai/Kiranti, Gurung and Limbu as well as 'others' and 'unstated' (CBS 1985).

The aforementioned paragraph is particularly relevant here because it gives us an idea about the relevance of the categorization itself in Nepalese historical context. During the earlier censuses the ethnic category or/and ethnicity was not much focused as it is now. The state then did not highlight categorical enumeration of the population. Statistical population figures are available regarding religious and linguistic population with less emphasis on caste and ethnicity. The first four National Censuses did not focus much on those issues. The first census was made during the early 1950s, prior to the publication of the most of the texts discussed in this paper, which related with the categorization of the people of Nepal. For example, some of the most

comprehensive texts regarding history and ethnicity of Nepal can be seen only after 1950s – Regmi (1965), Hofer (1979), Bista (1987) and others. However, several foreign scholars, missionaries, and travelers mentioned about features of Nepali society prior to 1950, the practice of intensive studies on culture and society of Nepal, by both foreign and native scholars, started only after 1950s (see Dahal in this volume)

This list of group representing different caste/ethnicity in the National Census is of course prepared based on the self-report responses of the people, i.e. folk categorization, which has not been created by government, state or social scientists. The groups reported by the populace themselves, obviously reflects the long tradition self-ascription and ascription by others, on the basis of which, the people categorized themselves as belonging with their own particular group. The major objective of such categorization, during the censuses is purely to enumerate the people of Nepal, in terms of number, region, caste/ethnicity, as well as various other important factors. It is not connected with the identification and description of particular cultural markers of human categorization, which occurs every ten years in Nepal. CBS (2012) has listed names of 125 human groups (with additional 5 groups in 'others' category including foreigner and undefined) based on the population by caste/ethnicity in the recent census of 2011.

According to a very recent research by CDSA (2014), intended at preparing a social inclusion atlas and ethnographic profile of some categories, have further regrouped the 125 groups into other categories for the analysis of survey data, namely – Adivasi/Janajati (Hill, Newar, Tarai); Hindu Caste Groups (Hill, Madhesi); Dalit (Hill, Madhesi); Musalman (Madhesi Musalman, Churaute); and Others (Marwadi, Jain, Bengali, Punjabi/Sikh). Some of the operational definition of conceptual categories used in the report is worthy of mention here. Caste refers to a social group within the Hindu varna scheme that stratifies people in a vertical hierarchy, with differential privileges and levels of recognition. Officially, the term Dalit is defined as a member of a

caste-community, which has been traditionally excluded from social, economic, educational, political and religious activity, and which till now has been deprived of human dignity and social justice, due to caste based discrimination and untouchability. Ethnic groups are referred to as Adivasi/Janajati or as indigenous nationalities. Muluki Ain categorizes them as matwali (alcohol drinkers) and placed them in the middle of the caste hierarchy. Madhesi has entered into official vocabulary in recent years to describe a separate group in the Nepali social classification system. The definition of the term is politically contested, in its broader sense; it can encompass all of the groups residing in the southern Tarai or Madhes region of Nepal that adjoins North India. Muslims on the other hand, refers to a religious group, comprising a population who reside mostly in the southern plains, but with also some communities residing in the hill region (CDSA 2014).

This categorization is purely a social scientific work, which is based primarily on the Nepali human categories of the very recent National Census, 2011. Categorizing premises generally are – religious marker, social castes, cultural features, social exclusion and indigeneity and also regional geographical base, despite some overlapping racial, linguistic and regional factors, as well as, some conceptual and practical discrepancy. The premises and the critical discrepancy can be clarified to a large extent by defining characteristics of broader categories mentioned in the quote above. For example, Dalit category has been excluded from Hindu caste group, which only makes sense in the context of issues of social exclusion, and is closely connected with the traditional caste hierarchy documented in the legal code with the rules of touchability, impurity and untouchability, But the general descriptive meaning of the broader Hindu caste group should not have excluded Dalit, as a human category separately. On the contrary, Bista's classifications have classified Hindu caste groups into a single broad category along with the name of occupational caste group. Nevertheless, this paper is not in fact judging value of this sort of categorization, but such a categorization

should be critically evaluated and interpreted in the context of general dimensions of categorizing the people of Nepal into different cultural entity or group.

Furthermore, all of the groups in the Hill Janajati category are said to be Mongolian racially and speak language of Tibeto-burman family, but still vary in religious beliefs regarding Hinduism, Buddhism and other indigenous religions. Similarly, the Tarai Janajati category, too is diverse regarding linguistic families, racial backgrounds and many cultural features – some, for example, are believed to belong physically to Mongolian race but speaking dialect of Indo-Aryan language family (such as Tharus). Religious category of Musalman does differ in terms of regional distribution, linguistic variation and many cultural factors. Finally, the category 'other' has been marked in terms of migration and settlement history, as recently migrated group to Nepal having distinct identity constituting a separate entity. Therefore, this recent social scientific categorization, which seems to have justifiable base regarding different dimension, is the product of current socio-political as well as academic research and development context.

Another different dimension of categorization in Nepal has been presented by Bennett and Parajuli (2008), who categorized some of the ethnic category into two major groups of 'disadvantaged' and 'non-disadvantaged'. The caste ethnicity grouping made by them, based on the 103 castes and ethnic groups by National Census 2001, involves firstly, the 13 categories, such as – Brahman/Chhetri; Other Madhesi/Tarai castes; Dalits; Indigenous nationalities (Adivasi/Janajati); Newars; Muslim; and Others. Brahman/Chhetri are then subdivided into Hill and Madhes (Tarai); other Madhesi/Tarai castes are subdivided into Disadvantaged and non-Disadvantaged; Dalits are subdivided into Hill and Madhes (Tarai); Indigenous nationalities (Adivasi/Janajati) are grouped into Hill and Tarai Janajati and further subdivided into Disadvantaged and non-Disadvantaged groups. However, the categorization of this sort is not

directly relevant to the discussion of this paper regarding objective and subjective markers of categorization.

I have mentioned that the "categorization" does not simply exist as a reflection of the marker of categorization; rather they become relevant in the context of dynamics of the process of categorization in Nepal. In fact, it reflects the fact that the groups who are culturally distinct as the nationalities cannot be put into a same basket in terms of socio-economic development status. The earlier texts listed various names and profiles of various categories and groups based on historical texts, observation of markers and folk conception in everyday life. In fact, the groups who were living in the land of Nepal from ancient times either as emigrant or as aboriginal were listed in terms of various cultural, physical, linguistic and religious markers originally. Later, along with ethnic advocacy and movements the listing of human categories was more inclined towards the inclusion of the marginalized and backward groups. Such a need required to categorize non-Hindu groups or the groups other than four varna as being excluded from the mainstream in all affairs of the state. This trajectory of categorization by the state divided the Hindu caste groups and the rest of the others as indigenous nationalities. But what was not considered in this categorization was that the problem of exclusion, marginalization and backwardness was not merely associated with being a member of caste group. Some of the groups, among the 100 from National Censuses have been categorized in terms of developmental deprivation.

In fact, the definitional criteria of indigenous nationalities in a legal act by the government seem to be more encompassing on one hand and incomplete on the other. For instance, if indigenous nationalities mean to be having objectively a separate language, history, territory and subjectively we-feeling, what is the sense of making one more criteria, as not being included in the mainstream political decision making mechanism. It is confusing whether, the categorization is cultural identity oriented or inclusive developmentally oriented. However,

what can be argued is that in contemporary Nepal, disadvantage has come about as one very important human categorization. The concern for the development of marginalized and disadvantaged by means of social inclusion is one very important issue in Nepalese context, which is not in any way, same as ethnic categorization in terms of objective and subjective markers, as a cultural entity and distinct human groups.

Nepal's socio-cultural diversity is characterized by racial, caste/ethnic, linguistic, religious and regional diversity. Nepalese people belong to four racial groups: Caucasian, Mongoloid, Dravidian and proto-Australoid. Tarai castes such as Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and so called 'untouchables', Hill castes such as Bahun, Chhetri and Dalit, and Muslims belong to Caucasian race. Similarly, 59 nationalities or indigenous ethnic or tribal groups belong to Mongoloid, Dravidian and proto-Australoid races. Nepali people speak more than 123 languages and dialects that belong to four language families, namely, Indo-aryan, Tibeto-burman, Dravidian and Munda. One indigenous ethnic group called Khambus or Rais have about 38 language and dialects. In terms of religion, Nepalis have faith in diverse religions including Animism, Buddhism, Lamaism, Kirant, Hindu, Jain, Islam and Christianity. In terms of region, traditionally there were 12 ethnic clusters, namely, Khasan, Jadan, Tharuwan, Awadhi, Kochil, Maithil, Nepal, Limbuan, Khambuan, Tambasaling, Tamuan, and Magarat. Also, the people of Tarai identify themselves as Madhesi community (Bhattachan 2005). It could be considered a very short summary about the various categories and categorization prevailing in the country. Here the language Munda is an Austro-Asiatic language, which is closer to language spoken by Santhal. More specifically, the Munda of Nepal speaks Kharia sub-language of Munda language.

The human categories currently residing in Nepal and those that were listed in various documents discussed here have been categorized into four major human races; Caucasian race includes all the Hindu caste groups and the Dalits of both Hill and Madhes. Besides, all the indigenous

nationalities, recently 59 officially declared yet, belong to rest of the three races, almost all from Mongoloid race. Similar objective markers involve language families and distinct dialects within them. In addition, other religious and regional ethnic clusters too have implications in the categorization of people by the member themselves, other groups, social scientists and the state. Moreover, the category Munda, mentioned as early settlers in Nepal, which is also mentioned in Bhattachan's quote, having a language that is not stated in a linguistic family. The ethnonym Munda could not be found in any of the list of human categories discussed in this paper. There is no incidence of this term in Bista, Hofer, Censuses and state's nationalities lists.

Dimensions and dynamics

In general, the human categories documented in the past seemed to be based more on physical structures as well as the place of origin including different dimension of culture, whereas, over time, the emphasis on the markers of categorization seem to be transforming with difference in the relevance of particular markers of categorization. Nowadays, the physical markers and origin have been discussed as the profile attributes of different groups rather than main categorical markers. It has become more oriented towards categorizing group as 'cultural group', that is usually 'endogamous' as well as feeling a sense of solidarity. In fact, the objective physical markers and place of origin encompass numerous groups with different culture, language and self-ascription. Moreover, during recent times, the emphases of categorization have shifted more toward the issues of human development, social inclusion as well as majority/minority issues. Whatever the shift in the dimensions of categorization over time, the historical trajectory is always important, without which, we cannot clearly comprehend the modern mode of categorization, which is in a way also a continuity of the past to the present.

The cultural process and structure of human categorization is the modus operandi of ethnicity and ethnicization. Put simply, the term

'ethnicization' and 'categorization' as well, by its suffix '-ization' refers to any action, process, or result of making, i.e. ethnicization as a process, whereby any kind of ethnicity is formed, activated and maintained and categorization as a process of classifying people in terms of various markers. This process of ethnicization had a different base and underlying cause in the past and it is totally different today, which has more implication than just classifying people into certain social or cultural types. Human categorization, basically reflecting the incidences of 'similarities and differences' as well as the status of 'ascription', is meaningful not only for describing the diversity of cultures and people, but also to make sense of inter-relationships, among different groups in contemporary context, which is reflected in the present day heterogeneous, multicultural and plural Nepali society. For example, the legal code of Nepal is a reflection of the contemporary scenario of inter-ethnic/caste relation in Nepali society, which has clearly prescribed rules of conduct and behavior regarding alliance, commensality and deviance in everyday life. Similarly, the recent movements, representing various human categories of the country reflect the current inter-group relational dynamics vis-à-vis the state. The notion of 'inter-group relational dynamics' here refers to the contemporary state of intergroup relations in terms of exchanges and hierarchy derived from the then categories, resulting in a particular mode of behavioral patterns among the members of the groups. Over time, the continuity of such practices is transformed as the current scenario, i.e. the ongoing discourse of a need and attempt for upliftment of some categorical groups. In addition, the latest categories in the name of fifty-nine nationalities are meant for the development of those groups, i.e. the intention behind categorization by the state is to accelerate the social, economic and political development of the given groups. The emergence of the issues concerning the majority-minority is one of those dynamics. The globalization of the concept of democracy, good governance, human rights and freedom, dignity are some of the impetus for such dynamics of categorization at present, which obviously

has implication for society, state and individual members of ethnic categories.

The politico-socio-cultural history of Nepal is dominated a great deal more by the factors of integration than by those of cleavage and conflict. A great majority of the people of Nepal do not have any problem identifying him or herself with one cultural-linguistic or ethnic group or another at one level and with Nepali society in general at another level. This is what frequently has been described as the phenomenon of unity in diversity (Bista 1982).

Nepali society was introduced to the Hindu Caste System at some stage and was given a formal appearance of stratification. This has misled many people, both foreign and Nepali, to view Nepali society as stratified by caste divisions in its entirety. In fact, however, the various groups of the population were openly granted a fair degree of autonomy even after the promulgation of the Muluki Ain (Legal Code) of 1854 that introduced a formal hierarchy of castes. In a similar fashion, many people around the world are also concerned with another kind of stratification: that which was left behind by the former colonial governments. There is, however, a great deal of differences between the two cases – castes and the colonial legacy in their details. Nonetheless, there is a basic similarity. Each holds a worldview of structures and of hierarchy. Each perspective views people in terms of high and low, dominant and subordinate, privileged and deprived, along cultural, ethnic or caste lines rather than along lines of individual competitiveness. The caste system in India evolved as a process of socio-cultural and economic specialization, whereas in Nepal, it was introduced at a much later date as part of the political process of Nepalization aimed at an integration of different communities into an organized single structure (Bista 1982).

The topography and geographic location of the land dictates a very diverse and heterogeneous conglomeration of different types and distinct cultural expression in its composition. The origin of the Nepali people

of today is diverse, and Nepal is perhaps one of the few countries in the world if we consider its smallness in area and its largeness in diversity of people and their integration.

Overall dimensions of human categorization, (racial categories, sub-categories, linguistic categories) involved primarily the status of emigration from ancestral place, physique, language, culture specific capability, and cohesion as an entity. The source of categories and sub-categories mentioned in this discussion is primarily the historical texts, which have been said to be based on historical inscriptions noticed by the historians so far. There was no document having a list of categories by the state, except the caste organization of Malla king later. Simply stated, various human categories existed in Nepal with distinct markers and criteria of identification.

Controversy in the definition of some categories do exist, for example Thakuri, is a name for pure blood of Ksatriya in contrast to Khasa Ksatriya, while it is also associated with royal Malla as Thakuri, renowned warriors. In addition, similar term Thakuju among Newars refers to the descendants of them. Caste, status, and occupation of the medieval Kathmandu Newar have enlisted Thakuju and Malla as a sub-category within Newar Ksatriya category.

At present, among some of members of the Newars, such surnames still exist in usage. This is how some categories have various connotations as a term as well as various usages as a human category. The later categorization, do also have enlisted Thakuri as a separate category in the National Census of 2011. Hofer (1979) categorizes them as Parbatiya group living around midland foothills and legal code defined them as wearers of holy cord put them in the second level in the then caste hierarchy, which is also listed in Gautam and Thapa-Magar (1994) but Bista (1987) discussed this category within Chhetri category.

Similar is the case of the category Kirata, was originally defined as astrong physical personand identified as a separate cultural entity. This category today is not mentioned in the census list as a caste/ ethnic category, but as one form of religion. Gautam and Thapa-Magar, Frank and Bista have distinguished them as distinct category with sub-categories of Rai and Limbu within it. These two sub-categories are also found in the list of caste/ethnicity in the census lists as well as in the government list of nationalities of Nepal (HMG/N 2000 in which, the term Kirata is mentioned as a tradition/religion in the discussion of their individual profile, i.e. as a marker of ethnicity or one dimension of categorization of these people of Nepal. More clearly, the dynamics of categorization is such that the category of Kirata, which used to denote a distinguished human category in the past is now a typical characteristic of some human categories at present.

The caste categories during the medieval Nepal was fundamentally marked by the traditional conception of four-fold caste system (Brahman, Kshetriya, Vaishya, and Sudra), which is still extant in Nepalese society, among the caste groups, which passed through various transformations as depicted in the contemporary legal codes and today's everyday practice. Two categories of this fourfold caste system, such as Vaishya and Sudra do not seem to be in usage for categorizing the people of Nepal, though sub-categories, ranging from Brahman and Chhetri to untouchables exists, whatever the practice of commensality and exchange in everyday life is today. The ancient Nepali group in Subedi's (2055 B.S.) involves the categories mentioned in current nationalities (not all) list and a category known as Khas in different literatures, though not mentioned in any formal list of categories. Similarly, other represented some Aryan category and Himalayan nationalities. In addition, Tarai nationalities and Madhesi categories of present may have been included in some of the linguistic categories discussed in the above quote.

Hagen's categorization seems to be marked by language, region, migration, and race/physical features. All of the groups in ancient

Nepali category resemble the groups in recent categories – ethnic groups living in the Himalayas, Hill, and Tarai as well as Aryan caste groups and some Khasas. The Nepali group involved only the caste categories, which are also mentioned as separate caste category in the legal code too. Other Tibetan groups are recent indigenous nationalities, particularly around the Himalayas, but the term Bhote has been listed similar to Bhutia is still found listed in the National Censuses as well as, in very recent list of the state regarding indigenous nationalities. The categories collectively known as Vanik, Byasi, Mugali except the Humli have been mentioned as separate ethnic category in the censuses as well as by the state's declaration of indigenous nationalities, but almost all of the contemporary surnames, within these groups do not follow the same categorization mode at present, rather they are one of the categories within recent Chhetri category.

The classification discussed by Frank (1973 in Hofer 1979) of the people of Nepal, involves multiple dimensions of categorization, such as, language, religion, culture, and geographical location, as most of the ethnic classifications do not. Moreover, the categories do overlap in some dimensions among each other, despite the existence of categorical cleavages between them. Two linguistic families distributed into four regions are depicted.

The caste categories, codes of conduct attached to particular caste and the sanctions associated with specific caste hierarchy based deviation, documented in the then legal code was definitely not a new agreement or convention mode to regulate the behavior of the people, rather, it was the reflection of the then prevailing customary traditions of the country. According to the text, the making of the legal code was primarily, intended to maintain uniformity among the judicial system throughout the country, which would guide the justice providers situated up to the local level who are far away from the centers. Therefore, the document reflected the socio-cultural behavior of the time, as well as, the frequently sanctioned activities of the society of that time. For example,

food taboos can be taken as one of the important markers of the time – some categories of people who used to take certain variety of food items from time immemorial, were allowed to continue in the legal code and vice versa. Similarly, the traditional occupation attached to particular caste was also formalized in the documents. In sum, the food taboos, traditional occupation and sexual conduct, together, determined the rules of touchability and untouchability, in the then social life. Hofer has mentioned a definition of ethnic group, as a term, which is understood, as an antonym of caste or caste society, approximately, in the same sense as the term 'tribal'. But the legal code reflects that from a very long time in history and various other groups which used to be a separate category had been incorporated into the caste hierarchy in the Nepali societal context. In addition, different groups in the caste hierarchy do have sub-groups, each with its own internal hierarchy, related with purity and pollution. Most importantly, some categories of people's, nomenclature has changed as per the demand from the members of their group. For instance, Tamangs, plead the state to change their ethnonym 'Bhotiya' to present day name 'Tamang'. This is one example of how categories had been named in the historical context.

Bista's categorization is probably the first ever most comprehensive document on the various categories of the people of Nepal, which is based on anthropological observations of visible cultural, physical, and religious markers, though, 28 individual human categories as distinct entities do have additional 16 sub-categories. The similarities and differences among the groups are principally, discussed in terms of cultural markers, such as rituals, languages etc. This text has included almost the entire currently living category of people as distinct cultural groups regardless of their majority or minority position. The people with occupational castes are discussed as a separate category or ethnic groups of people with their own cultural markers particularly around hills and Tarai. Each of the individual human categories does have sub-categories, as well as, various surname categories that differ in their

clan name associated with particular ancestry, as well as, variation in ancestral worship pattern is also emphasized as important markers of categorization. In addition, the rule of alliance among the groups involving caste/group endogamy and clan/ancestry exogamy is common to almost all groups, which further facilitated the persistence of each group as a separate entity over time.

Among the categories, Bista had categorized, some are not found in the recent census's list of caste/ethnicity, for example, Gharti (which was within occupational caste in Bista's work), Panchgaunle, Bodo (listed within Dhimal by Bista), Thudam (listed with Topkegola by Bista), Olangchunge, Baragaunle, Managba etc. The recent list of nationalities of the state, has however, listed these groups (such as Thudam separate from Topkegola), Gharti as Gharti/Bhujel, Panchgaunle, Bodo, Olangchung and Managba.

Conclusion

Human categorization, based on perceived similarities and differences, in terms of various markers in Nepal, seem to have incidences of both overlaps and cleavages, based on the variation over time and across historical context. Studies on various historical texts, indicate the history of settlement of various human groups in the land of present day Nepal, which can be understood as the root of currently prevailing cultural and ethnic diversity. We can see various lists of different human groups documented in Nepali history, which is an evidence of dynamics in the dimensions of categorization of people of Nepal.

The categorical terminologies, found in the historical texts on ancient Nepali society, indicate the incidences of racial groups from different place of origin with distinct life styles, as well as, number of instances suggesting the probability of exchange and acculturation among the groups, which makes it likely for transformation to occur in the objective markers, despite some rigidity of ethnic boundaries. More clearly, the

groups or categories were distinguished, then, on the basis of their place of origin and observable physical features, cultural and linguistic traits.

Gradually, the emphasis on the markers seem to have shifted from physical toward cultural differentiation and socially constructed hierarchy, predominantly based on taboos related with food and commensality. The people of Nepal in the past were geographically segregated in terms of locality and residence with each topographical region representing specific categorical groups. Such segregation can be attributed to the place of origin of the group concerned, which obviously, carried cultural affinity with nearby neighborhood, as well as the cultural baggage contained within the group.

During the modern period, particularly after the unification of petty states of Nepal, the rulers recognized the ethno-cultural diversity. State in an attempt to create a uniform Nepal by the process of Nepalization, reflecting the pervasiveness of a language and of course hierarchy, but at the same time ethnic specific cultural practices were given sufficient spaces, as the small cultural groups were organically functional and specialized to particular geography. Later planned migration and resettlement for various purposes also took place. More recently, the issues of nationalities emerged to re-gain their shadowed cultural and ethnic identity, as well as a concern for socio-economic development.

In such various circumstances, various dimensions of categorization seemed to have come into play. The dynamics in the dimensions have been found to have varied with time, as well as with the involved party in the categorization. Historical texts reflected one dimension and the categories observed by the social scientists, emphasized some other dimensions. In addition, the state's categorization also has its own peculiarity. Dimensions and dynamics of categorization of people in Nepal are in itself multidimensional, reflecting various discrepancies among the categories proposed by various parties, paradoxically, even for the same people of Nepal living here from ancient times.

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Ethnic Movement and Ethnic Identity Construction Process in Nepal

Shyamu Thapa Magar*

Introduction

This article explains ethnic identity construction process in Nepal through pan-ethnic movement that escalated after the 1990 people's movement for democracy. Before 1990s, the ethnic movement in Nepal was limited in the sphere of cultural development among ethnic groups. The aggressive ethnic movement for political rights escalated after 2006 following the second people's movement. This article discusses the ethnic movement that intensified from cultural development to political rights. Discussion will focus on Nepal's ethnic movement, the determining factors that affected ethnic identity construction process, and the process of ethnic identity that makes them different from others. It will also focus on government's initiation to address these issues by establishing National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) and declaration of national holidays on major groups ethnic festivals, and role of politics that affected ethnic movement and ethnic identity construction process in Nepal.

Indigenous nationalities are defined as tribes or communities as mentioned in the schedule groups having their own mother language and traditional rites and customs, distinct cultural identity, distinct social structure and written or oral history of their own. Fifty-nine linguistic and cultural groups were identified as "Indigenous Nationalities" forming 37.2 percent of Nepal's 23.1 million total populations (Census 2001;

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Gurung 2005; Gurung 2006). They are categorized into five groups: highly advanced, disadvantaged, marginalized, highly marginalized and endangered groups, based on their social and economic conditions in comparison with other caste groups. According to NFDIN definition, "Janajati is that community which has their own mother tongue and traditional culture but does not fall under the traditional four-fold Hindu Varna System" (NFDIN 2002). More specifically, the term Janajati refers to that community which has distinct collective cultural identity with its own language, religion, traditional egalitarian social structure, traditional geographical area/homeland written or oral history, with a shared "we" feeling but a community which has no decisive role in politics and government in modern Nepal. Janajati people self-identify themselves as 'Janajati'.

Many indigenous experts claim that indigenous ethnic groups were internally colonized under the Hindu religious ideology rather than by using external forces. When Aryans entered Nepal during the Muslim invasion of India, they brought Hindu socialization with them. They used their knowledge to manipulate the highlanders who were perceived as barbarians (Vansittart 1991, 10) through politeness and cleverness. This process of internal colonization was different from guns, germs and steel (Diamond 1995) used by European conquerors over the Americans, Africans and Australian Aborigines. The voices of indigenous ethnic groups became stronger after establishment of the Indigenous Ethnic Federation to work collectively for demanding equal participation and representation in the parliament and equitable access over the state resources. Politics became vital for every social organization to be heard by the government.

Methodology

This article is based on information collected from three months of field work among the leaders of the ethnic organizations of different ethnic groups in Kathmandu. Interview method was used to collect the

information. Besides interview, participant observation was also used to observe the process of certification of individual as a member of a specific ethnic group by the NFDIN office. Individuals from ethnic groups need such certification to apply for the government's jobs or scholarships allocated to the members of ethnic groups. With a nominal fee, the NFDIN certifies individual's ethnic identity based on the recommendation provided by the ethnic organization of the applicant.[1] This article also draws from my doctoral dissertation *(*Thapa Magar 2014) in some relevant context.

Understanding ethnicity in the context of Nepal

The issue of ethnicity and issue of exclusion were apparently not clear during the 1990s due to strong discouragement of the Panchayat regime (Whelpton, Gellner and Pfaff-Czarnecka 2008, xix). Ethnicity was officially addressed in the national census after 1991. The issues of ethnicity appeared in Nepali politics focusing on cultural development of the community group reviving and inventing group's "cultural codes", to use the concept used by A. Alexander Shestakov (2008) in his dissertation. He emphasizes that ethnic groups revived and invented cultural codes for group identification and blame existing socio-structural status that marginalizes and suppresses their status quo within the society. Ethnic groups of Nepal started focusing on cultural development of the ethnic community by establishing ethnic social organization. Ethnic social organization works as platform to bring members together into a collective membership by fostering a shared sense of belonging to a

1 I received such recommendation from Nepal Magar Association after paying a fixed amount of money and ethnic certification was provided by NFDIN. In the beginning, this certification was free of charge from NFDIN. Later NFDIN took 200 rupees per individual as service charge. One of the female staff working in NFDIN expressed that this amount is used for providing support for ethnic individuals who reached to ask for the support from the organization especially for severe medical treatment, but after devastating earthquake of 2015, they used this money for supporting earthquake victims.

cultural community defined by their common ethnicity. For instance, many ethnic organizations in Nepal came into consensus to bring their members into one group by writing their surname after their name and clan name[2]as a common shared identity – one common strategy of ethnic identity construction in other parts of the world as well (Smith 1986, 25)**.** This process helped them to bring their exact group population during census. In the case of the Magar people, they have numerous *thar* (clan name) and *upathar* (sub-clan name). Majority of them had written their *thar* and *upthar* after their names without writing Magar as their surname. The Nepal Magar Association Central Committee disseminated their decision informing all of its district chapters to inform and make all Magars aware to write "Magar" as their surname after their name and clan name, while applying for the citizenship, the only government authorized identity card (Magar 2013, 2014, 178-179). This process helped to increase Magar population as a sense of collectively shared name, with a feeling of solidarity as emphasized by Anthony D Smith (Smith 1986, 22-31).

With realization of the strength of collective voices to be heard by the state, ethnic groups established the pan-national indigenous organization - the Nepal Federation of Nationalities (NEFEN) in 1991. The continuous interaction with and among NEFEN members and their collective efforts forged into international links and participation of Nepal's ethnic activism in the global indigenous movement. This transnational linkage helped Nepal's ethnic organizations to connect with international indigenous forums. In 1993, the name of NEFEN was changed to Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) or (*Nepal Adibasi Janajati Mahasang*), emphasizing the claim that Janajati groups are indigenous to Nepal (Whelpton, Gellner and Pfaff-Czarnecka 2008,

2 Individuals used to write their clan name after their name. This creates confusion among people regarding which ethnic groups they belong to, to avoid this situation, ethnic social organizations disseminated to write their thar or clan name after their name.

xxii). Collective voices mainly rose over the issues of social exclusionary practices existing in the society that made them marginalized within the Nepali social structure. They raised their voices for mainstreaming them through inclusionary process for equal access over the state resources. The existence of separate groups became visible with different cultural codes[3] (Shestakov 2008) initiated by those ethnic activists affiliated with their ethnic organizations. They blamed Muluki Ain (Legal Code) of 1854[4] as the mechanism to promulgate social exclusionary practices that existed in society. Some scholars connected origin and evolution of ethnic movements in Nepal closely associated with the history of democracy. Krishna Hachhethu (2003, 17) argues that ethnic activism was first noticed with the dawn of democracy in 1951. Majority of informal ethnic social organizations were already established for the socio-cultural development of their respective ethnic communities. Ethnic activism was revived with the announcement of a referendum in 1979 (held in 1980) to choose between multiparty system and party less Panchayat system. After the end of the Panchayat system and the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, ethnic movements gained

3 Cultural codes reveal the specific cultural forms, describe and systematized to be an important step in understanding culture. Here, it denotes a specific culture that is learnt from the collective level for their separate group identification. A cultural code represents social property, unity of norms, customs and morals (one of the elements among three perceptional levels borrowed from Shestakov, 2008:30-36).

4 The Muluki Ain 1854, the general code (legal code) of the country is the foundation of all legal rules and regulation for government agencies. The first amendment was in 6.17.2021(1964 and has completed 12th amendments in 14. 8. 2064(2008). Number 10A.clearly stated that," If a person discriminates as an untouchable or excludes or prohibits any person on grounds of caste, religion, color, class or work, the person shall be liable to the punishment of imprisonment for a term ranging from Three months to Three years or a fine of One Thousand Rupees to Twenty Five Thousand Rupees or both" was Amended by Some Nepal Acts Amendment Act, 2063(2007) of Chapter 19 on Decency and Etiquette (Adal) of Number 104 in Muluki Ain (2020, twelfth amendment: 405-408page). http://www.lawcommission.gov.np. Scholars highly cite Andreas Hoofer who has written a book about Nepali legal system in his book *Caste and Hierarchy in Nepal*, 1979/2004 analyzing the Muluki Ain of 1854.

momentum as the "natural" outcomes of the age-old suppression through the imposition of stratified hierarchical model by the Hindu rulers of Nepal (Gurung 2000, 13**).** Krishna Hachchthu opined that restoration of democracy with the principles of popular sovereignty, equality, freedom and cultural rights has provided platform for ethnic activism (Hachhethu 2003). Three broad areas categorized for the ethnic demands are quest for identity, sharing of national resources, and greater representation in the political structure. The demand of cultural identity by *adibasi janajati* (indigenous ethnic groups) is mainly based on political rights associated with economy. The dominant trend of establishment of the ethnic organization and involvement in advocacy are highly influenced by the international support with equity and equality focused participation and representation (Hachchethu 2003, 16-18). For the collective voices, major eight ethnic groups called *SETAMAGURALI*[5] including other two groups (Gurung 2000) formed Adibasi Janajati Mahasang (NEFIN). The indigenous ethnic activists championed the issue of deprivation led by the state's exclusionary processes. Their regular interactions, analysis of social structure, and finding of less representation in political and economic area made the ethnic communities to realize their condition of marginality over the state resources including the exclusion from the political power. As argued by Erickson (2010, 51), after 1990, group identity was taken as an essential component of ethnic movement by bringing members into one common place with group sentiment of common origin. Group sentiment is also attached with the idea of "race" as a way of claiming collective membership into a distinct common group attached with shared signs and symbols. Having 'Mongolian' trait of different facial structures, ethnic groups of Nepal differentiated

5 SETAMAGURALI (Sherpa, Tamang, Magar, Gurung, Rai and Limbu) was commonly understood with major ethnic groups, and discourses were on the air, although Gore Bahadur Khapangi, former chairperson of Nepal Magar Association, expressed that no formal SETAMAGURALI was established but there were hot issues among indigenous ethnic and caste groups during that time.

themselves from others based on their physical, mental, and social and cultural practices, and thus revived cultural signs and symbols (Magar 2013; 2014, 175) to be different from each other and caste groups in the country.

Ethnic movement worked as a vehicle to form groups that carried their ethnic surname despite having different clans and sub-clan names. Ethnic movements take its form as social movement automatically connected with political action. Steve Fenton (2003) expressed that ethnic movement is attached with political movement while claiming their rights to stand collectively and to organize and socialize members of the group. Fenton also tried to clarify that ethnicity cannot be a theory. To become a theory, it has to incorporate the sense of motivation (with recognition and allocation of emotional ties either rational or instrumental), principal forms of social organizations (as in the USA and South Africa, inclination towards binary division of black and white with dominant form of structuration and exclusively referring to ethnic opposition) including autonomous and fundamental principles of action (primary source of action where ethnic differences are seen as being a form of 'fundamentalism' (Fenton 2003, 181).

According to Barth (1969), ethnic identities are maintained and sustained through delineating ethnic boundaries of one group from the other. He explained ethnic groups as largely self-perpetuating, sharing fundamental cultural values, and having communication, interaction and a membership. They identify themselves and are also identified by others as constituting a category that is distinguishable from other categories of the same order. Barth emphasized the fact of ethnic groups categories of ascription and identification by the actor themselves and characteristic of organizing interaction between people relating other characteristics of ethnic groups at first, exploring the different processes that seem to be involved in generating and maintaining ethnic groups and observe these processes as we shift the focus of investigation from

internal constitution and history of separate group to ethnic groups and boundary maintenance. In this process, ethnic dichotomies have been analyzed as cultural content. The basic identity people look and search is through their cultural markers (dress, language, and general style of life as ways of living), and the other basic value orientation determining performance for self ascription and ascription by others (Barth 1969, 203). He observed on self ascription persistence of boundaries as focused, despite a flow of information across members. Ethnic movement is understood with different perspectives by different scholars. Those affiliated directly with movement as member of the group are carried away with primordial[6] thoughts as focused by Edward Shils (1957) and Clifford Geertz (Geertz 1973, 255-310), whereas scholars see them becoming instrumental to achieve something with their affiliations. Some argues that there is no existence of primordialism among the activists. Circumstantialists explain the circumstances and external forces within society while bringing changes with self-interest (Glazer and Moynihan 1975), informal interest (Cohen 1974), maintaining individual advantage (Cornell and Hartmann 2007), and leading towards targeted goals carrying with hidden interest. They compete within groups and outside ethnic groups for the resources depending upon the circumstances towards political and economic interest. Interest and utility is a central feature of this approach (Nagata 1981). Primordialism is discarded as social construction by Russians stating that ethnic actors with instrumental thought used ethnicity and race as means to particular ends achieving economic, political, social and individual and group benefit inventing for the group's recognition (Hobsbawam and Ranger 1983). It is also constructed by external social, economic and political forces and actors that shapes, reshapes on definition and category that is attached with history and ethnic movement along with ethnic construction (Nagel 1994) and also rational choice for the personal

6 Distinctive physical and cultural features, territory, language and recognizable membership with common mentality (essentialism) carried with similar sentiments supporting Edward Shils (1975).

and collective goal (Hetcher 1978). During my fieldwork, I found both primordial and instrumental theoretical inclination among the Nepali ethnic leaders from central level to the grass root level.

Determining factors for ethnic identity formation in Nepal

In Nepal, ethnic groups perceive the ethnic movement as legitimate response to the political-economic deprivation based on the four varna systems in the past and its continuation in the present time[7] (Magar 2013, 256). They are fighting for equal rights through the democratic process in national politics. Present ethnic politics initiated by ethnic activists demanded equal treatment as the compensation for their suppression and oppression through promulgation of legal code creating caste-based social structure. Deprivation based on social exclusion from enjoying the state resources is given more preference in ethnic movement. The major nine groups (Magar, Gurung, Newar, Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Sherpa, Thakali and Sunuwar) forged into an alliance by founding the Nepal Janajati Mahasang (Nepal Federation of Nationalities (NEFEN) in 1991 (Gurung 2010) and later changed its name adding indigenous with Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities. This was the process of self-claimed federation for ethnic groups initiated for collective demands. NEFEN formed a committee in response to the UN Indigenous Forum in December of 1993 for celebrating the World Indigenous Decade in 1994. The concept of 'indigeneity' was adopted after joining UN Indigenous Forum by Janajati towards their identity construction process. International Labor Organization Convention 169 (ILO 169) had become the main institution for adopting indigenous ethnic titles who were known as tribal groups earlier. Later, they were referred as ethnic groups from 1980 in government documents. Discourses over ILO 169 helped to develop institutional competencies among the activists and the indigenous ethnic organizations (Magar 2014, 2015).

7 Ethnic activists explain that caste based varna system is the root cause for ethnic political economic situation in Nepal (field information).

Government initiation on formalization of the indigenous ethnic identification

During the Panchayat period, raising issues of indigenous ethnic or Janajati rights were considered to be a state crime and ethnic activists were considered extremists going against the government or being *sampradaik* (communal). The reason of raising Janajati issues was apparent due to not being addressed by the government for mainstreaming them as equal to others (Thapa, 2000). On February 7, 2002, as way to of calming Janajati people by showing sympathy, the House of Representatives passed a bill entitled National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities Act 2002 (NFDIN)[8]. This Act formalized as the government's work to address ethnic groups' demand in the country for the first time, although, Rastriya Janajati Bikas Samiti (National Committee for the Development of Nationalities) was formed in 1997[9], as precursor to NFDIN, for the development of Nepal's ethnic groups.

The main reason for establishing the NFDIN was to eradicate disparities meted out to the nationalities in the economic, social, and cultural development of the nation through research and protection of the cultural heritage of the nationalities (Gurung, 2010). This was expected to bring improvement in their capabilities through empowerment in the field of economic, social and community activities, to involve the nationalities in the national development by enhancing their knowledge and skills, and to improve their access to national resources by means of professional modernization. The establishment of NFDIN brought long discourses between indigenous experts and government policy makers. When Janajati Bikash Samiti was established, many non-Janajati scholars, social activists and writers expressed their views in several

8 Adibasi Janajati Utthan Rastriya Pratisthan Ain, in 2002 (2058 B.S)

9 Government established Rastriya Bikas Samiti in 2054 Ashad 23. Later Rastriya Adibasi Janajati Bikash Pratishthan was established under 2002 (2058 Act) and all human and physical resources of Rastriya Bikash Samiti was merged into this Pratishthan.

daily, weekly newspapers criticizing the definitional criteria of Janajati being the groups as those "who are not included under traditional Hindu fourfold varna system". Such critics ranged on favoring Hindu system and seeing Janajati movement as threat for the society which will bring divisions in society. For example, Madanmani Dikshit (1998) claimed such distinction of janajati identity will deteriorate the social harmony, social cohesion, and religious harmony between social groups and it will move towards social separation. Echoing similar view, Surendra K.C. mentioned that it was unsuitable for the state to bring superficial social divisions (K.C. 1998). It was also criticized as "an attempt to erect another parallel community against Hindus and this kind of act was seen as destroying national unity and creating divisions" (Tandon 1998).

The "high" caste groups also demanded separate identity as Janajati of this country claiming that they also have their own traditional religion (Hindu), rituals and cultural practices, and language as counterpart of ethnic movement. The national newspapers Gorkhapatra Daily (1998) and Kathmandu Post (1998) wrote in their editorials to avoid creating communal feelings and separation. The establishment of the National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) was the first milestone for indigenous ethnic groups in Nepal. Recognition and legalization for indigenous ethnic groups have given them an opportunity to stand for their right to self-development in social, political and cultural dimensions. The legalization of this Foundation not only provided authenticity over the indigenous ethnic groups of Nepal but also brought clear categorization of the groups and their social and economic position in the country. Information about these people was disseminated through media where the most endangered groups were given priority for protecting their genes (case of Raja mama [10])

10 NFDIN found only one unmarried man under the endangered group called Raja. NFDIN searched a girl for him to marry, provided land and supported for his monthly living for protecting his group.

and their cultural habitat[11] and rights to roam freely in the forests for the Raute, the last foraging groups in the South Asia. In this process of group identification, many groups sought for separate identification. NFDIN became the only government institution for dealing with indigenous ethnic identification issues. Many indigenous groups which has not been listed by the government sought for the state recognition of their ethnic identity through NFDIN. Many different ethnic groups registered application in NFDIN for the recognition of their ethnic identity by the state. Many new groups emerged when the government identified fifty-nine indigenous ethnic groups. A new high commission committee involving different indigenous intellectuals, politicians and activists representing their social organizations with the coordination of NFDIN enlisted additional twenty two-groups[12] with the fifty- nine groups previously identified under the chairmanship of Prof. Dr. Om Gurung and then Lok Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General of NFDIN.

Certification of belonging to a group to compete for resources

NFDIN was established with strong demand of NEFIN[13]. NEFIN members are the council members of NFDIN. NEFIN members demand NFDIN to give honor to NEFIN members. Members representing Chepang and Thakali of Mustang expressed that NFDIN must ask their advice before bringing any step since they have struggled a lot to establish

11 Raute chiefs were brought to Kathmandu. They were given audience by King Gyanendra and Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Pradchanda." The famous statement Raute gave to the King was, "You are the king of Nepal, and we are the king of the jungle. Let us live and roam in the jungle freely for our living." Rautes are supported financially when they enter urban areas through government initiative, especially NFDIN.

12 Different groups emerged from the previous identified groups and demanded to be enlisted as different from others. Rais are identified with having different Rai dialects; Pun Magars declared to be different and demanded to be enlisted as different group from Magars due to performing different rituals but was discarded by the commission.

13 It was established as Nepal Janajati Mahasang in 1991 and later it changed its name as Nepal Adibasi Janajati Mahasang in 2004.

NFDIN. The coordination between NFDIN and NEFIN is maintained and strengthened through their cooperation and interdependence with each other. All NEFIN members along with NFDIN came to a consensus to give group identity certification to individuals who bring authentic proof to be a member of a particular ethnic group.

Each ethnic organization gives group identification certificate to individuals based on their surname belonging into the group written in their citizenship. The main criterion of belonging to the group is having the group name as surname attached after their name and clan name in the citizenship card. There are many clans and sub-clan names attached with surnames or community group names. To avoid confusion, surname is taken as identification for an individual belonging into the group. There are many clans and sub-clans within one *thar* (surname of an individual) of ethnic group. Each ethnic organization circulated their decision to all those ethnic members to write their group identity surname after their name and clan names to bring their members into one community as well as to bring actual population data instead of *thar* or *upathar* (clan and sub clan).

In this regard, the case of the Magar people provides an interesting example. They have many *thar* and *upathar* similar to sub-groups of Brahmin and Chhetri communities. To avoid confusions with other groups, especially Chhetri and some with Brahmins such as Bista, Thapa, Lamichane, Baral, Regmi, Pokhrel, and so on, the Nepal Magar Association central committee circulated directives to all district chapters to inform all Magar to write Magar after their *thar* and *upathar* since there are many clan and sub-clan names found within Magars. To bring all Magars into one group, the Magar title attached after a name or clan or sub-clans are given more priority for belonging to the group. To certify one into the particular ethnic group, individuals (especially students and those eligible for jobs) have to get recommendation from their ethnic social organization paying fixed amount of money for the recommendation that is decided by the organization. This registration

fees differs according to the rules and regulations of ethnic organization. This certification gives authenticity of belonging into a particular ethnic group. Ethnic organizations give this certificate based on the individual's ethnic group written after his or her name in citizenship card along with father's and grandfather's name and the surname belonging into the group[14](Magar, 2013, 2014, 2015). Such recommendations based on citizenship provided by ethnic social organizations validate one's ethnic identity while applying for jobs and scholarship opportunities reserved under the janajati quota.

This criteria of belongingness to the ethnic group helps to compete for resources within and outside the group. This shows that coordination between ethnic organizations and NFDIN to work together for the development of indigenous nationalities can have tangible impacts for the ethnic groups. Although the government has helped to establish NFDIN for the development of indigenous ethnic groups under the Ministry of Local Development, this identification is not authenticated by the government while sitting for the Civil Service Examinations for government posts. The government only validates citizenship certificate of any indigenous ethnic group as a citizen of the country.

All indigenous ethnic groups have started to identify themselves as separate groups. Cultural codes were invented by community leaders for their distinct group identity. The invention of dress codes was linked with the materials used by their older generation that they had seen and watched during festivals and rituals. These dress codes were linked to those available materials to cope with environment and situation in the past. Ethnic codes have become major group symbols for group identification which appeared as ethnic flag representing their ethnic

14 This author received the same recommendation from Nepal Magar Association based on Nepali citizenship by paying Rs. 50. This recommendation used to be given free of cost, but these days NFDIN take Rs. 200 as administration cost. The certification is given as identity card. This data was collected using participant observation tools for my doctoral fieldwork in 2011.

cultural traits, such as dress with different colors golden ornaments and colorful glass beads along with ethnic group-based musical songs and dances.

Indigenous ethnic groups had demanded national holidays for their group festival: Loshars for Gurung, Tamangs, Sherpa and other communities living in high mountain areas, *Udhauli Ubhauli* and *Chandi purne* for Limbu and Rai, *Maghe Sankranti* for Magar and Tharus, *Chhath* for the Madhesi people from the Tarai, and some festivals especially from the Newar in Kathmandu valley. These public holidays were added to the main festivals celebrated by Hindus. Nepal Government has declared public holidays for other religiously minority groups especially for Muslims and Buddhist. Government declared national holidays for the abovementioned festivals and reduced the number of public holidays for the main Dashain festival up to five days. Since Nepal is in political transition, the government is responding to the demands of indigenous ethnic groups seriously to make them feel that their issues are being addressed as equal like other groups in the country.

Many indigenous ethnic groups started declaring themselves as Buddhist, Kirati and Prakriti Pujak (nature worshipper) as a resistance against the caste system. They wanted to demonstrate that they are outside the varna system. This reflects their direct opposition against Aryans[15] who are

15 The Aryan and non-Aryan race issues in Nepal is also linked with Indian Aryans as the high caste groups are viewed as migrants from India in the 14th century to Nepal. To distinguish between Aryans and non-Aryans in Nepal, facial (pointed nose and big eyes) and physical structure of the individuals are also used. The Aryans and non-Aryans in India were established by Lord Risley Morphs who worked as the leading authority on Indian ethnology. Indian society's legal framework stands as Risley's (1891) creation as the taxonomy of Indian communities dominates today's caste wars. According to him, social position of a caste varies inversely to its Nasal Index and clarified *jatis* as Hindus, and tribes as non-Hindus. The institutionalization of tribes in Indian society is based on their primitiveness positioned them into caste based on their professional specialization while the remaining living in remote geographical territories were classified as tribes (Malhotra and Neelakandan, 2011, 55-57)

holding power over Anaryas or non-Aryans, or Mongoloid races of the country.

Impact of politics on ethnic movement

All individuals attached to indigenous ethnic organizations are found to be affiliated with political parties from the central to grassroots levels. The trademark of individual identification of ethnic group members are to be linked to a political party associated with its political ideology. Political party affiliation is apparent among every individual within every ethnic organization. People within an ethnic organization are divided by their different political ideologies. Affiliation with political parties has caused rifts and suspicions among members of ethnic organizations. The majority of the members affiliated with a particular political party could work harmoniously by avoiding those members affiliated with other political parties with different ideologies. Association with political parties enabled members of an ethnic organization to work with all others in Nepal. Memberships with similar political party may become organized due to their shared political ideology and party affiliation while members affiliated with different political parties are excluded during this course. Even though their membership is assured, their participation is limited to remaining as non-members of the executive committee. A high-level indigenous ethnic activist who had worked as the General Secretary at NEFIN[16] expressed his feelings saying that "All Janajati leaders (indigenous leaders) have become *dalbadi* (highly influenced by political party). They are strongly committed towards political parties rather than their community groups. Their involvement with *adibasi janajati* (indigenous groups) as a leader is also creating gaps between them as 'elites' and 'others' for whom they are here to speak for".

They are doing politics in the name of the community they come from. These Janajati leaders are always ruled and mobilized by political

16 Personal communication, 2011 and 2013.

leaders. These leaders are also creating disparity within their community. Political party membership plays important role to create divisions between and among the members as well as other group members. Ethnic organizations have become platforms for members who are directly affiliated with a political party for their individual development. Ethnic activism has provided immense opportunities for their individual development carrying the ethnic "we" feeling, but it is also creating stratified statuses among the members of the same community.

The different political orientations and need for indigenous groups to stand as collective groups led them to form new ethnic groups. Each ethnic organization is attempting to have its entire executive committee members sharing a single political orientation than having executives belonging to different political parties. Such politics of creating exclusionary boundary within an ethnic organization based on party membership prevents leakage of information to other members of the same organization but who are affiliated with different political parties although it is very difficult to have all members elected from the same political party. But majority of the ethnic organizations have members with different political orientations. As executive committee members in each ethnic organization are elected, members of the same political parties are supported to bring about a majority. Those who are affiliated with other political parties are also elected as committee members, but they are kept out from participating in major decision making processes within the ethnic organization. At times, there are negotiations for the positions and manipulation to bring majority among the committee that brings balance within the members of the ethnic organization.

Nominations of the chairperson among indigenous ethnic groups', the executive memberships for women, youths and students are all controlled by the political party that has the greatest number of members in an ethnic group. Political parties play an important role on nominations and withdrawals of candidates during elections for the executive committees

in these organizations. Even leadership positions within the NFDIN are recommended by the committee of the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) depending upon the political ideology he or she is affiliated with and the political party running the government. These positions are filled by members who have contributed to their political parties and holding key position in ethnic social organization. These political positions are filled depending upon the holding of political positions in the government by the major political parties. The issue of "we" and "others" based on political orientation is prevalent within each indigenous/ethnic organization. For achieving majority, each member tries to bring as many members affiliated with the same political ideology. Bargaining and negotiations are common for both elected and nominated members affiliated with different political parties. In this process, games are played by members using their power and position in creating favorable situations to bring in their members belonging to the same political party. The casting of votes by members representing the districts depends upon the political party they are affiliated with. This has created competition between members of the same community group affiliated with different political parties. Political party affiliations also play an important role during elections of committee members in ethnic organizations. Often, it is viewed and participated in as if they are participating in national political party elections. Ethnic organizations have become the platforms for all indigenous ethnic activists to exercise their political power to be identified as an upcoming political leader within their own ethnic group. These activities and positions help in creating better opportunities, especially in attaining political positions in their political parties on the basis of their identity as indigenous ethnic group.

Exclusion and inclusion thus can be observed within each ethnic organization based on political affiliations. The majority of the members are brought together by their network of members from the same political

party. The theory of kin selection is minimized as a consequence of seeking members from the same political party. As people related by clan and kinship join different political parties, the selection for the ethnic cadres is based on political party affiliation and their involvement with the organization although kinship roles takes important role for the party members. Their membership is not based on their academic achievements. As political parties and ethnic organizations need followers and workers, highly educated ethnic members are excluded or they do not appear, since they are not affiliated with any district chapter under the organizational structure. Only those academicians and experts identified affiliated with political party sharing similar political orientations are invited in group's organizational activities or anyone who have reached to the higher position, especially, in political positions such as ministerial and government positions are invited as chief guests in their ethnic organizational program. This tactic of inviting individual with ministerial positions is beneficial for the group to speak on behalf of the group and for the individual who has support of the community group. In this issue, Min Bahadur Balami, 61, working as chairperson in Nepal Magar Samaj in Kathmandu expressed that, "Every individual is affiliated with political party. It is important for the group identification to speak on behalf of a group by the chief guest who is representing government." The highly educated intellectuals inclined to party ideology are openly involved with ethnic organizations. They are invited in organizational activities, whereas, others not openly identified with political party ideology or not interested to involve in those ethnic social organizations work on their own by establishing separate organizations or work independently on issues of indigenous ethnic groups and are hardly recognized by ethnic group organizations.

More than two hundred individuals from different indigenous ethnic groups were represented in the Constituent Assembly among the 601 members representing different political parties. "High" caste

groups hold the majority by controlling power and positions in the major political parties. Due to high involvement in the ten years of Maoist Conflict, Magar's representation was greater in number in the Constituent Assembly as representatives of the Maoist political party in comparison with other ethnic groups. Very few Magars are represented from other political parties. One Magar lady representing the Nepali Congress Democratic Party clearly stated that, *"Malai Nepali Congress le banayeko ho, Magar Sangh le hoina, tesaile ma Nepali Congress prati bafadar chu*" (I am groomed by Nepali Congress and not by the Magar Association. So, I am loyal to Nepali Congress). She has never been seen at NMA programs. All indigenous groups have empathy towards their community members but their political party affiliations determine how they show their support for ethnic groups they are representing. So having sentiments towards their group at one level and targeting for better opportunities at other levels has helped them to obtain both collective and individual benefits. Politics has important role in constructing ethnic identity in Nepal. It helps to bring awareness about ethnic rights realizing that it can be only achieved and addressed through politics. Without their political affiliation, ethnic group's individual and collective rights cannot be heard, so each and every ethnic activist is found affiliated with a political party for direct individual and indirect group benefit.

Conclusion

Ethnic movement and ethnic identity construction process in Nepal became visible after the 1990 movement. Informal ethnic social organizations were contributing to cultural development of the ethnic community group by emphasizing on the primordial feeling, focusing on cultural codes and symbols to show them as distinct from other groups. In this process, they aligned for collective voices for establishing NEFIN as a pan-national indigenous organization to struggle for and speak for collective political rights. Their collective efforts helped ethnic groups to enhance their network, dissemination of their agenda and work

collectively to be heard from the government. They emphasized their group identity with the group title suffixed after their name, invented dress codes, helped declare indigenous group festivals as national holidays, considered Buddhism as resistance to Hindu hegemony, and got recommendation from the ethnic social organizations as belonging to a particular ethnic group. NFDIN, the government organization established for the development of indigenous ethnic groups, defined and categorized ethnic groups and is also helping in certification of indigenous ethnic groups in the country by providing certificate based on the recommendation from ethnic social organizations. Cultural construction of group identity turned towards political demands for their equal access over the state resources. Ethnic movements which begun as cultural movement in the beginning are now politicized. Ethnic activists are highly influenced by political ideology. Ethnic individuals affiliated with political parties are benefited from their political affiliations. Ethnic groups also got recognition from the government with declaration of government holidays for the particular ethnic festivals (Magar 2013, 2014). Ethnic movement and ethnic identity construction process in Nepal has taken its leap from cultural development to political rights.

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Cultural Loss and Uncertain Cultural Identity: An Ethnographic Study of Bhutanese Refugee Camp

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Introduction

Nepal has witnessed refugee as a problem since 1959 when a group of Tibetans entered Nepal seeking asylum (Subedi 1993), which is still has not been solved yet. To add fuel to flame, Nepal again faced refugee problem from 1990, when a large number of Bhutanese citizen of Nepali origin fled from Bhutan and entered Nepal. Dhungel asserts that all of them were Nepali origin whose ancestors had reached Bhutan for the first time in 1640, however, their number increased largely between nineteenth century and early twentieth century for as people migrated employment opportunity (Dhungel 1989). Between 1990 and 1991, the Bhutanese citizen of Nepali origin started to flee to Nepal due to the sociopolitical movement for equal rights and the repressive responses from the Bhutanese state. As a result, they acquired 'refugee' status in Nepal. Though, they had inherited Nepali cultural identity, they acquired Bhutanese socio-cultural and political identity in Bhutan. Later they were identified as *Lhotshampa*, a specific term used to denote a group of people of Nepali origin, who settled in the southern region of Bhutan.

There was evidence that a large number of refugees were residing in seven different camps in Nepal after they were forcefully displaced by the Bhutanese government in 1990 due to socio-political movements for equal rights (ICJNS 1994). However, the camp life of refugees has now turned into just a historical reality only because a large number of

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refugees are leaving the camps, following the third country resettlement program. In this context, this paper examines the cultural experiences of their camp-life as a process of cultural loss compared with the Lhotshampa culture. Hence, cultural loss is the central theme of this paper, which is explained through ethnography to delve into the cultural loss issues.

Currently, forceful displacement and some other migrations are creating socio-cultural as well as political problems in the world. These the significant aspects for research in the social science domain. Although, migration is a normal and natural process based on human rights, refugees are to leave their homeland forcefully because of various social incidents. Natural catastrophes are also responsible for such displacements. The case of Bhutanese refugees is often explained as a forceful displacement caused by the oppressive regime and its intolerance towards diversity, and lack of democratic polity for recognizing minority rights.

The term 'refugee' originally was used to refer to French Protestants who fled from their homeland due to religious oppression at the end of the seventeenth century (Lewellen 2002). The same term was used to refer to the huge number of people displaced during the World Wars. Henceforth, the term got its continuity. Historically, from 1945 to 1980s, the process of decolonization and postcolonial state making process also produced a considerable number of refugees (Lewellen 2002). The majority of the studies have explained sociopolitical factor as the main cause of generating refugees. The case of refugee is also characterized as socio-political subjectivity by Malkki in her study over Hutu refugees from Burundi living in Tanzania (Malkki 1996).

The study on refugee population is an emerging issue in the sphere of academia in the current globalized world. It is a global problem that has become an increasingly important project for anthropologists who can use their knowledge and research techniques in solving them (Scupin and DeCorse 2008, 559). The nature of refugees and their problems are

closely related to the subject matter of "anthropology of forced migration" in which term 'refugee' is recognized as a new vocabulary of migration (Lewellen 2002). Within the field of anthropology, ethnography has been applied in various studies concerning the subject matter of cultural changes, losses, transformations and the livelihood patterns of refugees because they are the persons detached with their inherited identity.

Likewise, another sensitive aspect associated with refugees is the creation of melancholic situations, which can be important sources to understand a close reality of refugee life. Refugees are obviously, landless, stateless, identity-less, and so on. And such conditions can cause traumatic impacts for the refugee. In the view of Scupin and DeCorse, once situated in the camps, they have to live in scarcity from all kind of resources. As a result, they have to depend on limited food, suffer from communicable diseases, face minimal health care, and live in overcrowded setting with full of stress within and across families. In the crowded living quarters there is very little privacy, often leading to increased marital and familial conflicts, often creating cases of abuses upon women and children. Within the camps, refugee families experience a loss of control over their destiny and very often they describe camp life as a waste of time, meaninglessness, pacifying and so on (Scupin and DeCorse 2008). These are the elements of subjectivity of 'loss' in Bhutanese refugees.

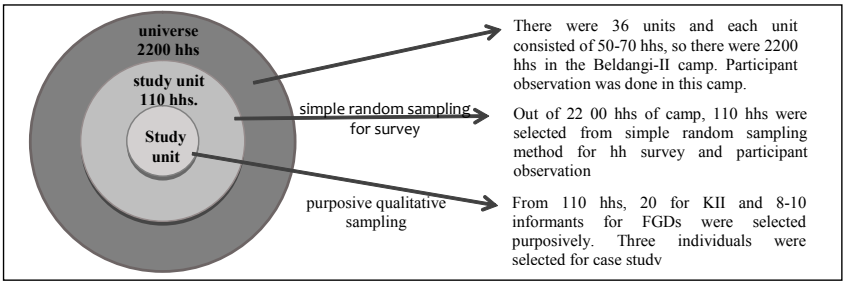
According to Harrell-Bond and Vourtira, in the study of refugees, three anthropological approaches—organizational, interventionist and analytic can be applied. The organizational approach is more focused on the issue of policy and the structures and workings of agencies as a cultural broker, while interventionist approach is fundamentally an approach of applied anthropology, working for aid agencies toward the goal of helping refuges. In addition, analytic approach emphasizes on adaptive strategies, social structures, values and beliefs through a specialized fieldwork technique of research work (Harrell-Bond and Vourtiraas cited in Lewellen 2002). With the help of ethnography, this paper emphasizes on cultural issues and livelihood strategies of Bhutanese refugees based

on the process of cultural transformation, assimilation, adaptation and acculturation.

Methodology

I have focused on qualitative analysis of cultural loss and livelihood issues of Bhutanese refugees based on the ethnographic study conducted in 2011. For that study, Beldangi-II Bhutanese refugee camp in Jhapa situated in eastern Nepal was selected in order to elicit the qualitative information, which intended to uncertain how refugees are losing their homeland, cultural identity, cultural practices, and how they are struggling to survive in the camp through limited access to resources. This paper also draws on secondary sources to delve into the issues of how Bhutanese move towards uncertain future of cultural identity and life of new generation due to worldwide dispersion process of resettlement. Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected to rationalize the theme of the study.

Figure 1: A sampling procedure chart of the study

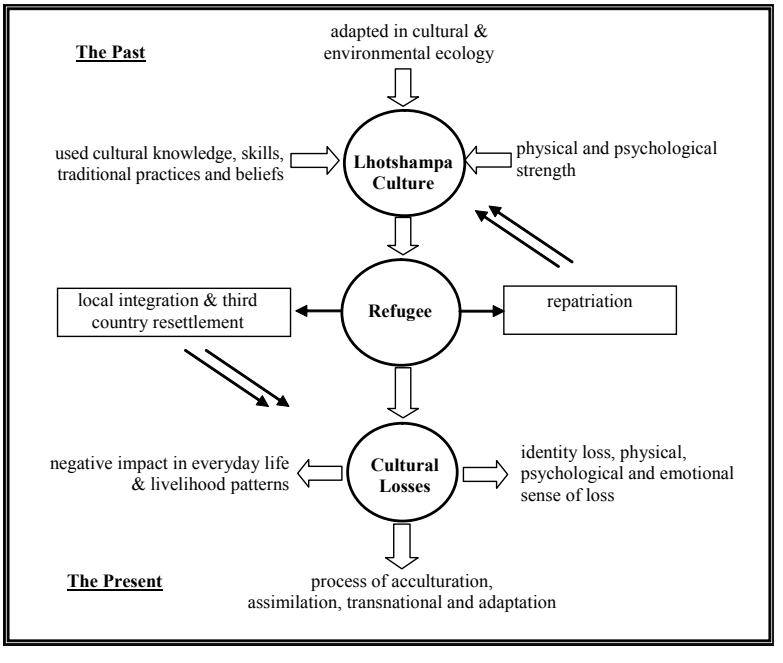


In this study paper, I have drawn on the tragic situations that appeared due to the process of cultural loss comparing with the Lhotshampa culture as it was practiced by the refugee in Bhutan. To grasp the situation, I have employed the basic methods of qualitative research, namely- case study, formal and unstructured key informant interview, participant observation, and formal/informal discussions. I have also used house hold survey to generate some preliminary quantitative information.

2. Conceptual framework for the study of cultural loss

In this paper, cultural loss has been conceptualized through the discontinuation of original cultural traits, beliefs, knowledge, skills and implies the physical, psychological and emotional sense of loss due to opposite socio-cultural environment that are analyzed through acculturation, assimilation and adaptation processes. These anthropological concepts have been used for looking at Bhutanese refugees regarding their issues of cultural loss. These conceptual tools can be seen as a process of extensive cultural fluctuations in relation to subordinate groups of people in the societies. In the case of refugee, this notion can be equally valid. Mostly the subordinate or less powerful societies suffer from such fluctuations (Carol R. Ember et al. 2007). Incorporating these conceptual tools, the overall framework has been designed and presented below to make the analysis more precise.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework showing the cultural situation of present and past



3. Understanding cultural loss process

This section presents some brief understanding regarding culture and its loss or change processes. Fundamentally, the processes of cultural change or transformation are the main factors to delineate cultural loss. Generally, cultural loss is also addressed through the changing processes caused by adaptation or acculturation or assimilation. These are the major terms used in anthropology to understand cultural loss. In other words, the very basic aspect of culture is its ever-evolving nature but 'loss' can occur in the unusual socio-cultural circumstances faced by people forcefully. This is one of the key aspects of the analysis of cultural loss or change and transformation. Adaptation, acculturation and assimilation are the very basic theoretical concepts that are appropriate to analyze the cultural loss issues. In fact, it is found that the concept of cultural loss is rarely used in anthropological study, or there is a conceptual gap in anthropology. In this context, Lewellen (2002) declares the newness of refugee studies as a sub-discipline within anthropology but no broad theoretical perspective has been solidified. That is why, the issue of cultural loss has been connected to the terms acculturation, assimilation and adaptation.

The concept of adaptation is used in ecological studies; it relates to the cultural adaptation to the environment in anthropology. In this connection, Steward's concept of adaptation is suitable to mention, which further relates to the cultural adaptations to the environment. The key to the adaptation of a culture is its techno-environment, the term coined by Steward (1968). Refugees also try to adapt themselves in a new human and environmental ecology. To refer to Steward, they are used to a confined life style in the camp because there are no technological supportive facilities available as their coping strategies. At the same time, they not only obey the rules and regulations that are just set for the camp life, but also develop a new system of life in the camp. In such a situation, Steward's notion is less useful to study the experiences of refugees. Vocational trainings, awareness programs, ration packages, and so on are the ever-running activities in the camp. These activities are,

in fact, a kind of readymade cultures implemented by various agencies for practicing a different ways of life. In other words, the refugees are always followed by various agencies, wherever the refugees go. As a result, refugees have to adapt to the cultures fed to them otherwise, there are no any other options for them.

In the study of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, Chhetri focused on the adaptation of Tibetan refugees in Pokhara, Nepal. In particular, it has been argued that persistence and change in behaviors and practices could be regarded as strategies of adaptation (Chhetri 1989). Refugees are the victims of forced migration. They have to live a dependent life in a congested area in the camp, adapting the new social and cultural environment. In such conditions, adaptation and acculturation processes, may occur simultaneously on the refugees.

The process of acculturation refers to the changes that occurs when different cultural groups come into intensive contact. Acculturation refers to those phenomena which result, when groups of individual having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original cultural pattern of either or both groups (Redfield, Linton and Herskovits 1936, 149). Unemployed youths in the camp are found involved in illegal sexual activities while many youths are also involved in illegal trafficking of timbers. In some situations, the local youths have followed the activities adapted by the refugees.

Ember writes that the process of assimilation is a concept very similar to acculturation. However, assimilation is a term more often used by sociologists to describe the process by which individuals acquire the social roles and culture of the dominant group (Ember et al. 2007). In the case of Bhutanese refugees, they are in the process of assimilation with new cultural surroundings of host community indirectly. For instance, Bhutanese refugees have followed the cultural practice of the locals to

collect the firewood from the surrounding jungles and to sell them in the local market area.

Issue of cultural loss on refugee study: A general review

Fouere (2007), as an anthropologist, presented the case of Burundian refugees in Tanzania and concluded that there was decrease in knowledge concerning the Burundian oral tradition, agriculture and stockbreeding among the youth. In the case of Bhutanese refugee, they had lost their traditional moral authority in both the family and the community. Generally, younger refugees were also involved in doing other kinds of occupations except agriculture because they did not have access to land resource, so that they were detached from their traditional agricultural activities. On the other hand, younger generations did not get chance to see and know about stockbreeding because the refugee camp lacked the availability of animal husbandry facilities. They did not have even any knowledge of milking a cow or a buffalo especially among the adolescent and young groups.

Baskauskas (1981) and Loizos (1981), both separately modified the ideas of Marris (1975) which have been noted as one of the means of refugees' adjustment to great loss, may be through the process of grief. In the process of grieving, refugees pass through various stages— (i) conservatism– a defensive element to maintain continuity and hold on to the past; (ii) grief/ bereavement– mourning, emotion and anger but with an acknowledgment of the irretrievable loss; and (iii) innovation– moving beyond one's loss to develop new patterns of life. These stages can be difficult for any refugees to enter because they are experiencing very unusual moments for a long time that their homeland identity is lost forever. In Brasche's writing, in the changing context, things have changed without adequate consent, without the informed choice of the people who were experiencing it. 'Loss, therefore, refers to the emotional and psychological sense of separation and lack of continuity with practices of the past (Brasche 2003).

In the case of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, Tibetans are attempting their best to practice and perpetuate their traditional culture but they have not been fully successful, especially, among the younger generations. They cannot attain it because they do not feel any responsibility to maintain their inherited socio-cultural norms and values (Chhetri 1990). Younger refugees, in particular, who are the responsible groups for the loss of culture, are unable to conserve it because refugees are socially free and they do not feel themselves as the responsible members of the community and family. It makes them unable to practice their traditional socio-cultural norms and values.

Apart from refugees, in other people's cases, Hall asserts that identification is a construction, a process never completed, or always in the changing process. It is not determined in the sense that it can always be won or lost, sustained or abandoned (Hall 1990). Obviously, process is not static, rather a continuous one. It takes place abruptly or without the definite expectations of the sufferers. Once the established identity is lost, there might be such situations that ensure its reestablishment in any forms. To mention as an example, Bhutanese refugees witnessed their unwanted and unexpected loss of identity as Lhotshampas and they also stood to be in the situation of statelessness, homelessness, and landlessness.

In Malkki's description, the individuals who are searching for asylum and crossing international borders tend to lose connections to their culture and identity. Cultural identity, a vital aspect of human life, would also simply be forgotten when individuals cross the borders (Malkki 1995).

On the other hand, Zetter (1999) emphasizes in his study that refugees are cut from the material and symbolic representations of the past and they tend to reconstruct a mythical perception of the past. It is generally admitted that, in exiled life, nostalgic feelings are nourished by altered memories of the past life.

These aforementioned conditions of the refugees affect profoundly the prevalent cultural practices, cultural relations and cultural behaviors leading towards great loss. Another distressful condition or the refugees is the difficulty to adapt the new socio-cultural environment, as a result they move towards the loss process in every aspects of life. In connection to this fact, this empirical paper provides the current concerns and practices among the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal by means of comparing the socio-cultural practices of homeland Lhotshampa.

5. Gaps in the existing studies

Cultural loss is a term applied to both refugees and the native people. However, the rate of cultural loss is very high in refugees compared to the native people. Therefore, the speed of cultural loss can be explored and compared with the loss-taking place in the native people to a considerable degree. However, such an exploration and comparison is not found in existing literatures. Refugees have to embrace the new and weak cultural environment that plays a substantial role for the quick loss of their past culture. Native people should not live the kind of life that the refugees live. This is the reason why we should examine closely the speed and the factors, which cause cultural loss to compare the loss between that of the refugees and of the native people.

Likewise, importance and value of indigenous or traditional knowledge system of refugees that is practiced in their homeland, for natural resource management system cannot be continued in the camp life. In this situation, anthropology does not add to this concern with the ways in which refugee people bring their cultural imaginations to bear on the utility of such resources. This notion can be viewed as the loss of traditional knowledge system of refugee community regarding agriculture, farming, livestock and common property resource management. Therefore, a gap also exists in the anthropology of natural resource management system.

Diaspora and transnationalism: A close relation with the nature of refugee

Heisler views that migration is extremely complex, as are motives and experiences of their move. In contrast to "assimilation" and "cost-benefit," the new vocabulary of migration is one of transnationalism, diaspora, multiculturalism, citizenship acquisition, social movements, and refugees (as cited in Lewellen 2001,131-132). Pattie (1994) describes that the term 'refugee' is historically more closely associated with the term 'diaspora' as an exiled community bounded by an idealized vision of the homeland. Therefore, the term diaspora is used to refer to any people or ethnic population forced or induced to leave their traditional ethnic homelands, being dispersed throughout other parts of the world with the ensuing changes in their culture.

On the other hand, logically, then, a diaspora and refugee are also transnational issue in this globalized world. Transnationalism overlaps globalization but typically, it has a more limited purview whereas global processes are largely decentralized from national territories, and take place in a global space (Kearney 1996, 2). The transnational mobility of people may be the result of forced or voluntary migration. Since large number of Bhutanese who were forced to flee from their homeland is now dispersed in different parts of the world, in a form of Bhutanese diaspora. Many of them have been resettled obligatorily as well as voluntarily to Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Therefore, anthropologists need to do such studies to trace the cultural issues of refugee, diasporic and transnational communities as a common anthropological concern because anthropological scenario of culture cannot only be confined to the refugees but it can also be equally applicable to any other kinds of diaspora and transnational people. All of these concerns are connected to and influenced by the common cultural subjectivity of loss but in different ways. For instance, nostalgia of homeland, problems in imagined community, structure and unity of family, kinship, material and non-material cultures and other many

rituals practices are the common subject matters for the study of cultural damage as a part of anthropological study.

Livelihood strategies: Then and now

Al-Sharmani (2004) defines the term 'livelihood' as legal, economic, educational, social and cultural capital that refugees strive to secure and maximize their lives. Associating this concept, in this section of the paper, an empirical analysis on the livelihood of the refugees is presented. In doing so, I have tried to extract and pinpoint various components of refugee's livelihood patterns.

Grabbing opportunities of occupation is not an easy task for every refugee because they lack required documents for the job, e.g. citizenship card, the credentials, technical skills certificates and so on. Bhutanese refugees are found involved in occupations like teaching, wage labor, or as street vendors outside the camp for financial support. At present, remittance sent to the camp by the resettled refugees in the third countries has become the backbone for the livelihood of the refugees.

Majority of the household interviewees had previous work experience on agriculture. In spite of the multiple sources of livelihood, it was the major occupation and source in Bhutan. It is a matter of pity that they are unable to continue the conventional agricultural activities in Nepal. Similarly, refugees are unable to be engaged in livestock rearing activities. In Bhutan, animals were their sources of food, fuel, transportation and livelihood. Due to the lack of farming land and space to keep them, the refugees have failed to carry out this activity. Thus, their traditional systems of occupations are being eroded. As a result, the knowledge of agricultural system and issues related to the natural resource management is evading among refugees. However, about 2.73% household respondents were found engaged in agricultural activities for the host community (see Table 1). Here, the considerable fact is that refugees have neither land nor access to natural resources. Most of the refugees are depending on humanitarian assistance.

Table 1: Major Sources of Livelihood (Then and Now)

Occupations	Present (in camp)		Past (in homeland)	
	N	%	N	%
Agriculture	3	2.73	48	43.64
Petty trade/Business	14	12.73	15	13.64
Labor	32	29.09	10	9.09
Job and Service	11	10.00	17	15.45
Caste based occupation	2	1.82	12	10.91
IGA/Others	21	19.09	5	4.55
Have not employed	27	24.55	3	2.73
Total:	**110**	**100**	**110**	**100**

(Source: Field Survey-2011)

[IGAs (income generating activities) include knitting, producing cotton threads, tailoring, bamboo basket crafting, petty businesses, carpentry, bakery, cooking, welding, fabrications, computer operation and maintenance, handicraft, mending electronic devices, auto mechanics and so on].

Among the employees engaged, the highest percentage of the respondents, i.e. 29%, was employed in labour-wage earning sectors and about 12.73% of the respondents were in petty trade/business within the camp (see Table 1). Concerning the identity, they lost their caste-based occupation as they started living in the refugee's life. In the past, 10.9% of the population was engaged in caste-based occupation but now this figure is reduced to only 1.82%. Among the female respondents in the camp, majority of them were employed in Income Generating Activities (IGA). In total, 19% of the respondents were involved in the IGAs. In contrast, in Bhutan, only 4.55% Lhotshampa people were engaged in the IGA activities. A point to remark here is that the agricultural occupation has been in a miserable condition. Only a limited number (2.73%) of respondents were found involved in the agricultural activities in the host communities. Compared to them, a higher percentage, i.e. 43.6% of the respondents in the Bhutan

were employed in agriculture-based occupations. Rest of the occupations was minor to them. However, the scenario is just opposite at present in the livelihood of the refugees, which is presented in table 1.

In their native land, 15.45% of total respondents were employed in the services other than the occupations based on agriculture. They were working there as teachers, social volunteers, staff of NGOs/INGOs, jobholders in private office, etc. for their livelihood.

In relation to the current livelihood sources, refugees were found unable to continue the income strategies they adopted in Bhutan. It was common for them to get involved in multiple income generating activities in Bhutan. The activities included agricultural works, caste based occupation and long-term businesses. Today, such multiple strategies are not possible in camp because of various settlement problems and the lack of access to resources in a foreign land. It means that more changes that are drastic have been seen in selection and utilization of the occupations in the refugee camps.

For the income-generation of the refugees, the activities of Bhutanese refugees themselves are just the means for mobilization of the local NGOs. They are seen necessary but not sufficient condition in order to enable themselves for the creation of the IGAs for their own. In the process of running such activities, these organizations organize potential beneficiaries, form groups to involve the members in different types of income generating activities. As a rule, the group should be responsible for the success or failure of the assigned income generating activity. But, the groups are left unsupervised in practice. So, the NGOs were found less responsible for the implementation. Therefore, it is useful here to suggest that the implementing donor agencies must supervise the activities and monitor the progress continuously (Uprety and Dhungel 1993).

Empirical analysis of loss of Lhotshampa socio-cultural practices

Cultural loss is the central issue of this paper. It is the loss, lack or forced avoidance of what they practiced in Bhutan. The study was able to trace losses which are materialistic, non-materialistic and psychological in nature. The loss of the traditional marriage practices, traditional healing practices, doma culture and other rituals could be categorized as materialistic ones. Additionally, non-materialistic cultures such as the culture of respect and honour, indigenous knowledge of natural resource management, agricultural knowledge are the losses of the refugees. Psychological losses were the loss of independence, and loss of sovereignty and many more. Therefore, it is important to know that what and how the basic cultural practices and knowledge system arrived on the root of loss after becoming a refugee. During the ethnographic field research, the key informants and participants of the focused group discussions shared their ideas and knowledge regarding the cultural loss of their life. Some of the basic cultures that Lhotshampas have lost and that witnessed a great change of going downwards after Lhotshampas' exile in Nepal are briefly analyzed here.

Loss and impact of marriage practices

The study of marriage among other is a central focus of cultural anthropology as an important social institution. It could be revealed that the marriage system is one of the badly affected institutions in their refugee life. Arranged marriage was their commonly practiced system in Bhutan. Love marriage and inter-caste marriages or exogamy practices were not acceptable there. It was due to a kind of established structural system based on caste and Hindu ideology. Now, endogamous and exogamous love marriages within the camp were found as accepted system for the young refugees. The main cause of the increasing trend of love marriage and exogamy is traced to the excessive freedom they have in the camp. The parents' right in the decision of marriage is also narrowing down gradually. Concept of love marriage itself does not allow such right to the parents. However, *naumati baja* (traditional musical instruments for

wedding) are still used in the marriages but the *baja*-men (musical band for wedding) are non-Dalits. This practice can be termed as the cultural loss among Dalits and cultural transformation among the non-Dalits. Dowry system is also not seen in the new marriage systems in the camp. It may be due to the reason that they are economically deprived or such marriages involve the decision of two parties not to indulge in such traditional concepts. Divorce rates are also high in the camp. Regarding these all marriage practices, both the key informants and the participants of the FGDs shared a number of consequences of loss.

Loss and impact of family structure and kinship

In Bhutan, the community was very tightly knit, and people remained closely connected throughout the life cycle. The community was generally patriarchal in structure. Sons were expected to take care of their parents and to provide them financial and economic support.

There were strong bonds of love and obligation within the family. A daughter-in-law was obligated, regardless of her age or state of health, to care for her mother-in-law. She would keep her mother-in-law happy by preparing food, helping for washing and massaging her legs during the bed in the evenings. This tradition is fading with the transition of life in the refugee camp, and now, with the beginning of exiled life. However, respect and courtesy has still been defined in this relationship. In the countries where they are resettled, the demands of such work of the younger generations are still fading away.

Therefore, a seen change exists in the camp regarding the family structures and kinship concept. As the Lhotshampas, they had practiced both nuclear and extended family systems. Their practices have been continuously confined to the nuclear system these days as the generation is changed. Poor economic condition and third country settlement have contributed to this situation. Intra-familial and interfamilial unity, trust and cooperation are in degradation mostly because of the youths' behavior. Likewise, social solidarity and reciprocity widely prevalent in

Lhotshampas are on the verge of extinction. It may result in the further dislocation of the family members from each other and in the complete loss of binding unity of the community required for maintaining socio-familial discipline and trust to each other.

Loss and impact of culture of respect/honor

In Lhotshampa community, an established system of respect was prevalent. The elders in the community would command deep respect and affection too. Very often, family issues, health problems and financial issues were first discussed among the members in the family. However, what the present refugee life has given to them is the changes in youths, in particular, their freedom from the responsibility to respect the elders. They do not have to obey their elders and seniors instantly and willingly in most of the cases. Now, young refugee generations do not respect their parents, their teachers, religious gurus of various sorts and the relatives to the expected level as young Lhotshampa did in Bhutan. They take the elders and gurus as if they are nothing. They do not feel gratitude towards the elders with the due sense of respect through the appreciation of culture. Such true Bhutanese respects and honours are about to disappear in the camp. Such tendency and environment can lead them even to darkness. To remark a bit, this may result in the loss of unity, familial/social/ethnic power and at last make them weak in terms of a community.

Loss of *Doma* culture

The traditional way of making storing and serving *doma* is interesting in Lhotshampa community. Actually, *doma* refers to a chewing item made by betel leaf, lime and areca nut. According to the respondents, *doma* culture had begun in Bhutan but there is no recorded history. Later, *doma* culture entered the Lhotshampa community and gradually become a cultural practice and custom. *Doma* is served after meals during rituals and ceremonies. However, this culture could not flourish in the refugee camp. People used to make and take it but they cannot practice nowadays due to the unavailability of the raw substances required to make *doma*.

Loss of other ritual practices

Many rituals performed in the Lhotshampa community are the strong reflection of their rich cultural practices. Birth, death and other rituals were well practiced similar to the native Nepali practices. Nowadays, most of them are not practiced and some of the methods are altered. Durga Sapkota, a male refugee of Beldangi-II camp, shares his ideas in the following words:

> *Maghe Sakranti* would be celebrated in a different way. In this occasion, people would silently bathe at first, put ban *tarul ko tika* (tika of wild yam) on the forehead and then start eating the foods. This tradition is discontinued in the camp. It is said that people have to bathe on this occasion due to the obligation since they would not do it daily or regularly in Bhutan. Since we bath daily in this camp, we do not give much priority to bathing as far as *Maghe Sakranti* is concerned. *Goth-dhup* (practice of worshipping cowshed) is another abandoned practice. Likewise, poor financial condition and unavailability of the required materials have also forced us to abandon many rituals in the way we wish.

Mana Maya's, a female refugee's view about *goth-dhup* is worth mentioning culture here. She has abandoned the *goth-dhup* due to the lack of required materials, e.g. *goth* and cattle. Refugees were also anxious about the people who had gone abroad since they had been continuously avoiding the cultures of Bhutan. For example, they do not go through all the procedures followed in *shraddha* (a ritual of remembering the ancestors). The main activities such as wearing lungi, combing hair, appointing and using the private priest, etc. are not followed abroad. The reason is still the unavailability of required substances to continue their tradition. In other words, the refugees are asylum seekers. They could not follow all rituals because of political and geographical restriction.

Impact in traditional healing practices

Similar to the native Nepalese beliefs and practices, Bhutanese refugees as Lhotshampas had strong belief on *dhami-jhankri* (witch doctors),

baidhya (a traditional domestic doctor), and *drungtso* (like *baidhya*) to heal the illness. *Jharphuk* (a method of hymning rules use for the healing) is commonly used method of these healers. People used to take help of these witch doctors in different kind of sickness or bad health conditions. The practices adopted by such persons are traditional healing practices. However, nowadays, they are not practiced in the refugee camp. To express in specific terms, such practices were left in Bhutan as soon as Lhotshampas were evicted. The main reason is the lack of required materials in their refugee life. *Dhyangro* (a rounded drum made up of the skin of the animals) and *gajo* (a stick to play *Dhyangro*) are needed by the witch doctors in many cases. These tools are not available to the refugees. *Jharphuk* needs special kinds of herb leafs, roots, etc. in many illnesses depending on their kinds because the refugees' do not have the materials in the camp.

Loss of agricultural knowledge and practices

Women and children participation in the use and management of agriculture-related resources the institutions was also a great focus in Lhotshampa community. They had active role in irrigation projects, forest conservation programs, programs related to the landslide and soil erosion. This had ensured confidence among women for gender equality, women empowerment and child skill development, social unity, and socialization in the society. Children and women were comfortable to enhance their potentiality when they practiced traditionally or nontraditionally their resource management system.

Refugee life seems to have a great cost to women and children regarding their participation in the use and management system of natural resources. Irrigation projects, forest conservation programs, watershed management programs, landslide and the programs for controlling soil erosion programs were implemented in Bhutan. At present, neither have they owned resources like land nor have they access to the management of nearby resources. Therefore, exiled life has great negative impact on their effort and potentiality of women empowerment, gender equity.

Brown writes in his study of the Bhutanese refugees that no land is available to refugees for cultivation, apart from a small plot around each hut (in the fire prevention line) on which they grow a few vegetables for home consumption. Therefore, life in the camps is not preparing the younger generation for a farming life back at home. A growing danger in the camp is the high potentiality of the growth of dependency syndrome due to the heavy reliance on handouts and free food setting (Brown 2001,124).

Refugees remember those jovial days of working in agro-sector and earnings from it. Adult refugees have witnessed great changes in terms of agricultural seasons, farming methods, preparing and using main agricultural tool, e.g. plough, yoke, etc. and using them, and traditional method of seed storage. They have almost forgotten the knowledge and information regarding the traditional agriculture system. Practice of animal husbandry and poultry farming are also not in the list of the works they do now. All their possible incomes from these businesses have fallen sharply.

A case below (Case-1) shows how elder refugees are spending dark life conditions in the camp and how traditional knowledge has been gradually declining in the refugee camp especially among youths.

Case-1: Impact of Loss and Future's Uncertainty of Refugees

A woman refugee named Chhayadevi Dhaurali of camp, aged 49 describes how miserable her life is. She describes that the older people are spending traumatic and transitional life in the camp. Moreover, they are losing their identity, assets and cultural practices in that age. According to Chhayadevi, her family had left their Bhutan's house at night leaving the doors open and burning *diyo*, (a worshipping-lamp). At that time, her sons were immature to understand the pain of the situation induced. For 20 years, her family has passed in the darkness in the camp, far from her native land. She has lost many things in the period of exile. She remembers that in Bhutan, her family had a huge house, many cattle and many hectars of land. She had a very comfortable and happy life there.

Now, her family has to depend upon foreign ration assistances. At this time, she has felt deeply the importance of traditions and the things associated to her cultures, social faiths, unity, and material goods for their livelihood support.

During the narration of her bygone days, she was so upset, serious and nostalgic. Therefore, it seemed that the psychological distress had a giant impact among the older refugees. She was quite serious while talking about agricultural activities. It is because no refugees are involved in the field of agriculture due to the lack of access on the land. Particularly, the new generations do not know the agricultural system. She asks various questions to the young generations as-what are the seasons of cultivating, harvesting and storing of particular crops? These questions indicate the basic knowledge of human civilization. But, they are unanswered by the people of the new generation of refugees. Therefore, their disconnection with agricultural system has produced another bad consequence of the death of agricultural knowledge. Thus, the people of the older generations still remember the past, feel the unfortunate present and uncertain dark picture of the youths for the future.

The latest situation: Darkness and uncertain future

For the solution of the refugee problem, hundreds of thousands of Bhutanese refugees are being resettled in the third countries, in Europe and in America, with the help of IOM and UNHCR under the resettlement program started in 2008. Although various opportunities of employment and higher-level living standards are created for the refugees in the resettled countries, the resettlement activity has perished their anticipation of the recovery of indigenous socio-culture of the past. Recent reports of the studies carried out concerning the issues of the refugees have disclosed their miserable condition closely. In this vein, a report of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, a federal U.S. government agency, published on October 2012 stated that in the three years to Feb. 2012, the rate of suicides among Bhutanese refugees resettled in America was 20.3 per 100,000 people. Following the figure from the World Health Organization, the rate was almost double the rate prevalent in native US people, and this figure further exceeded the global suicide rate of 16.0 per 100,000. However, it was similar to the

rates of suicide experienced by Bhutanese refugees in camps before they relocated (see Mishra 2014).

Post-migration difficulties that the victims faced offer clues about their possible motivations. Most of them are unable to communicate with the people of their host communities. Many of them are also worried about family staying back at home left unemployed and over the difficulty of maintaining cultural and religious traditions (Preissapr 2013). Similarly, many refugees are spending tragic moments in the USA. It has also been evident that time and again refugees have tried to hang themselves. They have felt no peace in mind. Therefore, the refugees regard this situation a misfortune in their life and explain it as a disorientation of the culture, a dependency culture (Kulman 2014).

Above given information shows how refugees are uncertainty for their future generations. They have witnessed such tragic moments as they are in the compulsion to live in an undesired and unsuitable socio-cultural environment. Similarly, such situation is created because of the action of concerned agencies to take them in the countries where refugees are not fully fit to work, adapt and live happily. Those agencies should have considered the natural and humanistic approaches keeping in mind the socio-cultural fitness of the refugees, which is found missing in the implemented approach. It would be then a better way to create a suitable environment either to live in the host country or to repatriate to their own native land so that they could enjoy the intended socio-cultural practices to the satisfactory level of their requirements. Another suggestive measure could be that the concerned stakeholders should have studied deeply regarding the adaptability and cultural sensitivity of human conditions in time before resettling the refugees to the third countries.

Conclusion

The objectives of this paper were to gain an understanding of the loss of cultural traits and practices and then to know the livelihood strategies

of the Bhutanese refugee community situated in Nepal. Based on these objectives and research data, conclusions could be drawn: firstly, refugees are not only uncertain about their future but also remain dissatisfied with the life wherever they go because they have lost their indigenous and cultural identities, which are also considered as securities of life. In the absence of the identities mentioned, the cultures move to the direction of loss and may reach extinction. This rule perfectly applies to the refugees of this study. Secondly, because of the speedy process of acculturation, and assimilation taking place among refugees and other diasporic or transnational people, rate of their cultural loss is higher in speed than any other kinds of changes in the lives of the ordinary people. Thirdly, a great loss of culture is likely if the people are detached from the natural resources and the management system from which they use their traditional and indigenous knowledge, skill, experiences, etc. It could be understood that instead of resettling them to the third country, and providing merely ration package programs, stakeholders should create a feasible environment of sustainable livelihood as far as possible by increasing employment capabilities and opportunities such as launching technical education, vocational trainings and handicraft industries. By this procedure, both the refugees and the stakeholders can benefit fully utilizing the economically active age of the refugees.

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Practice of Democracy and Justice in Simple Society: Can We Learn Lesson from the Kisan Community of East Nepal?

Shambhu Prasad Kattel*

Introduction

"Democracy" and "justice" are two popular words used everywhere from macro level political debate to day to day social discourse in the present world. If we look at the present use of the English word "justice", it is commonly cited in legal sector by law professionals and other related people since the 17th century (Moore 1967). Similarly, "democracy" is fashionably used English word in the political sector after the downfall of then Soviet Union, throughout the world as a popular political ideology. The word "democracy" is formally used by politicians as well as general public, especially, after the Enlightenment movement of Western Europe (Moore 1967). In the present political discourse, both words (justice and democracy) are very much related to each other and understood as two sides of a coin—democracy without justice and justice without democracy is impossible. It is considered that democracy is essential for societal justice. It enhances excellence of democracy. Most of the countries of the present world, exercise democracy, as the best political system and try to promote justice in each spheres of socio-economic and political life. Thus, as the representative concepts or an ideology of the capitalist political system, the terms are gaining popularity day by day. If we overview the literatures of stateless simple societies of various groups and their political organization and social justice in Africa and Asia, we will find out that both concepts applied perfectly to such people (Gluckman 1973). The simple societies were/are organized under group

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leadership or a democratic leader and exercised democracy and justice more perfectly than modern democracy. However, such simple societies are also a part of formal political state nowadays. Very few simple societies still exercise their traditional political practices within the group, which have overarching formal political system.

Western Europe became a centre of modernization and capitalist development, especially after the 17th century due to enlightenment movement. The movement had been able to establish liberal democratic political economy, which later on translated to a democratic political system following liberal economic policy. This special political and economic policy allowed capitalism to flourish in Europe (Weber 1930). Thereafter, democratic political system has been established as a dominant ideology throughout the world challenging all types of despotisms; traditional kingship political system, communism and autocracy. Similarly, liberal economy is accepted as the main thrust of democratic political system for modernization and change. Nowadays, the democratic political system is understood as the only sustainable political system after the failure of the socialist USSR.

Hence, the Western Europe became the centre of political ideology and economic policy as a result of enlightenment movement. It also became the locus of capitalism, technological advancement, physical facilities and centre of human rights and justice. The clue to their development is considered to be democratic political system. Democratic political system was refined by encountering several hurdles in the beginning and later matured by incorporating the best components of different societies. For example, individual choice and freedom, human rights and justice, periodic election, people's participation, good governance, referendum, and so on are absolute components of democracy nowadays, which were developed in the process of learning by doing for more than 200 years.

Development of market economy, technological innovation and information technology, reduced the distance of the globe and the world

and is now established as a global village. Majority of the countries of the present world have adopted democratic political system as an ideology and take part in the race of modernization and advancement. Modernization and advancement are never ending processes in which all types of countries are involved with high aspirations.

The present situation of world politics forces us to accept that democracy or democratic political system is an ideology, which emerged in Western Europe and gradually spread to the rest of the world. On the contrary, as mentioned above, there are many examples of practices of democracy and justice in stateless societies or simple societies of Asia, Africa and of Europe. Some of these societies were practicing a perfect democracy with justice system, even before the formulation of formal European states, long before the enlightenment movement.

If we believe in the argument that democracy and justice are social reality that existed after the development of formal European states/ ideology, then we would be blaming that all simple states or stateless societies before the development of European states, were dictators. If someone says that democracy is a Western European Ideology then I think, it would be a superficial argument of power/supremacy, not based on fact. In my view, democracy and justice are socio-political practices exercised in many societies, before the existence of formal European states.

In daily discourse, we have heard that democracy is the government of people, for the people and by the people. According to the definition, people have the right to form their government and it serves the people (Dahl 2000). In practice, all types of governments, from capitalist to communis regimes are claiming to be democratic these days. Therefore, democracy is a vague term used differently in different settings. However, most of the scholars agree that democracy should have six basic characters: (1) citizen rule, (2) majority rule and minority rights, (3) individual rights, (4) free and fair election, (5) citizen participation

and (6) cooperation and compromise (Dahl 2000, www.ehow.com/info_8535890). Similarly, justice is a situation in which people feel that their voices are heard and their problems are addressed and are given priority. Moreover, justice is a quality of being just or impartial or fair (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/justice).

This article explains the justice system and democracy of the Kisan Community of the eastern Nepal. I have acquainted with the Kisan community and their culture for the last 7 years. During my PhD dissertation research, I have spent a year (2008-2009) in the Kisan community. Since then I have visited the community from time to time and have talked to them extensively. Since my introduction to the community, the Kisan people have changed their king three times. Indeed, they do change their superior power, when he is getting older and is unable to perform the given duties or indulge in liquor drinking habit or so on**.** I have seen the justice system and democratic practice being strongly established in this community than the formal justice system of Nepal. Therefore, this article examines whether democracy and justice is a western concept which came to influence local communities after modernization or is it a traditional/indigenous system of simple societies? On the basis of data from the Kisan community, I argue that concepts, democracy and justice were common practices of simple societies. Such practices were overshadowed during colonial rule and in the process of modern state formation. Most of such states and societies were colonized by the western states. Therefore, formal states understand western model of democracy and justice only, whereas most of the simple societies exercise their own traditional practices of democracy and justice in their community as informal practices.

Conceptual argument

When individuals live together, they must develop and follow certain rules to fulfill group objectives. For simple society/community, such rules might be social values or culture, but for a complex society, such

rules might be the laws enforced by formal political organization. Human history shows varieties of laws as per the character of the society, be it despotic or democratic, among others. Human civilization taught us that democracy is the best political system in which people have choices for their development. United Nations Development Program defines development, as a process of enlarging the range of people's choices—increasing their opportunities for education, health care, income and employment and covering full range of human choices from a sound physical environment to economic and political freedom (UNDP 1990).

As development is a process of enlarging the range of people's choices, this is possible in democratic political system only. The democratic political system is run by government of the people, for the people and by the people. According to Dahl (2000), in democracy majority rules the state after election but they also respect the rights of minority. Hence, citizens are not restricted to put forward their choices in democratic political system and nobody feels injustice due to state affairs (Diamond 2008). The word "democracy" has been understood differently by different people. The types of democracy that we commonly hear are 'liberal democracy', 'procedural democracy' and 'substantive democracy' (Sen 1999).

Liberal democracy operates under the principles of liberalism i.e. protecting the rights of individual, characterized by free, and fair and competitive election between different parties, a separation of powers into different branches of government, the rule of law in everyday life as part of an open society, and the equal protection of human rights, civil rights, civil liberties, and political freedoms for all (Dahl 2001). Procedural democracy is a democracy in which the people or citizens of the state have less influence than in traditional liberal democracies. This type of democracy is characterized by voters choosing to elect representatives in free elections (Brown 2003). Substantive democracy

is a form of democracy in which the outcome of elections is considered to be the representative of the people. In other words, substantive democracy functions in the interest of the governed (Diamond 2008).

Nowadays, deliberative democracy is also commonly used concept in the field of politics. Deliberative democracy or discursive democracy is a form of democracy, in which deliberation is central to decision-making. It adopts elements of both consensus decision-making and majority rule. Deliberative democracy differs from traditional democratic theory in that authentic deliberation, not mere voting, is the primary source of legitimacy for the law (Dryzek 2010).

Whatever the types and forms of democracy exercised in the world, they primarily focus on participation of citizen in decision making bodies and ensure their rights in laws and try to create an inclusive society with harmony and justice. If this is true, then democracy and justice are not primarily western idea and practice. According to Gluckman (1971), many tribal groups of Africa such as Anuska, Shilluk, Lozi, Buganda, Twa and others were practicing headmen and community court, in which voice of each community members were heard and respected, otherwise there was no chance of being headmen of the communities. Such local level practices of democracy and justice were/are existed in simple societies of Asia in which anthropologists did not find influence of western ideology (Leach 1954; Spencer 2007).

Democracy and justice system of the Kisans

The Kisans have their own court and the government mechanism with specialized authority for maintaining peace and order in the community. The government mechanism works for political functions and the court is for social justice. In this article, I will briefly introduce the community, their government mechanism and court/justice system and people's participation in democratic exercises.

The Kisan community and its government mechanism

The Kisan, a Tarai ethnic group with less than 1000 population, are living in Jhapa district (in the boarder of Nepal and India) for more than a century. They are under the rule of Nepal government since their arrival to the country from India. They have their own government like mechanism, called *Baiga system*, a traditional governing body, which is run by their own King, known as *Mahato*, as well as, ministers and police. The Kisan authorities run a community court referred to as *Kachchheri*. The court is well established in the community and settles all types of cases of the community members. None of the community member has a feeling of injustice due to the *Kachheri* decision, since there has been no appellant, thus so far on any *Kachheri* decision. Unlike among many other traditional communities, Kisan authorities, including the King, do not have rights to select their successor (the future king) on a hereditary basis. In another words, even the ruling king cannot declare his eldest son as his successor. Rather, the Kisans organize a community assembly regularly and select their authorities and the prince.

Nowadays, the group is living with non-Kisans, though they do not prefer to interact with them in daily life. They do not prefer to go to formal forums for services, but follow their own cultural practices, speak own (*Sadri*) language and are organized under their own political organization. Traditionally, the group is involved in subsistence farming along with animal husbandry and they also enjoy hunting small games.

The Kisans claim that they are the indigenous group of Jhapa district. They are living in the district for more than 150 years as Kisans, and their immediate kin groups Nagasia are also living across the border of Nepal to India. In Nepali language, Kisan means "farmer." According to Vidyarthi and Rai (1985), the Nagasia were the rulers of Madhyapradesh of India until the 16th century. Gradually, they migrated to west Bengal and from there to Nepal. As an indigenous group, the Kisans are confused with cobblers who also identify themselves as Kisan in Nepal. The Central Bureau of Statistics (2008) shows Kisan population in some

hill and Tarai districts of Nepal and that population is reported as 2728. However, in Nepal the Kisans, as an indigenous group, are found only in Jhapa district and their population is 773. The rest of the Kisans, who live in the hills and has been documented in the CBS of Nepal are cobblers (Kattel 2012).

The Kisans are one of the highly marginalized groups of Nepal. They are excluded from governance and deprived of basic social services. But the group is well organized within their own community. They have their own community court, law and the law implementing agencies, with established democratic practices and justice system.

The community, as mentioned above, has its own government mechanism and community court. Both the government mechanism and community court are set up democratically and their authorities are elected from the community members. The Kisan government mechanism, *Baiga* system, is run by the *Mahato* with the help of two *Wakil* (lawyer and/or minister), and nine *Sipahi* (police men). The supreme political unit of the Kisans that controls both the institutions and the authorities is community assembly (*Kisan Sabha*), constituted by community members.

Community assembly

The community assembly is the supreme political body of the Kisan's political organization and justice delivery system. All of the 160 households are members of the Kisan *Sabha*. The *Sabha* is organized annually after harvesting paddy, whereby all member households have to attend the assembly compulsorily. In general, the assembly is held for one day, but sometimes, if issues are serious then, it can continue for two to three days. However, due to accommodation problem, they try to complete it in a day.

The main function of the community assembly is to identify necessary laws, amend old laws, elect *Kachchheri* authorities, form the government and *Kachchheri* and resolves all types of community problems.

According to the informants, if an assembly member raises a question about authority or any issue, it is voted immediately. Thus, traditionally the Kisan community carries out election to select their leaders. The voices of the community members are taken seriously, and every effort is made to respect the human rights of the community members.

The *Sabha* not only elects the *Wakil* and *Sipahi*, but also, terminates the existing King and selects a new one, if majority of the assembly members raise questions, about the functioning of the king.

The *Baiga* system

The Baiga system is the supreme political organization/body of the Kisans for day to day political affairs. The King is the chief of the organization who is supported by the *Wakil* and *Sipahi*. The Kisan *Sabha* approves the decisions made by the organization in the previous year and makes strategies and plans for the coming year. The main activities of the *Baiga* system are to protect and promote Kisan culture, enhance access of the community members to their court and implement the court decisions.

The main role of the Kisan authority is to perform political, religious and cultural functions. The authority is also responsible for organizing village worship (*Gram Pooja*), once a year after harvesting. The King has to perform the duty of priest in the *Gram Pooja* and family rituals of community member. Hence, the King is also the community priest, who performs life crisis rituals, *pooja* and participates in religious and cultural activities of each Kisan household.

As stated above, the king is also elected from Kisan Sabha. In general, the King is elected either from a rich family or from a landless family due to practical reasons. The main reason behind for selection of the King either from one of these economic backgrounds is that the King should give full time to the community. If one is rich, he does not need to bother about his family economy. If he is landless, he does not need to bother about farming activities. If the king is not able to give his full

time, then the *Sabha* removes him immediately and selects a new king. However, there is a dominant belief in the community that is the king has to be elected from the same lineage.

The *Wakil* have to support the king in day to day political, religious and cultural affairs. A poor community member cannot offer full time to community. Therefore, two Wakils are elected now, who serves the community turn by turn. There are nine *Sipahi*, who represent all nine Kisan villages.

The Kisan authority: Annually elected from the community assembly

The Kisan authority is elected from the Kisan Sabha directly. In general, the Sabha is organized every year, but sometimes it happens twice or thrice a year. General tenure of the authority is one year, but sometimes it can go up to 10 years, if one works honestly. The *Sabha*, based on the performance and interest of the authority, renews the tenure every year,

The political and religious authority of the king is not based on economic affluence. The present king comes from a landless family. His wife is a wage laborer, but the king has higher status in the community; he is restricted to involve in wage laboring. The *Baiga* system has no source of income. It does not pay salary and allowances to the authority, but the king receives a few rupees and a *Dhoti* and a *Pheta*, while performing a ritual. However, this is not enough to maintain the family economy, so he goes fishing, collects snails, and hunts small games. This state of affairs may increase community satisfaction with the king.

The next authority of the Kisan is the *Wakil*. In the understanding of the common Kisans, *Wakils* do not have the religious power of the king. Therefore, all community members are eligible to be *Wakil*. The community assembly elects an individual, who is active, social, and motivated to serve the community. According to informants, the *Wakil*, like the king, has a long history in the community. The *Wakils*

are assistants of the king and aid him to carry out administrative works. They are managers of the government and community court. They have to deal with community cases, organize community meetings, and assist the king in resolving the problems. They are the judges of the court, and have to listen to the cases and give their opinions to the Chief Judge (king) for resolution. Hence, the main role of the *Wakils* is to assist the king in decision-making process.

In the Kisan government structure, a *Sipahi* holds the third position of authority. During the time of the study, the Kisan population was spread among nine major villages[1]. In each village, a *Sipahi* is elected, as head of the village and local representative of the government. The *Sipahi* controls the sociocultural and political life of the village (*Gram* in Kisan language) and villagers (*Gamaklok*). In most of the Kisan villages, there is a central place identified and the *Sipahi*, along with his fellow villagers, appears in the central place on a daily basis. Hence, villagers easily meet the *Sipahi* to communicate news and problems. The *Sipahi* is responsible to maintain peace in the village, and periodically organizes dispute resolution sessions. If he fails to resolve a case, then he forwards it to the *Kachchheri*.

Any villager with good health can be elected as *Sipahi*. Generally, villagers elect a *Sipahi* from the village assembly, with the advice of their higher authorities. According to Kisan law, a *Sipahi* can remain in the role as long as he can perform his duties in a free and fair manner. During fieldwork, I found that most of the *Sipahi* were physically fit and energetic individuals, under the age of sixty. Community people believe that *Sipahi* have to be strong physically and mentally because they are responsible to apprehend the suspects of a crime or wrongdoing.

1 The major villages of Kisan are (l) Semairdanga (Mechinagar 4), (2) Majhargaun (Mechinagar-5), (3) Nindakinar (Mechinagar-6), (4) Kalakhuta (Mechinagar-2), (5) Bagribadi (Mechinagar-12), (6) Bansgaun (Dhaijan7 & 8), (7) Barne (Shantinagar-1), (8) Bamhandangi (Bahundagi 3 & 9), and (9) Bhhutabari (Anarmani 1).

Therefore, the village assembly considers the physical fitness of a candidate, while electing a *Sipahi*.

Functions of the *Baiga* system: Considering individual rights, choice and freedom

The supreme political organization of the Kisan is the *Baiga* system which determines the roles and responsibilities of an individual member of the community. As stated above, it is a government like mechanism with layers of structure for maintaining peace and order in the community.

There are three major functions of the Kisan government: executive functions, legal functions and security functions. The executive function involves the execution of the decisions of community assembly and *Kachchheri*. The legal function pertains to identification and implementation of community laws. The security function denotes the protection of community members, their resources and cultural practices.

To run the community smoothly, the *Baiga* system has identified some laws. Main functions of the Kisan laws are cultural preservation and maintenance of socio-cultural systems, control of inter caste marriages, protection of private and public property, protection of women, children and weaker members of the society, preservation of available natural resources, respect for gods, ancestors, and senior members of the family and community, and protection of individuals rights.

The Kisan community exercises the right of choice/freedom during partner selection. A young girl or boy can choose a life partner from within the community or from outside. The only way to use that freedom is that they need to get approval for such marriages from the *Baiga* system. The newly married couple or parents of the couple can go to the community authority, and pay NRs 2000 for the cost of purification ritual and offer a *Dhoti* and *Pheta* to the King. The community authority organizes a purification ritual (a small feast) in the concerned village,

where all villagers have to attend and receive a sip of wine and a few pieces of meat, as acceptance of their marriage, and then they all bless the couple. However, it is the *Kingwh*o who purifies them and announces publicly that the bride/groom is accepted as community members and that they have to follow the Kisan culture in their lives.

Similarly, a community member can enjoy freedom freely and fairly by following the Kisan culture and tradition. The community laws apply equally to all the members of the community whether they be the authorities or the general members. The following three major functions of the *Baiga* system clarify its roles, for the promotion of individual rights, choices and freedom.

Executive functions of the *Baiga* system

The Kisan government executes the decisions made by community assembly and performs daily administrative tasks. According to key informants, primary administrative functions include maintenance of peace and order in the community, performance of socio-cultural rituals, and protection of available resources. The king, *Wakil*, and *Sipahi* meet almost daily for regular functions, although, not all *Sipahi* are required to attend all the meetings, except only those pertaining to their own jurisdictions. The full meeting of the Kisan government is organized as required, for instance, in the event of the death of the king or for *Gram-Pooja*.

In addition, the community assembly introduces policies and develops strategies for the protection of socio-cultural practices and the surrounding natural resources. In principle, the community assembly seems to be a powerful institution, but in practice, the government officials are more powerful as they are the implementers. The government also assists the *Kachchheri* to implement the laws and punish the wrongdoers; exercising power publicly in daily life. In practice, the *Kachchheri* resolves disputes and the government executes the decisions of the *Kachchheri*. The Kisan government delegates power to the *Wakil* and *Sipahi*, for

executive functions. The king, as symbol of supreme power, appears in the *Kachchheri*, as chief judge, but ultimately, allows implementation of decisions, to the *Wakil* and *Sipahi*. Thus, the Kisan government implements the decisions made by the assembly and community court, and also oversees socio-cultural regulation of both the public and the private spheres.

Thus, the political organization of the Kisan, through executive functions of the decision made by community assembly and court, ensures the rights, choices and freedom of each community members and in addition, special attention is given to the poor, marginalized, women, senior and physically challenged members of the community.

Legal functions of the Baiga system

Another important function of the Kisan government is to implement the community laws. As discussed above, the Kisan community has defined 14 types of laws to maintain social order in the community. The Kisan government identifies the necessary laws and the community assembly approves these laws. The approved law is implemented by the *Kachchheri*, and regulated by the authority.

The main functions of the Kisan law are cultural preservation and maintenance of socio-cultural systems; sanction/purification of inter caste marriage; protection of private and public property; protection of women, children and weaker members of the society; preservation of available natural resources; observation of respect to gods, ancestors, and senior members of the family and the community; and protection of individuals rights. The community assembly has created laws regarding these issues, which are enforced by the government.

The common punishments available to the Kisan government are physical punishment, fines in cash or grains, and termination of community membership. Termination of the community membership is a final and highly unusual punishment. Nobody could remember any instances of such cases in Jhapa district during the time of fieldwork, although, there

were many examples of membership termination and conversion of Nagasia to Christianity in India among the Kisans.

An individual Kisan, whether chief of the community or a simple individual, is always under jurisdiction of the law. Almost all community members were aware of the laws, but very few of them remembered the specifics of the provision. The only member who was a graduate of the Kisan community was not impressed by the traditional practices, but he believed that the community laws were more effective than those of the state. In contrast to the immediate access afforded to the community by the Kisan traditional government institutions, the state institutions are located only in headquarters, leaving the community relatively unfamiliar with state law.

The political organization of the Kisan implements the community laws very strictly. No discrimination, bias and prejudices are heard in the implementation of laws by the Kisan authority. Hence, the Kisan laws treat the community members equally, which means there is equal chance of enjoying individual rights, choices and freedom.

Security functions of the *Baiga* System: Preservation of Kisan culture

The natural, socio-cultural and economic environments of the Kisans have been changing significantly during the last few decades. A population of cultivators until some decades ago, now has changed into landless laborers. A 'closed' and relatively homogenous community has been exposed to multi-cultural societies. The sytem of exchange of goods and services has been influenced by the market economy, especially, through the locally established bazaars and wage laboring in non-Kisan farms and tea estates. As discussed above, the Kisan communities and authorities have also been exposed to state laws and formal institutions such as VDC/Municipality, District Court, Police Office, District Administration Office, District Land Revenue Office, and so on. Through regular interactions with "high" caste groups, some

Kisans have come to consider their cultural practices as inferior and have adopted non-Kisan practices like inter-caste marriage, celebration of "high" caste Hindu festivals, and so on. And now social mobility is increasingly becoming common.

The establishment of a local bazaar and the construction of the East-West Highway after 1970s have propelled a large influx of non-Kisan communities into the Kishan homelands. And, with this demographic shifts, there has been a corresponding increase in contacts and external influences. According to a senior key informant (Mr. T. Kisan of age 79), a five-day community assembly was convened in 1991 to discuss about the preservation of Kisan culture in the changing contexts. There was an intense debate over whether to preserve traditional culture or to adapt "high-caste" culture. Finally, it was decided to expand the mandate of the government, for the preservation of Kisan culture.

The community assembly has introduced some laws regarding the preservation of their socio-cultural practices, including legitimizing changing practices so that it is in accord with traditional socio-cultural norms. For instance, inter-caste marriages, is now accepted in the community but is subjected to a purification ritual before its acceptance.

The king has been given extra roles and responsibilities, through which, he controls political, socio-cultural and religious aspects of community life. By law, the king has to attend private as well as public rituals and functions. Attendance of the king is crucial to finalize family and community rituals, or *Pooja*. The king, as living representative of the god, is considered pure/holy and his attendance sanctifies the events. As the Kisan law provides ground for the preservation of cultural practices, the attendance of the king in private rituals is part of implementing that law. For the preservation of their culture, the Kisan government organizes yearly *Gram Pooja*. The *Sipahi* has been given the main responsibility for organizing *Gram-Pooja*, in which, the attendance of the king is compulsory.

Given the changing context, it is not always possible to follow traditional practices as of now. But the Kisans have redefined their traditional practices, accordingly. As a result of exposure to movements for inclusion, women's rights, and human rights, women members of the community can now also attend public rituals and *Gram-Pooja*. The government and *Kachchheri* meeting is open to all community members. The Kisan authorities have also abridged the week long traditional arranged marriage process to one-day version, although, it is compulsory to wear traditional dress and ornaments.

Kisan people have similar outlook and dress patterns like some of their neighboring groups Some of these neighboring groups were also identified as Kisan until 2004, and were clients of the Kisan government and the *Kachchheri*. After they began to identify themselves as distinct from the Kisan, the Kisan people have severed relationships with these groups. The Kisan community members, their government and the *Kachchheri* are sensitive to the preservation of their culture and have created ethnic boundaries with these groups in various ways these days. Identity among the Kisans have also been promoted by the Kisan Club which has been established by younger and educated Kisans in order to support the interests of the Kisan community in Nepal's mainstream political process.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the political organization of the Kisan has consciously been preserving their culture. Hence, it has adopted some socio-cultural practices to cope with the existing situation (inter-caste marriage and practice of purification ritual) and created an ethnic boundary with other groups.

Moreover, the political organization, with the aim of protection of individual rights, choices and freedom, strongly follows the community laws, which regulates activities of community members, especially, for the collection and use of the natural resources, treatment of protected groups like seniors, poor, women and the handicapped.

Justice system in the Kisan community: Issue of participation

Theoretically, a Kisan goes to *Kachchheri* immediately when he/she realizes injustices rendered because it is equally accessible to all. But in practice, it is different. The King and one of the *Wakils* are from Semairdanga village, where all the offices, including the *Kachchheri* and the Kisan Club are located. The size of Semairdanga village is almost double than the other Kisan villages. The villagers of Semairdanga are more aware of the processes of the *Kachchheri*. The Kisans of other eight villages know about their *Kachchheri*, but while almost all disputes of Semairdanga go to the *Sipahi* and *Kachchheri*, only the serious disputes are forwarded by the *Sipahi* to the *Kachchheri* from the other Kisan villages. Table 1 shows the participation of disputants in the *Kachchheri* in 2009. About forty-five percent of cases registered in the Kisan Kachchheri are from Semairdanga village alone.

Table 1: Village-wise Registration of Disputes in the Kisan Kachchheri in 2009

Kisan villages	Registered disputes	Settled disputes*	Percentage**
Semairdanga	72	68	45.1
Majhargaun	14	11	5.9
Nindagaun / basti	17	17	11.3
Kalakhutta	14	13	8.7
Bagribadi	11	9	5.9
Bansgaun	9	7	4.6
Barne	7	7	4.6
Bamhandangi	15	14	9.3
Bhutabari	7	7	4.6
Total	**166**	**153**	**100**

Source: Field Survey 2009

* Settled dispute in the Kachchheri from each Kisan village denotes the cases settled in the community Kachchheri, not in village by Sipahi.
** percentage of the settled disputes (n = 153)

Disputants from other villages say that they do not want to travel up to five hours to *Kachchheri* so most of the cases were settled by the local *Sipahi*. Moreover, most of the poor and the women of other villages knew little about the *Kachchheri* and are more likely to go to the *Sipahi* for justice. The poor are ready to acknowledge a dispute and recognize the *Kachchheri* as a fair judiciary system but cannot afford the time to leave their work to travel to their court. In my observation, some poor families except from Semairdanga had very little knowledge about the *Kachchheri* and its process, though they know that there is *Kachchheri* for resolving disputes. A few of them have not seen their king yet.

For women, the *Kachchheri* is considered fair because of its equal access. Women are allowed to participate in the *Kachchheri* meeting without any gender bias. However, in the community, the Kishan women are discouraged from participating in the leadership as *Sipahi* or *Wakil*. Nowadays, literate women are allowed to be *Sipahi* or *Wakil*. However, they are involved as facilitator or volunteers, but not as the elected leaders. However married women are constrained by their responsibilities at home and traditional socio-cultural values. Despite this, participation of women in public gatherings, including the *Kachchheri*, has been increasing as a result of the pressure of modernizing influences such as markets, multiparty democracy and social awareness programs conducted by development organizations.

Furthermore, any community members can attend *Kachchheri* meetings, but few do so regularly. I observed that senior people such as T, Kisan (age 79), P. Kisan (age 82), and M. Kisan (age 59) of Semairdanga village attended *Kachchheri* meetings regularly, talked to the authorities and provided suggestions. I also heard that Toyala Kisan of Majhergaun and Bhulu Kisan of Nindabasti also attended court meetings from time to time. These senior Kisans not only regularly attended the *Kachchheri* meeting but also went to the Club and local tea shops in their leisure time. There are other seniors in the community, but none of them regularly attended the *Kachchheri* or the Club. It was revealed that

those who have land for sufficient food production are more active, but landless people do not have leisure time to go to the *Kachchheri*/public gatherings. They have to take care of the children and animal whereas those of higher economic status have more free time.

Kisans prefer to settle a simple case within the family, or at the village level, with the help of the *Sipahi*. In a big village with more than 20 households, the *Sipahi* seems to be busy most of the time resolving village disputes. However, there is no record keeping system for the disputes registered and settled in the villages. To find out the total number of cases registered and settled in the village and in the *Kachchheri*, an extensive discussion was organized in each Kisan village where the village Sipahi, senior members and past disputants were gathered to recall cases. Table 2 shows the cases received and settled by *Sipahi* in villages and forwarded to community court in 2009.

Table 2: Cases Handle by Sipahi in 2009

Kisan villages	Cases received by Sipahi	No of Cases Settled in the village	% of cases settled in the village	Case forwarded to the Kachchheri	% of the local cases received
Semairdanga	46	22	58.0	24	52.0
Majhargaun	25	17	68.0	8	32.0
Nindakinar	36	25	69.4	11	30.5
Kalakhutta	38	33	86.8	5	13.1
Bagribadi	29	22	75.8	7	24.1
Bansgaun	27	22	81.4	5	18.5
Barne	16	14	87.5	2	12.5
Bamhandangi	27	21	77.7	6	22.2
Bhutabari	19	18	94.7	1	5.2
Total	**263**	**194**	**74.0**	**69**	**26.0**

Source: Field Survey 2008

As per the data presented in table 2, it is evident that a higher number of cases in Semairdanga come to the *Sipahi* because of the size of the village but also because the disputants prefer to settle the case in the *Kachchheri*. The *Sipahi* of Semairdanga settles less than 50 percent of the cases and forwards rest of the cases to the *Kachchheri* but more than 68 percent of the cases are settled by *Sipahi* in other Kisan villages. On an average, only five cases come to the *Kachchheri*, from each of the other Kisan villages per year. However, the *Kachchheri* receives above 20 cases from Semairdanga village yearly. As the two *Wakils* and the king live in Semairdanga, community members of this village have greater access to the *Kachchheri*. This practice indicates that disputants from other villages prefer the *Sipahi* for settling disputes locally. The main reason behind this is the distance of the *Kachchheri* office from other villages. For example, disputants from Buttabari and Bamhandangi villages have to spend about five hours to reach the *Kachchheri* office.

From the survey and discussions, it was revealed that 21 percent of disputes are never disclosed to *Kachchheri* at all, because of the inability of the disputants to spare time from work, disputant's unwillingness to be known as disputant, or due to their inability to pay the fine decided by the *Sipahi* or *Kachchheri*. This indicates that only 79 percent Kisans have access to the *Kachchheri*, and the rest are not participating in the community justice system.

I have not found any discriminations between Telia and Sindariya sub-groups. Similarly, I did not see any structural factors in the judiciary system in itself that hinder or prohibit women, the poor and physically challenged persons to attend the *Kachchheri*. I did observe a nominal number of female participants in the *Kachchheri* because of their overburden task at home. No democratic or judicial system is perfect in practice. The poor and the women have less access to the indigenous judiciary system not because the system is biased against them but because their economic and gender status constraint their access to and participation in the judiciary processes.

Hearing process in the Kachchheri

The dispute resolution process in the Kachchheri was found very perfect and mature in terms of democracy and justice. I realized the process of resolution session is advanced for justice delivery, for both the disputing parties and for implementation of the agreement. Disputants are also satisfied with the process, as well as with the justice given by the court. I came to know through the literature that there are four types of Alternative Dispute Resolution practices in the society and the most advanced and people friendly is mediation (Guliver 1979). The Kisan *Kachchheri* is like mediation, which offers a neutral and voluntary dispute resolution service to the community people. The dispute hearing process of the Kachchheri is as follows:

Case Registration: It is a common practice among the Kisan that a disputant who feels that he/she has been wronged by someone goes to *Kachchheri* authority for a case registration against thewrong doer. Most of the times the person who feels he/she has been wronged goes to *Kachchheri* for complaint registration, but a family member or a relative can also register a case on his/her behalf. Case registration is just a communication of the problem to the authority. So the *Kachchheri* receives a case very informally and just an oral complaint is sufficient to initiate the process forward.

Hearing of both parties: During case registration, the *Kachchheri* authority seeks detail information of the case and informs the complainer that he/she might be invited once before the session after hearing the case from the other disputant party. The same authority hears the case from the other party by inviting him/her to the *Kachchheri*. If the case was heard by *Sipahi* at village level, he will decide resolution session himself. If it was heard by *Wakil*, he fixes a date and time of resolution session or *Kachchheri* meeting in consultation with the king.

Invitation for dispute resolution: The *Kachchheri* authority invites both parties of the dispute for a resolution session. The disputants come along

with family members, relatives and witnesses to the *Kachchheri*, a bit earlier than the given time. Normally, *Kachchheri* meeting is organized in the given time. The *Wakil* announces the start of the meeting and then gives time to each party for case presentation.

Rule Setting: Immediately after the start of the session, one of the *Wakils* stands and announces that the session tries to resolve the case considering the responsibility of the authority to maintain peace in the community. Thereafter, he shares a couple of rules of the meeting, which hovers on the following themes: (i) we all are members of a community responsible to maintain peace, maintain our own tradition and culture, (ii) we follow our tradition and the rules of the *Kachchheri*, (iii) we speak turn by turn in the meeting and wait until one finishes his saying, (iv) we tell the truth, (v) we respect each other, and (vi) accept the agreement

Case presentation: Thereafter, a *Wakil* gives time to each party some time to present their case. After the completion of the presentations of both the parties, the Wakil gives permission for the witnesses and relatives of each party for presenting their views. The *Sipahi* of the concern village also attends the session and hears the process and presentation of each of the participants. The king also hears the dispute carefully without giving his view. However, the *Wakil* whispers to the king from time to time so that he understands the case.

Seeking the agreeable option: When the hearing is complete, the *Sipahi* stands and asks the disputants that if there is a possibility for agreement. Here, sometimes each party claims compensation or dignity from the other party as possible options for agreement. The *Sipahi* points out possible points of agreement. Meanwhile, the *Wakil* asks both the parties to come with an agreeable option and gives about 10 minutes. If disputants cannot come with an agreeable option, then the king assigns one of the *Wakils* to support them to seek an agreeable option. The process requires 10 minutes to two hours as per the complexity of the case.

Agreement: The *Wakil*, who is assigned the responsibility of finding agreeable option, presents the agreeable option in the *Kachchheri*. The king asks the disputants, whether they are happy with what has been agreed upon. He then announces that if the agreement is not implemented in practice tomorrow, then none of the disputants can complain the issue of non- compliance with the *Kachchheri* authority. By this time, both the disputants say that they have sought an agreeable option by themselves and will not come to the court again for the same.

Reintegration: After hearing their joint voice of agreement and readiness to implement the agreement in practice, the *Wakil* requests the disputants for re-integration. Re-integration is symbolized by exchanging a flower, if the case is about transaction or something. If the case is about assault or against infringement of rights, then the wrongdoer has to offer a little amount of local wine (few sips) to the victim first and to all the participants. The re-integration process ends when disputants embrace each other and says that we are re-integrated.

Implementation of the decision: The participants clap their hands during the time of embracement. Meanwhile, one of the *Wakils* stands and assigns a responsibility to the *Sipahi* that he has to report to the *Kachchheri* after a week whether the disputants implemented the agreement in practice or not. This is the final process of the *Kachchheri*. The king announces the end of the session and each participant goes back to their home.

Appellant of the cases

As I mentioned earlier, I have spent about one and half year in the community for fieldwork, but I have not met a single appellant, who has appealed again after a *Kachchheri* decision. I was interested to know about it and asked many of the disputants why they did not appeal the decision. None of the disputants informed me that they were threatened by their authority. Rather, all of them expressed that they were satisfied

with the decisions made in the *Kachchheri*, therefore they did not need to appeal the earlier decision.

This issue was raised by the author to the authority as well. The king said that Kisan authority does not influence any decisions. The decisions are made by disputants and the officials facilitated the session and inspired the disputing parties to come to a decision. Both the *Wakil* think that if disputants go for appeal again, then it would be s their fault because the disputing parties themselves had made and agreed to the decision. I also realized the strength in their saying because I have seen a higher satisfaction level among the disputants on their agreement/decision. Therefore, none of them had appealed the earlier decision, till the date of my study.

Conclusion

The fundamental characteristic of modern democracy is good governance, transparency, people's participation and respect of choices, freedom and rights and access to resources. Political scientists, define democracy as "for the people", "by the people" and "to the people". The political definition of democracy is taken as principle by all types of so called democratic states, but great variations can be seen in practice. The variations are named as liberal democracy, deliberative democracy, people's democracy, substantive democracy and so on. Following the democratic political system, the western countries and nowadays some of the eastern countries also have advanced capitalism and have furthered their physical facilities. Moreover, so called socialist countries have also become advance in term of capitalism, business, information technology and physical facilities and claim themselves as democratic. This situation leaves a question open, whether, democracy is governance of people and freedom of choice or an economic advancement of the nation created in political terror. In my opinion, the common rhetoric understanding of democracy and its various uses forced us to categorize the people's participatory exercise of simple societies as undemocratic.

In fact, capitalism and advancement of physical facilities are part of economic system. The political system of democracy includes governance that includes people's participation, freedom of choices, respect of rights, access to resources, and free and fair election and justice system. If we examine these components of democracy in the *Baiga* system of the Kisan, we will find out that these components are hundred percent applicable to the government system of the Kishan people.. The community assembly elects their authority: the king, *Wakil* and *Sipahi*, every year and the authority works for the people voluntarily. Thus, the *Baiga* system of the Kisans is " of the the people, by the people and for the people" in practice, not only in slogan. The economy of the community is very simple; most of them are struggling for subsistence.

If we look at the justice system of modern democratic state, we find layers of structure of court. However, the court follows formal process of case registration and hearing that hinders poor and vulnerable people to access justice, as they cannot hire a lawyer, cannot provide proofs and witness and cannot follow for years. Moreover, most of the decisions of the court are unimplemented and above 50 percent cases are appealed again the earlier decision. The Kisan *Kachchheri* receives a case informally, resolves it in the agreement of disputants and reintegrates them in the session and also gives responsibility to concerned *Sipahi* for follow up of the agreement. Hence, all cases registered in the *Kachchheri* are resolved and is not appealed again. This proves that justice system of the simple society is far more simple and accessible to all, and is people friendly and democratic.

So called democracy exercised by formal states in the modern day do not have a long history than the enlightenment movement of the Western Europe. On the other hand, simple societies have been exercising democratic practices since the origin of their society without using the word even before the existence of the formal states (as the history of formal state goes back to 5000 years) for maintaining peace and order in the society/community. If we look at the political system of the societies

of Europe, Asia and Africa, before enlightenment movement and origin of capitalism, we can see the principles and practices of democracy at societal level. Therefore, I argue that democracy is neither an ideology of the west nor a concept of capitalism and advancement. Rather, it is a participatory governance and justice system of simple societies which was copied by the formal states in the Western Europe after enlightenment movement and politicized at large.

Anthropologist Gluckman (1973), Leach (1954), Pospsil (1978), Moore (2001) and many others present the cases of simple societies of Asia and Africa as examples of original democracy and justice system. The case of Kisan also gives me sufficient space to argue that democracy and justice system are local cultural practices of simple societies learnt from the process of socialization. Therefore, many simple societies of Asia and Africa, which are not exposed to formal states, have election to elect their authority; they practice participatory decision making processes and guarantee individual freedom and rights. Moreover, such societies not only exercise rights and freedom, but also equally respect rights and freedom of others. The Kisan law provides an example in this respect, and also gives special attention to poor, women, vulnerable groups and senior people and children in daily life.

Formal democracy is power centric and the power is associated with economic and physical advancement of the state. The practices of democracy are learnt from simple societies; it is not developed as a theory or a model or contributed by a scholar or an institution. Therefore, it is exercised differently by different capitalist countries as a piece of cloth, which can be used differently as quilt, rug or bed cover, room separator, rain coat and so on. As it is a power centric concept/ ideology, all types of economically better off countries (from capitalist to socialists such as England, USA to China) can claim themselves as democratic. Simple societies of Asia and Africa have developed democratic practices and justice system long, before the formation of the formal states and exercised it in daily life, though they are unable

to claim democratic because of their economic and marginalized status. On the other hand, economically better off countries, whether they are capitalists or communists, easily claim to be democratic. Therefore, democracy can be a rhetorical political ideology and exercised variously as per their interests and economic abilities. However, democracy is a traditional way of life and day to day practice of many simple societies like the Kisan.

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Urbanism, Land & Peasantry

Experiencing Urbanism: A Case of Putalibazaar Municipality and Waling Municipality, Syangja

Amrit Kumar Bhandari*

Background

"…. [I]t is now claimed that more than half of the world's population has become 'urban'; and with some half a dozen cities boasting populations of greater than 15 million, there is no sign of this trend reversing" (Rapport and Overing 2003, 374). According to Orum (2004, 853), "Urbanization is the process whereby large numbers of people congregate and settle in an area, eventually developing social institutions, such as businesses and government, to support themselves". Urbanization has already established itself as a form of civilization. Roberts and Kanaley (2006) agree with this by arguing that:

> Urbanization—the spatial concentration of people and economic activity—is the most important social transformation in the history of civilization since man changed from being a nomadic hunter-gatherer and adopted a settled, subsistence agricultural way of life… It has proven to be an unstoppable and a mostly desirable phenomenon. Cities are the foundation of modern civilization. (p. 1).

The urbanization process is directly related to the city-making process. As a result of urbanization, cities are increasing in number and also their population. Glaeser (2011, 1) highlights the global process of urbanization as follows:

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Two hundred forty-three million Americans crowd together in the 3 percent of the country that is urban. Thirty-six million people live in and around Tokyo, the most productive metropolitan area in the world. Twelve million people reside in central Mumbai, and Shanghai is almost as large. On a planet with vast amounts of space (all of humanity could fit in Texas—each of us with a personal townhouse), we choose cities. Although it has become cheaper to travel long distances, or to telecommute from the Ozarks to Azerbaijan, more and more people are clustering closer and closer together in large metropolitan areas. Five million more people every month live in the cities of the developing world, and in 2011, more than half the world's population is urban.

The process of urbanization has been intensifying throughout the world, and Nepal is no more an exception. The number of urban, urbanizing, and semi urban areas, is increasing throughout the country. Some of these areas are exhibiting spontaneous urbanization while others are officially designated as urban areas by the Nepali Government in the name of municipalities. In Nepal, there are 217 officially designated urban areas, which have been categorized into metropolitan city, sub-metropolitan cities, and municipalities.

Urban anthropology is the specialized field of anthropology which is primarily concerned with the study and analysis of urban life, urban planning, and other urban dynamics. As a sub-field of anthropology, it is of a recent origin. Angelini gives the outline of history of urban anthropology as:

The term urban anthropology came to designate a subfield of cultural anthropology in the 1960s, even though anthropologists have been conducting research in cities since the 1930s. While ethnography, the core methodological tradition of anthropology, derives from in-depth studies of rural and village life, the development of urban anthropology also reflects broader conceptual debates within the discipline. New

conceptualizations of the city have influenced how anthropologists think about culture and social change. (Angelini 2009, 840)

Both Putalibazaar Municipality and Waling Municipality were formed in 1996 by the government by merging different pre-existing VDCs[1]. However, most of the settlement areas and localities within these two designated municipal areas had lacked basic infrastructures like safe drinking water supplies, electricity, sanitary waste disposal system, and solid waste management systems, and urban road at the time of their formation.

Roberts and Kanaley (2006, 1) are prominent amongst the scholars who view cities as very productive centers by arguing that cities "are the engine room of economic growth and the centers of culture, entertainment, innovation, education, knowledge, and political power". So far what the world has perceived and most of us think and believe is that the urban areas or cities are more developed with better facilities. Anthropologist Hoebel equates civilization process with "city making" by insisting that "civilization means 'city making' where civilization took over, the primitive tribesman moved into town and became an urbanite of whom the most sophisticated were 'urbane' or he remained on his land as a satellite peasant villager" (Hoebel 1958, 195-196). Cities characterize and reflect a different level of development and civilization as compared to the rural areas. However, the context of these two municipalities is different as even today we can find a number of remote and less developed rural settings in terms of infrastructural development. To sum up, these areas had very few prerequisites needed to declare a certain area as a municipality.

1 Former Chandikalika VDC, Satupasal VDC, Karendada VDC, Putalibazaar VDC, and Ganeshpur VDC were merged to form Putalibazaar Municipality. Similarly,Dhanubase VDC, Waling VDC and PekhuBaghkhor VDC were merged to form Waling Municipality.

As evident in the public gossips even these days, the municipality declaration had brought varied types of hopes and expectations among the local people. At least, some of them were feeling promoted immediately into an 'urban' category, while others were thinking that the municipality would be a vehicle for the much needed *bikas* ordevelopment and thus they were dreaming of rapid development of urban amenities. Still there were some others who used to view the declaration as an imposition of urbanity, as it was made without the availability of basic urban amenities. Such changed thoughts sowed the seeds of numerous social and cultural changes.

Statement of the problem

Nepalese government seems to have adopted the policy of initiating development of rural and semi urban settings by declaring them as municipalities. Probably, it had imagined of generating greater amount of funds, thereby increasing investment in urban infrastructural development through municipality. Even after 18 years of municipality declaration, many basic urban infrastructures are yet to be installed. And, thus from the infrastructural development point of view, the real feeling of being an "urbane" is yet to be given to the local people of Putalibazaar and Waling. Examining the success or failure of such policies of Nepalese government would be anthropologically relevant to understand how the state creates "urban population" in Nepal.

Urban anthropologists have already pioneered in research in various issues related to dynamics of lives in the cities in various part of the world. Urban anthropology marks a distinct divergence from the traditional anthropological orientation while focusing on the more 'civilized' urbanites of the cities. As argued by Basham (1978), urban anthropology was used only after 1960's in order to counter anthropology's traditional emphasis on primitive and peasant people to the exclusion of urban, complex and industrial societies. According to Kemper and Rollwagen (1996, 1337):

> While some anthropologists research in particular cities, they do so without much, if any, concern for the urban context; others are concerned with the structure of city life and its impact on human behavior locally or cross-culturally; and still others are concerned with the development of international urban systems through time and space as distinctive social-cultural and political-economic domains.

Similarly, Angelini (2009, 840) describes the dynamics of the field of urban anthropology as "one of the most productive tensions within urban anthropology is whether it construes itself as study of the city or in the city. With notable exceptions, anthropologists have generally treated the city as a context for research rather than as their object of study." However, in the Nepalese context, the case of urban anthropological research can be explained by recalling Low (1996, 384), who asserts that many scholars "argue that while anthropological data are essential to understating urban problems, anthropologists have hesitated to participate in urban public policy debates." According to Bhandari (2010, 12) "this is particularly true for the case of mainstream anthropology and anthropologists of Nepal who are yet to cast a prominent mark on Nepalese urban policy debates."

Municipality declaration could not foster urban infrastructural development as expected; nevertheless, it paved the way for other changes like social, cultural, economic changes in the society of Putalibazaar and Waling. As a result, there has taken place a number of changes in the local society and culture. This paper revolves around assessing those changes in general. The analysis of social and cultural change in any setting includes a number of aspects and dimensions. There can be a number of issues to be addressed, factors to be accounted for, and consequences to be elaborated. In such case, variables tend to be numerous. Keeping the complex nature of socio-cultural changes in mind, this research paper analyzes the major changes that have taken place on socio-cultural life after the municipality declaration in Putalibazaar

and Waling under some selected variables, including type of housing, basic urban facilities at households, practice of saving money, way of transaction, type of '*khaja*'(snacks) eaten, organization of feasts and celebrations, and inter-personal relationships. Thus, in particular, this paper aims at answering some basic questions like how these social and cultural changes can be related to urbanism and how they can be linked to the theories regarding the causes and consequences of urbanization across the world put forward by anthropologists and other scholars.

Study area and research methods

The research from which this paper emerged was carried out in Putalibazaar Municipality and Waling Municipality of Syangja district of Gandaki zone, Nepal. The major market centers of these two municipalities are about 27 km far from each other. Both of them exhibit similarity in the sense that Aandhikhola (one of the main rivers of Syangja district) divides them into two halves. In case of Putalibazaar, out of total 13 wards, 9 wards are located towards the highway side of the municipality while remaining four are on the other side of Aandhikhola. Similarly, in case of Waling Municipality, out of total 11 wards, 8 wards are on the highway side and the rest three wards are on the other side of Aadhikhola. The study area characterizes a kind of plurality in terms of the caste/ethnicity and religious identities.

Primarily, this research was conducted by using a descriptive research design to highlight the various facets of urbanization occurring in Putalibazaar and Waling. It was based on primary data of qualitative nature, but some important secondary data were also collected. The qualitative data needed for addressing the study objectives were collected by using research tools, namely: observation, interview, and focus group discussion techniques.

Findings and discussion

Urban imagination among local people at the time of municipality declaration

The government's main aim behind the declaration was an attempt to accelerate the pace of the popular notion of development. So, there was mainly a change in administrative setup from a VDC to a municipality. However, for the local people, it was much more for it had led them to make numerous expectations related to urbanity and this fostered a distinct urban imagination.

The researcher had experienced the outpouring of such expectations during informal talks made in the course of the fieldwork. As one of the key informants posited that a large number local residents of Putalibazaar viewed the declaration of municipality as a change in their status from '*gaule'* (villager) to '*nagarbasi'* (urbanite). As put forward by local political leaders of Putalibazaar and Waling, people were ecstatic because of the change in their address from Village Development Committee to Municipality. One of the respondents from Waling recalled her expectation from municipality declaration as "*pahila pahila ta hamlai gamle vanera khub hepthe, aba hami pani Pokhara, Kathmandu, Butwal jasta thulthula thamma jada chhati fulayera vanna painchha nagarbasi vanera*" (earlier they were insulted by being called as villagers, but now they too can proudly give their identity as urbanites whenever they go to bigger cities like Pokhara, Kathmandu, Butwal, and other cities.). Later similar views were recorded from a number of people from both of the municipalities. Clearly, there was development of new identity of "municipal citizenship" among the local folks.

Some of the people were saying that they had imagined the flourishing of development infrastructure due to the municipal declaration, while others wondered why these areas were declared as municipality. In the words of one of the participants of the focus group discussion held in Waling, "At the beginning, I was amazed how a municipality would

look like." He went on saying: "With municipality declaration, people had felt that each and every household would be blessed with facilities of electricity, access roads, drinking water, toilet, and so on."

Definitely, there were hopes for better future with urban areas in the form of municipality. So, based on the experiences shared by the local people, it can be said that those early days were quite chaotic and full of expectations. Based on the descriptions made by local people, it can be argued that the declaration had helped to develop an urban imagination in the local people's mind. Local people in both Putalibazaar and Waling Municipality revealed during the fieldwork that such urban imagination had a variety of facets.

As one of the interviewees remembered, some people had imagined of better road to ease transportation while others had hoped getting the electricity facility in mind. Similarly, some others had imagined for all-round improvement in all possible basic infrastructures. Certainly, people were excited to imagine urban infrastructure in their places. One of the respondents interpreted that for certain sector of municipality the municipal declaration produced an overwhelmingly high expectations among the residents of both of these municipalities.

The urban experience after municipality declaration

Changes on social and cultural life of the people after municipality declaration

Rural areas and urban areas have different types of society and culture. Socio-cultural life, social relationships, norms, values, beliefs, and so on are different in a rural setting as compared to an urban one. Redfield's folk–urban continuum model (1930) posited rural and urban society at opposite poles of a spectrum (Angelini 2009). At the rural extreme, there were small, homogeneous, isolated, and traditional communities which were economically self-sufficient and had only a rudimentary division of labor. In other words, social life is characterized by tradition, harmony,

homogeneity, and isolation in rural settings, which become eroded by increasing urbanization. In Redfield's scheme, rural cultures become fragmented and disorganized as they enter into urban domains.

The study area included significantly high proportion of typical rural settings, which are continuously being influenced by urban features once they have been made parts of a designated urban area as Putalibazaar Municipality and Waling Municipality. Naturally, the existing social and cultural characteristics saw urban influences and gradual changes.

Changes in housing pattern

Both urban and rural areas mark out distinction from each other regarding the type of houses. Whereas modern sophisticated to simple RCC houses characterize urban area, simple traditional houses feature rural area. Based on the type of houses, a setting is often explained as an urban or rural.

As observed during the field, most of the houses were found to be of traditional type, either with zinc roof or slate roof or straw roof. These households exhibit the rural characteristic of the study area. Importantly, even in rural settlements like Sataun, Lamage, Hirapata, Satupasal, and Ramkosh, of Putalibazaar Municipality and Hatiya, Pekhu, Amdali, Mirdi, and Triyashi of Waling Municipality, there are some RCC houses which appeared to have been built relatively recently. These RCC houses reflect people's recent attraction towards urban features. As one of the informants of this research said - these days if people had to reconstruct their houses they would prefer an RCC one.

Status of basic urban facilities in houses

Urban households are different from rural ones due to the possession of certain amenities like specialized rooms like kitchen, bedroom, drawing room, bathroom and toilet, dining room, and soon. During the field work, observations were made in different localities in both the municipalities to get an idea about the possession of these urban

amenities in the households. Newly built houses in both municipalities had separate rooms according to purpose even in the rural settings. Observation in Pekha, Baghkhor, Triyashi, and other settlements of Waling and Sataun, Ramkosh, Hirapata, Karendada, Satupasal, Lamange, and other settlements of Putalibazaar showed that people had built separate kitchen, bedroom, and toilet even in their old houses. Buying TV and connecting a cable network to it, using LPG stove in kitchen, and managing tap water for kitchen have also been familiar sights in most of the households.

During the fieldwork, the local people revealed that the installation or arrangement of basic urban facilities in the households occurred predominantly after the municipal declaration. Construction of separate kitchen, bedroom, and drawing rooms fostered hugely after municipal declaration. Purchasing and using computer, television, cable connection, landline, mobile phone, LPG cylinder and stove greatly increased once people became identified and were aware as urban dwellers. Had there been no declaration of municipality, there would not have been increase in such practices, and easy access to market and feeling of being urban must have encouraged people to use facilities more and more—one of the interviewees marked. Similarly, one of the informants from Satupasal also agreed that people were trying to adopt the so-called urban lifestyle with increase in awareness among them. She also revealed that these basically urban features have already become a part of their life and people now can be seen borrowing loans from different groups for buying LPG cylinder. Road networks have been playing an instrumental role in facilitating the use of such urban facilities.

Dependence on market for food items

During informal talks with local people and interviews with respondents, it was understood that self-sufficiency of people through farming is ever decreasing and there has been a clear dependence on market for different food items. Most of the people interviewed during the fieldwork revealed that their own production had been gradually declining. As a result, they

now depend upon market for cereals or food grains much more than in the past. The households' reliance on market for vegetables appeared comparatively much lower than other food items. This is due to the fact that the households most often grow different types of vegetables in their farmland and their cultivation is relatively easier than other food crops.

Changes on transactional practices and saving practices

Urbanization or urbanism tends to alter transactional practices and saving of money among people. An urban area shows a remarkable distinction from a rural one in terms of transaction made in day-to-day life. Urban life totally depends on cash economy. The local people said that they used cash directly for paying wages, small-scale donation, and purchase of daily needed goods and services. But for large-scale payments like large scale donation, loan payments, and so on, they used checkbooks. Here, we can clearly find the involvement of cash in almost all respondents' daily life. In this sense, they have developed an urbanite feature of dependence of cash economy.

The above explanation clearly shows that there is dominance of cash economy in recent times in both the municipalities. A large amount of money enters this area through remittance. Besides, non-agricultural occupations also generate significant income among the local people. In an urban area, people have a number of sectors where they can invest their income; they also have the option of depositing in their bank account or they can even use it for lending in interest.

Some of the households were found to be saving their money in local informal groups and cooperatives. In different localities within the study area, there are a number of groups such as farmers' saving groups, women's saving groups, forest users' saving groups, school saving groups, etc. These groups are informal agencies but people invest money there on monthly basis. The money invested per member differs from group to group, but usually, it ranges from Rs. 50 to Rs. 1,000. As an

informant revealed, each month a large sum of money is collected and invested in the study area through informal groups. Echoing in similar vein, a local social worker of Amdaanda in Putalibazaar stated, it can be said that the spirit of working together has become overspread in the study area. But a question can be raised in terms of the use of money taken by members as loan from these groups, i.e., whether they have been using it for productive or unproductive activities.

Some of the respondents saved money in other formal agencies like local cooperatives. Collectively, the local groups and cooperatives have been instrumental in developing a habit of saving among people and developed possible practices for economic security in the future. In sum, in terms of saving money, certain urban features have developed among people of the study area. But still there is a prevalence of traditional way of saving money at home in the study area, which cannot be taken as productive practice. The stretching of formal banking into the study area is a very good sign and may prove to be vital for the economic practices in this area.

Changes in consumptions of 'khaja' at home

Urban and rural areas have significant differences in term of *khaja*(snacks) used in the morning and in the evening. Urbanism gradually results in changes in khaja practices. As noted in focused group discussion (FGDs), people's attraction towards packed and baked items is ever rising in the study area. These readymade items are preferred in the urban areas due to busy life. But these semi urban areas have also shown a great attraction towards finished goods in *khaja*.

As one of the respondents quoted during a FGD, people think that consuming packed goods is a modern or urban feature so they even use it in hard laboring agricultural work, though, these food items may not provide as much calories as provided by traditional items. Such shift in use of "*khaja*" exemplifies the shift in consumption pattern among people. Their changed consumption behavior is an indication that people

are striving to change their rural status into an urban one, as quoted by the participants of focus group discussion.

Changes on observation of some selected rituals/events

The process of urbanization brings changes in existing social and cultural practices in a rural or semi urban setting. During this research, attempts were made to understand the changes in two of the most important socio-cultural practices: birthday celebration and marriage. In this section, changes observed in birthday celebration and organization of marriage and other associated activities have been highlighted.

Birthday celebration by putting off candles and slicing cakes is very much popular practice in urban areas. The people of the study area were found to be aware of it. As reported by the local people during interview and informal discussions, the celebration of birthday in so-called urban style is getting gradually popular year after year. Most of them reasoned that the access to cable TV network is the most important factor for it. During fieldwork, simply literate or even illiterate people were also found to be using the term “birthday” to refer to birthday. One of the interviewees, who had served for five years in Waling as elected people's representative, believed that the municipal declaration has been largely responsible for popularizing birthday celebration. For him, since the sense of being municipal dweller has developed among local people, they now feel easy to imitate the practices being practiced in major cities of Nepal like Pokhara, Kathmandu, and Butwal.

Marriage has been a very important socio-cultural event in Nepal, and traditional arranged marriage is highly valued. In the past, people in a particular setting used to participate in various events of a marriage being held in their community or society. Management of feasts and other events during marriage were done in a communal way with people exchanging their assistance reciprocally. Whether or not one is closely related to other by blood, they used to assist in others' household work during wedding as actively as possible.

In most of the rural settlements of both the municipalities, it has been found that marriage has still been a socio-cultural event but in recent times significant changes have been noticed. During the field work, the researcher observed that the catering service was being used in a marriage event in Lamage area of Putalibazaar. Some of the local people admitted that the hiring of catering is a sign that the social and cultural relationship among people is getting to a different dimension. More and more individualist features have started to become dominant, and local people were found to be equating this change with the urbanization and municipality declaration.

Changes in interpersonal relationships in the neighborhood

Rural lifestyle is built around frequent sharing of things, goods and ideas. We can usually find these people sharing daily needed things like rice, ghee, milk, sugar, and vegetables. Not only that rural people frequently engage with each other by sharing moments of happiness, sadness, and others. More importantly, there can be found relatively more people around an individual to share with in a day-to-day life and to assist in various critical or difficult situations in a rural society. Contrary to this, these features are found to a lesser extent in an urban society. Busy schedule, individualistic feelings etc. propel people away from their neighbors. The scenes of party being organized in one household while another household is observing mourning at the same time are common phenomena in an urban setting.

In his famous article, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," Wirth (1938) claimed that urbanism, or urbanization, resulted in any of several important social consequences among people: (1) impersonality and anonymity in everyday life, (2) loss of trust among people, and (3) various forms of social disorganization, as in higher rates of crime than in rural areas.

I was inquisitive to know if these urban features outlined by Wirth have developed in Putalibazaar and Waling. An informant told me:

> In my personal view, the selfish acts are ever increasing in the last 4-5 years; the whole society is immersed in such selfish activities. The kind of mutual respect, cooperation and friendly relation, helping attitude, etc. which had been a dominant phenomenon in the past is gradually becoming a tale. Such transformation of society is a worrying sign and such selfish tendencies are more in the Waling Bazaar……

This was a view of an informant who lives in ward no. 8 of Waling regarding the prevalence of selfish behaviors and their status in the past. Other respondents were also expressing similar views regarding this. Most of them revealed that individualistic feeling has remarkably risen in the last 10 years or more. Thus, the findings are clearly support Wirth's explanation.

For the most of the people interviewed and discussed, there were many neighbors in the past to share with in the daily life but now their number has decreased. These respondents opined that people have started to generate a kind of prestige issue regarding the possession of goods associated with urban life. A participant of focus group discussion shared that more people now feel asking others for things as decline in their social status or lowering of their image, so they opt more for buying things than seeking for reciprocal exchange with neighbors.

Similarly, most of the interviewees agreed that interpersonal ties among people in the study area are gradually weakening. One of the respondents reasoned that such weakening is due to increasing urban features among the people in the study area. With increased dependence on market products for livelihood, people now very rarely practice some of the popular activities of the past such as '*paincho*'(reciprocal sharing of goods and foodstuffs).

In the past, one of the common activities which used to be the evidence of close interpersonal relationship was leaving one's house keys to other households in case all the members have to be out of the home and

nobody remains there to look after the home. Definitely, leaving one's keys in others household is a sign and symbol of trust on each other, which is very strong in the rural areas as compared to urban ones. So, regarding the practice of leaving keys to other households, people have started to turn more suspicious than in the past. This indicates weakening of bonding among these people.

Despite the above explained social and cultural changes leading to urbanism, it would be wrong to generalize that the society and culture of Putalibazaar and Waling has already urbanized. In fact, it represents a transitional stage. Definitely, urbanism has already stepped up, but the rural identities are also existing providing a duality. So, municipalization and urbanization account to a certain extent for those changes linked with urbanism. However, the role played by other factors in bringing those changes too deserves certain credit. Among these factors, globalization can be taken the most important one. As Giddens (2001, 61) maintains "inevitably, our personal lives have been altered as globalizing forces enter into our local contexts, our homes and our communities through impersonal sources – such as the media, the internet, and popular culture – as well as through personal contact with individuals from other countries and cultures."

Similar to Giddens' remarks, it is quite obvious that the globalizing forces have already penetrated into the family and socio-cultural life of the inhabitants of Putalibazaar and Waling Municipality. Television with cable connection, mobile phone, mobile internet, massive number of emigrants to various countries and their frequent visits to their parental home, etc., have been in an increasing trend. These globalizing forces are encouraging people to develop urbanism as a way of life.

Put in another way, it seems that by incorporating numerous products and features of globalization consciously or unconsciously, local people can be considered to be propelling society in Putalibazaar and Waling

towards what Beck (1992) suggests a 'risk society'. Giddens (2001, 965) sums up Beck's idea of risk society as:

> The risk society, he argues, is not limited to environmental and health risk alone – it includes a whole series of interrelated changes within contemporary social life: shifting employment patterns, heightened job insecurity, the decline influence of tradition and custom on self-identities, the erosion of traditional family patterns and democratization of personal relationships.

The explanation of changes made above clearly suggests that the societies in these two municipalities are more or less heading towards a risk society. They are gradually modifying their way of life in the directions as driven by the globalizing forces consciously or unconsciously. However, people here are hardly aware about these potential 'risks' of globalization, they are just engaged in what can be called imitation.

Institutionalization of '*tole bikas sanstha*' (locality development organization)

In what can be labeled as a much positive approach for urbanization, these municipalities have institutionalized *'Tole Bikas Sanstha'* (Locality Development Organization). It is a formal agency aimed at integrating the neighborhood and thereby activating them for the development of their own locality. As Power (2001, 346) stresses:

> Cities are made up of neighbourhoods and their fortunes are locked together. The success of cities depends on successful neighbourhoods, and therefore the urban agenda – an attempt to reverse the urban exodus and overcome social exclusion – forces on neighbourhoods as well as cities and regions. They are intrinsically interconnected.

The concept and practice of *'Tole Bikas Sanstha'* has brought forward the notion of developing a particular locality with the active engagement/ participation of local inhabitants. For the dwellers of Putalibazaar and

Waling, the allocation into *'Tole Bikas Sanstha'* has provided a different urban experience. This practice of involving in *'Tole Bikas Sanstha'* can be evaluated in Wirth's terms. According to Wirth (1938, 22) "While on the one hand the traditional ties of human association are weakened, urban existence involves a much greater degree of interdependence between people and a more complicated, fragile and volatile form of mutual interrelations over many phases of which individuals as such can exert scarcely any control." People's engagement in *'Tole Bikas Sanstha'* also exemplifies this notion of Wirth as mentioned above.

Payment of tax in municipal office

Though having associated with more rural characteristics, the study area is a part of designated urban area and paying taxes in municipality has provided the people with another kind of experience of urbanism.

During the interviews and informal discussions, the most repeated answer of the question of what municipality has done after its formation was that it imposed taxes. In both of the municipalities, almost all the respondents and discussants maintained that the most noticeable activity of the municipalization has been the imposition and collection of taxes from the locals. They were found to be very much unhappy to pay taxes, despite lacking minimum urban infrastructure. Some of the people were found to be very angry towards municipality for the same reason.

During the visits to municipality offices, I observed people lining up to pay taxes. Their disappointment was evident in their reaction towards questions related to taxes. It appears that the local people think they have been fulfilling their duty of paying all the taxes, but the municipalities have been failing to address people's expectations. Here it also appears that their relationship is a one-way traffic with only one party fulfilling assigned duty while other falling far from making people's urban imagination a truth.

Conclusion

Local people had overwhelmingly high expectations from the municipal declaration. But even after passing more than 18 years of that declaration, most of those expectations have not been met. However, the municipality declaration has led to a number of social and cultural changes in Putalibazaar and Waling. Housing practice has come under the influence of urbanism, so is the case of food and transactional practices. The way of observing lifecycle rituals like birth and marriage has been indicating towards weakening interpersonal ties. Individualism is becoming prominent with the gradual decline in reciprocity. However, it would be wrong to conclude that urbanism has totally transformed social and cultural life. In fact, it has driven the society into a transitional stage from where the only likely destiny is higher form of urbanism itself. In sum, urbanism has been evolving in a definite way in the social and cultural life of the local people. Thus, it can be concluded that municipality declaration has been a vehicle for the rise of urbanism in the social and cultural life of Putalibazaar and Waling of Syangja.

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Peasantry Transformation through Development: An Anthropological Study of the Newar Peasants of Khokana

Vishnu Prasad Acharya*

Introduction

This article discusses what explicit and implicit enablers are responsible for peasantry transformation on the one hand, and how neoliberal political economy has influenced and forced the peasants to come out from their traditional occupation, on the other. In donig so, this article explores the internal and external forces that trigger peasantry transformation. Peasantry has been the foundation of Nepali economy and an integral part of Nepal's culture, knowledge system, and ways of life (Regmi 1967). The economy of peasants is essentially a domestic one in which production is for the use of household or kin and the surplus is distributed to the others. This paper focuses on peasants of Khokana, Lalitpur, who are the skilled farmers with abundant agricultural fertile land and who were self-sufficient in agriculture until the recent period. But today they are selling their fertile land and coming out from farming and leaving behind their indigenous skill associated with this traditional occupation. My central argument in this article is that peasants who had control in their own skills and land resources were sustainable in the past. But today the local peasants are not functioning in the same ways as in the past. Peasants are gradually losing their fertile arable land and land resources. This process is eventually making them landless and dependent on the market.

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This paper is based on empirical data that I collected in the months of June and July 2014 for my M.Phil. Degree in Anthropology at Tribhuvan University. Key informant interview, observation, and life history were the major tools of data collection.

Understanding peasantry

Peasants have been defined by different scholars at different times and spaces. The majority of the scholars working on peasantry (Wolf 1965; Delton 1972; Firth 1995) have explained peasants as a system of small producers with a simple technology and equipment, often relying primarily for their subsistence on what they themselves produce. These scholars have defined who the peasants are and what they do but have not discussed about what implicit factors are responsible for peasantry transformation in modern times, particularly under the neoliberal regime. Thorner (1963), Lewis (1962), and Kearney (1998) conceptualize peasantry by looking at rural society in general and consider the problematic distinction between rural and urban in particular. Most definitions and debates about peasants have focused on their presumed social, economic, cultural, and political characteristics.

The primary means of livelihood of a peasant is usually seen as the cultivation of soil. The family is the main unit of production; in some cases, however, the household may not just consist of members of family but also the additional hired hands. They may also engage in other activities like handicraft or occasional wage laboring apart from farming. Peasant qualities include household farming organized for one simple reproduction, solidarity, reciprocity and egalitarianism among and between the community members. Their ways of life emphasize commitment to the communal values based on households, kin and community, and they maintain local harmony with nature and social embeddedness that fulfills their bio-cultural requirements (Wolf 1957). Eric Wolf's (1957) articulation on peasants depicts what peasantry is and what it fulfills, but such studies can not shed light on understinding the transformation of peasantry under the contemporary neoliberal

regime. Rhoades and Booth (1982) used farmer-back-to-farmer model in order to mitigate with the sense of mutually supporting pattern of concepts, analysis, methods and behavior for better result. According to them, the key farmers choose, experiment, and adopt agricultural pattern in order to survive and do better. They carried out research in Peru at the International Potato Center and observed farmers in Kenya storing potatoes in diffuse light by using their indigenous knowledge. They came with the findings that industrial and green revolution agriculture are both relatively simple in their farming systems, often with large fields and mono-cropping, uniform in their environment, and low risk. My research data and findings differ from their argument as peasants are not returning back to their eco-friendly agricultural productivity mediated through farmer-back-to farmer model in my study area. Unlike the model that emphasizes transfer of technology from the center, Robert Chambers and Ghidyal (1985) deployed "farmer first and last" model in which farmers make decisions based on knowledge, problems, analysis and priorities set by the farmers themselves, and farm according to their indigenous knowledge and its sustainability. They do emphasize how farmers can sustain their agriculture by using their indigenous knowledge in congruence with environment but do not focus on why peasants are forced to sell their agricultural land in the recent period.

James Scott's research (1973) on hydraulic agriculture river valley civilization in Southeast Asia delineates about peasantry and its high mobility and transformation due to the intervention of the state; hence, the state played coercive role towards peasantry transformation, but he also does not discuss about what explicit and implicit factors are responsible for recent agricultural transformation besides the state intervention. Hobsbawm (1982) carried out the research in Scotland and Latin American states and found that capitalistic market with specialized productions provided larger avenues for peasants to come out from their traditional occupation. He further mentions that 17th century Latin American haciendas were as capitalist as in the 20th century. Changes in

law, capitalistic economy, and social system enabled the small farmers to transform from their traditional farming to modern farming system. My research findings, considering the difference in time-space and focus, differ from Hobsbawm's findings. The farmers in my study area are opting out from their subsistence farming to other occupations without first shifting into modern agriculture; the local farmers are coming out of agriculture due to industrialization and urbanization. Shanin (1972) carried out research in Russian peasants and came up with the findings that peasants gave up their traditional occupation due to overexploitation by the state. The Russian peasants were brutally exploited through extra tax, corvée labor and domination in the name of low class citizens. But Shanin's (1972) work is silent in mentioning what other socio-political economic factors triggered peasantry transformation. Hence, this research aims to bridge the previous research gap by exploring explicit and implicit hidden enablers of peasantry transformation.

Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon (1979) studied Nepali peasants by deploying political economic lens along with dependency theoretical model. Their study shows how the progressive incorporation of Nepal's domestic economy into the world capitalist economy weakened the local economic productive system, including the agriculture sector. Their study also supports the earlier finding such as that of Regmi (1967) who also argued that peasants were used as corvée laborers in hilly region and tax payers in Tarai region during the Rana regime. Alternative sources of revenue extracted from the peasantry through traditional means of tribute, enforced military service, slavery and corvée labor during the the Rana regime had provided funds for a small circle of influential families who would later set up services for rich tourists, such as luxury hotels, industrial enterprises, and large-scale trade after 1950s. Blaikie et al. (1979) have explained Nepali peasantry and their relationship with the state as mediated through exploitation and marginalization. But their study, particularly their world system approach, is less relevant to

understand about the recent trends of transformation influenced through neoliberal practices.

Toffin (2008) studied Newar peasants of Kathmandu, especially, Dangols and Maharjans. He has studied how Newars maintain their occupation through caste and class based hierarchy but he does not deal with factors that are forcing Dangols and Maharjans to leave their traditional occupations. Even though past studies have dealt on various aspects of peasantry and peasant societies, most of the previous studies focus on who the peasants were and how they have been exploited by state agencies. However these studies do not explain recent trends of peasantry transformation. Hence, the article seeks to explore the factors for the peasantry transformation as narrated by peasants themselves.

Research site

The research site of Khokana is the core agriculture belt of Lalitpur district, having a glorious history in agriculture. It is a traditional and tiny Newari village about 8 kilometers south of Kathmandu, in the outskirts of Lalitpur, which has its own history and has retained its tradition and culture. In the past Khokana was relatively a "bounded" community of Newars who used to maintain solidarity and consensus. They used to transact within their own community members but not with the outsiders. Now Khokana falls under Karya Binayak Municipality. The place was a self-reliant and independent in agro-production unit until recently. Different divisions of labor were institutionalized through caste-based social hierarchy in the past. Now the farming community of the Newar people who live here are mostly dependent on agriculture and much of their daily activities take place outside of their settlement. Dangol and Maharjan among the Newar in particular are skilled peasants who produce agricultural commodities.

Brief history of peasantry transformation in Khokana

Historically speaking, Khokana was a self-reliant and independent village in terms of agricultural productivity. Much of the land of Nepal,

including that of Khokana, belonged either to the Ranas as *birta* or to the different forms of *guthis*[1] till 1950 (Regmi 1974). One of the peasants named Hare Krishna Maharjan told me that Bhimkeshwar *Guthi* had 81 *ropani*[2] of land, in which the peasants used to grow crops and get fifty percent of the produce. Rudrayani *Guthi* also had 205 *ropani* of land that also was used by farmers to cultivate agricultural yields. There were some *birta* land like *pot birta* (35 *ropani*) that belonged to the Rana oligarchy, and *kush birta* (31 *ropani*) belonged to priests and Brahmins. The local peasants used to grow crops on these lands and shared at least half of the produce to the landlords. He further told me that Bhimsen *Guthi*, Kal Mochan *Guthi*, and Rana Bir *Guthi* also were in existence for social welfare purpose that could be managed by local peasants. *Birtas* were classified according to the needs and wishes of the Rana oligarchy in Khokana. The peasants could cultivate these lands to produce the cereal crops and shared the produce with the lords in the name of chiefs: *saheb khanki*[3], *subedar khanki*, *singh shamsher khanki*, *chitrakar*[4] *khanki*, *kusle*[5] *khanki*, *ghode khanki* and the like. Beside sharing the procuce, the peasants were also required to provide compulsory labor contribution or *bethi*[6] for the landlords in order to perform works such as cutting grass for elephants, constructing buildings, cutting and collecting firewood, and so on. The remaining arable land could be used for agricultural purpose by paying 10 paisa per ropani as tax.

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1 An endowment of land made for religious or philanthropic purpose.

2 A unit of land measurement; 1 Ropani = 606 square yards.

3 The land granted for military employees, bureaucrats, priests and religious deities.

4 Chitrakar is a sub-caste group of Newars.

5 An "unclean" caste, also known as jogi or darsanarthi. A Kusle's traditional occupation is tailoring but they can also work a temple priest of minor deities. He provides music at festivals and ceremonies also accepts death gift on the seventh day.

6 Compulsory work taken by the local functionary by peasants for the public good and for an individual.

Ranas used to cover the fertile and plain field (*gairi khet*[7], *dol pareko garo*) which yielded higher productivity while the barren land (*tari khet* and *kholsa-khalsi ko khet*) used to be given to the locals for revenue collection. In the name of the chief s*aheb khanki*, the commander-in-chief had the most fertile *doh phant* or *dol pareko khet* field from where paddy crops and seasonal vegetables could be cultivated and collected from peasants. Hare Krishna further told me that more than half of the farm production had to be given to the lords, and for this purpose there used to be inspection from the Rana authority whether the peasants had honestly submitted their production to the owners or not. Similarly, the army *subedar* used to be from the Rana family in military service. In the name of *subedar khanki,* there was a large paddy field (*chalis muri*[8] *dhan phalne khet*) near the water tank on the way to the main road. For cultivating this particular lands, the peasants used to provide half of the yields, especially, the paddy crop along with mustard. There was *Singh Shamsher khanki* with a large paddy field (*paintish muri dhan khet*) for which the peasants used to give more than half of the crops to the landlord. These quantities of produce had to be deposited in paddy collection storage house (*godam ghar*) near Thapathali. Chitrakars, who used to work in the palace of Ranas and specialized in idol making and painting work, had some land in Khokana, which used to be cultivated by local peasants. Kusle[9], who used to play drums and other musical instruments in the temples, had some plots of paddy field (*dus muri of*

7 Irrigated lands in the hilly regions including Kathmandu valley on which rice can be grown.

8 A volumetric measure comprising 20 pathis or a land measurement unit in the hill regions comprising between 11190.25 and 1785.37 square feet according to the grade. A unit of land measurement equal to 1369 square feet according to the grade. A unit of land measurement equal to 1369 square feet, 4 muri of land makes one ropani which is equivalent to 4677 kg of paddy, 6805 kg of wheat or maize or 65.78 kg of millet.

9 An "unclean" caste, also known as jogi or darsanarthi. A Kusle's traditional occupation is tailoring but also a temple priest of minor deities. He provides music at festivals and ceremonies also accepts death gift on the seventh day.

dhan khet) located on the bank of Bagmati River; this land was also cultivated by the farmers of Khokana, who had to give half of agricultural yields to the owner. All of these lands were under the *birta* tenure till the dawn of democracy in 1951. One of the informants, Gopal Maharjan, told me that the Land Reform Act of 1954, that of 1968 in particular, was a historical event in terms of their land ownership. Before that time, they had no land at all their own names; they used to work as tenants in others' land. Some peasants used to work as tenants under the customary system of *tirja* land that were often terraced and less productive. Later, land right was given to the tenants, and the land was changed into *raikar*[10] from *birta*[11] and *guthi*. Since then, the peasants officially got their rights in their own land, including the rights to sell and buy lands. In order to manage public performance like *Shikali Jatra* and other religious practices, they had various *guthis* such as *ta gu, sala gu* and *jagu guthis*.

Causes of peasantry transformation

There are many internal and external forces which contributed to peasantry transformation in the study area. Unavailability of agricultural labor, expensive agricultural inputs, break down of labor exchange institution, and in-migration are some of the major factors which contributed to the transformation of peasantry culture.

Higher inputs in farming and lower agricultural outputs

Agricultural sector in the Kathmandu valley is an area grossly neglected by government as well as by the farmers. Due to scarcity of labor, the cost of wage labor has increased throughout the country. Wage rate for agriculture labor tremendously increased in the study area. Household based labor the major sources of labor supply for agriculture, has

10 Lands on which tax is controlled from individual landowners, traditionally known as state owned.

11 Tax free land grants made by the state to individuals. Usually on an inheritable and tax exempt basis, abolished in 1959.

significantly declined due to schooling of children and availability of alternative jobs in nearby towns. During my field work, the cost of labor of for a day was 500 rupees for women and 600 rupees for men. In addition to the normal wage, two meals had to be given along with meat and local liquor to the workers. One of the key respondents Rajendra Dangol told me: "Unless we produce the crops, especially paddy, we will not be able to feed our family. We have no money to buy edibles if we carry agricultural production; now it costs really three times more. Our children and grandchildren do not work at all in the field. What to do and what not to do?" It was found that very less number of farmers were selling surplus in the market. The majority of them had subsistence level of food production but had to produce it with high investment. Input was very high and output was very low, which is not rational in the neo-liberal market. He further told me that they were doing it for social prestige (*ijjat*). If they leave the land barren, it would be a matter of social prestige (*ijjat*) in the locality. It was one of the reasons for continuing this traditional occupation. Hence, very high hidden investments in farming and very low agricultural yields made it imperative for the local farmers not to continue traditional farming.

Extinction of *Bola*

Traditional labor institution of reciprocal labor exchange system such as *pareli* or *parma* have been prominent throughout Nepal. In these labor institutions, people exchange labor which helps to carry out agricultural activities smoothly. The *bola* system among Newars used to fulfill labor scarcity during cultivation and harvesting period. This system collectively helps to accomplish the work on time, which reduces the investment cost as well as and helps in binding the society for collective good. Often, labor exchange used to occur between Bungmati and Khokana village. In the past, households used to have a number of children under a joint family, where the more hands could be available for agriculture work. In *bola*, families could exchange labor contribution easily.

This social embeddedness of peasants fosters social solidarity and cohesiveness in the village. Under *bola*, the peasants had a relationship based on reciprocity, empathy, trust, cooperation and social solidarity between and among the members. But gradually, the young generation started going to schools for education, and they gradually stopped working in the same way as before. Neoliberal policy created occupational alternatives that diverted the active population to other occupations as well. It was found that under *bola*, they used to exchange labor based on customary rules. If one male was called for *bola* in the farm for one day, either a male or two females had to go the following day in order to reciprocate or equalize the labor force. This unequal sexual division of labor between male and female was also one of the reasons for the *bola* system to come to an end. In the past, social activities used to be operated through caste system, but now class status has become more important to engage in social activities.

Effect of erratic rainfall on peasantry

Uncertainty of monsoon and winter rainfall has largely affected peasant economy in the study area. Scarcity of water was felt for the last five to seven years, as one of my key informants Devendra Maharjan recalled.

During July 2014, while doing fieldwork, I observed that there was no water in their canal as there was no heavy rainfall. It is obvious that without rainfall there is no possibility of irrigation from the canal. I observed the paddy fields till 15th of August intensively, and hardly 90 percent of the land was prepared for plantation. The peasants were waiting for rain to cutivate the remaining land. Without abundant water, paddy crop is not possible. Seedlings had already become old for plantation and diseased. In the past, peasants had their own ethno-cognitive approach to know about the monsoon. By seeing the color of cloud, mobility of stars, nature of wind, rain cycle of the past records, peasants could develop their own empirical ideas of monsoon.

The activities such as sowing the seeds in nursery, managing the canal for proper irrigation in the field, planting and arranging goods and services for the farming processes reflect the embodied empirical and practical knowledge of the local farmers which were gained through experiences. Their ethno-cognized knowledge does not operate in the same way as before, as the cycle of the monsoon has radically changed. One of my informants, Dilip Maharjan, remarked: "In the past the monsoon used to come from the last week of May (Jestha) or first week of June (Ashadh). That was the main time for paddy plantation in the valley. If we do not plant on time, the production will be less." Changing trends of climate and unstable water cycle were important factors to dissuade the peasants to engage in their traditional occupation. Early and delayed monsoon results either in less production or vulnerable to attack by different diseases that eventually forced them leave their traditional occupation.

Monetization through external factors

Monetization land resources is a prominent feature of neoliberal market economy. Historically speaking, Khokana had no land transaction till the 1990s though there was a small volume of selling and buying of land before. Transaction was limited within Newars. The Chaudhary Group, currently a corporate giant of Nepal, brought 35 *ropanis* of land for industrial purposes by paying 8,000 to 10,000 rupees per *ropani* in the late 1970s. Similarly, the government appropriated land of Khokana peasants in Bhainsepati, where a big radio tower, a sub-station of the government's radio – the Radio Nepal – is located today. Government provided nominal subsidy to the farmers. These two fundamental development projects paved ways for the monetization of land in this locality. Similarly, during the 1980s, the Panchayat government took the Bhainsepati phant belonging to the peasants of Khokana and the nearby Magar Gaon by paying a nominal amount of money as a compensation in order to make a prison.

According to Krishna Bahadur Thapa of Magar Gaon, the government provided 3,000 to 4,000 rupees per ropani of land to the landowners.

After getting the money, peasants started constructing new buildings in Khokana. Gradually, they started selling their land for their own domestic use. They had no alternatives to generate cash amount, besides the sale of land. It was a preliminary phase of neo-liberal era that also had loan indirect impact on Nepali economy. After the dawn of democracy in the 1990s, the democratic government bought others plot of land to develop a residential area (*awas chhetra*). Since then, outsiders started to buy the land in Bhainsepati for housing purposes, which again influenced Khokana and its peripheral areas to sell their land. This process of buying and selling of land became prominent after the late 1990s, during the 2010 in particular. While the local peasants had enough plot of land for agriculture in the past but, now due to domestic needs and educational purposes, land has become the prime commodity for generating cash. Building houses, investment in education for their children, and growth in the domestic expenses became powerful triggering factors for the sell of land in recent times.

Flow of internal migration to capital city

Migration has accelerated the speed of land transaction and monetization of land resources in the study area. During my fieldwork, I met some people who visited the study area for buying some plots of land. One purpose for the visit was to build house for residential purposes, and the other was to buy the land for business purposes. I met a migrant who wanted to buy eight *ana* of land to construct a residential building for his family. He told me that his son, who was in South Korea used to earn more than one lakh rupees per month, had asked him to purchase land for housing. He further told me that they wanted to have their own home rather than living in a rented apartment. According to him, his grandchildren forced them to buy the land in the valley. This example shows how 'modernity' influences youths (in this case, the grandchildren) in shaping their perception on how they want to be suitably modern (Lietchy 2010). The centralized development infrastructures, especially, in terms of quality education, advanced health centers, different employment opportunities,

different business opportunities, and even suitable climatic condition motivate people to have their own house in Kathmandu valley. District-based middle class family, white collar-based high profile professionals, businessmen, politicians, and other skilled professionals have a dream to have a home in the capital city. It was found that many people had migrated in this locality first by buying a plot of land.

After the Bhainsepati area became expensive and dense for settlement, the migrants started shifting Khokana side. This trend has been very prominent in Bhainsepati for the last twenty years. I met a number of professionals who had bought land for housing purposes. In order to provide quality education to their children, they decided to live in Kathmandu valley where a number of so-called good schools, colleges and universities have been set up. Deependra Gurung, a migrant from Parbat district, told me that he had bought six *ana* of land for 24 lakhs near Sano Khokana and was planning to construct a residential home. His major objective was to provide quality education to his children, and for that he had to construct one residential home. I found a number of migrants who had bought many ropanis of land for their needs and requirements. Peasants were paid attractive amount for the lands. They would not have earned that much of money only through agricultural yields. Attractive amount of money helped them to transform land into a valuable commodity that cauld be immediately sold for cash.

Fantasy of fast track and second ring road

Development projects launched by government as well as other development agencies have had a direct influence in the locality. Such development project are perceived to provide economic opportunities and transform the rural social system. Khokana is primarily an agricultural village. After the road from Magar Gaon to Shikali temple was built in the 1990s, people started taking some plot of land connected with the main road for future economic benefit and also for residential purposes. The area was a religious site with an open common pool resource area

and the road was designed for pilgrimage and for internal recreational tourism.

In the mean time, the government brought out the concept of fast-track road that will connect Kathmandu to Nijgadh in Bara district, through the Bagmati corridor. Some people invested in land thinking that the land could beget enough cash value after the construction of the said road. It was found that many industrialists (*marwadis* in particular) had bought many *ropanis* of land on the banks of Bagmati River for business purposes, thinking that after the construction of fast-track road is over, either the land would be used for building business complexes or can be sold with a large profit. This catch word of "fast-track," which has been encouraged as the shortest road to connect Kathmandu to Tarai taking only one and a half hours, became the attraction that made the situation favorable for land transaction. During my field work, it was found that a group of professional people from the Engineering Department also had bought 32 *ropanis* of land for college building purposes. Due to this development project, many people had bought some plots of land for residential and business purposes. Similarly, there is still a talk of second ring road in Kathmandu valley. According to present survey report, the second ring road project covers nearly 76 km by connecting three districts of Kathmandu valley, and it passes through Khokana and Bungmati. According to the present survey, the road is supposed to pass through the center of a paddy field, which is the core agricultural belt of Khokana. If it goes according to the present survey of government, Sano Khokana will be within the ring road and Thulo Khokana will be just outside of the ring road but connected to it. Since this megaproject of the second ring road became public, Khokana became an attractive place for an imagined business hub. Since then, the pace of land selling and buying has accelerated in the area.

From peasantry to wood carving

Wood carvings of Kathmandu valley are traditionally practiced by a clan of the Newar, the indigenous people of Kathmandu valley who have

graced the traditional architecture of the valley since the time of Araniko (1245-1306). The wood carving designs are mostly based on holy scriptures and mythical structures of Buddhist or Hindu faith: deities, demons, animals, religious symbols, as well as intricate patterns and some images. The Newari tradition is still very much alive in peripheral areas like Bungmati and Khokana. Using mostly traditional tools, the process of creating Nepali wood carvings stayed almost unchanged. However, most family business needs to turn to commercial art, creating Newari art-inspired furniture and souvenirs for paying customers. The majority of these products go overseas, making wood carvings one of the biggest export trades of Nepal. Wood carving is not a new phenomenon among Tuladhar, Shakya and Bajracharya, but Maharjan and Dangol in particular did not practice this occupation before. In the past, this wood carving was used in temples, monasteries, and other cultural heritages. No houses were allowed to use such art during the Rana regime. The artists used to carve for rulers, monarchs, and for religious purposes without any personal profit. Later, the nobilities, landlords, aristocracy, middle class, and other high profile people used this art in their own houses, especially for doors and windows, which helped to expand its market for economic profit, as was told by one of the informants.

For the peasant class among the Newars such as Maharjan and Dangol, their indigenous skill was in farming. While this bounded community came into contact with domestic and international market after 1990s, this agricultural group (Dangol and Maharjan) gradually started to adopt wood carving skill for commercial purposes. After the dawn of democracy in the 1990s, with the expansion of neo-liberal political economic practices, the market of wood carving expanded. The middle class family also started using this indigenous Newari art for their own use in the form of carved wooden doors and windows in their individual houses. This expansion of business opened up larger avenues for economic transaction in domestic as well as in foreign countries. This global-local connection helped to attract youths towards new occupational

alternatives. Hence, they chose this profitable work for economic benefit as well as for social respect. In the past, caste-based social hierarchy was practiced but now class has become the measuring rod of social honor (cf. Leitchy 2010). Traditional farming as an occupation gradually shifted into commercialization, while the indigenous art flourished onto the domestic and international market. It was found that a number of youngsters were engaging in commercializing their indigenous art to the national and international market. Idol making, preparing artistic doors and windows, handicrafts, decorative items, sculptures and curio goods were the major products which helped them to earn a handsome amount. This occupational alternative available within their own "ethnoscapes" (Appadurai 196) made the situation favorable for abandoning their traditional farming. Open market, individual entrepreneurship, competition, and consumption of commodities are integral features of neo-liberal economy.

Shifting of land-based *Ijjat* economy to modern buildings

Material dimensions of *ijjat* economy are becoming more important and costly in the Newar honor economy. Social investments in *guthi* obligations, kin networks, caste patronage, and religious observations offer fewer economic guarantees relative to the consumption and display of modern commodities. In the past, an individual used to be measured on the basis of land that he/she owned. A person who used to occupy acres of land could achieve higher status in society. Land and agriculture have played a leading part in Nepal's social, economic, and political life throughout centuries. Land has therefore traditionally been represented as the principal form of wealth, symbol of social status, source of economic and political power (Regmi 1976). It was found that as an impact of modernization and globalization, the locals started displaying their modern houses in order to maintain class. Their traditional *ijjat* economy shifted from land to modern buildings and vehicles. One of the farmers told, "Even though, I construct a new building by selling my parental land the people will not count me, as most of them have

already constructed their modern buildings." His narrative projects the idea that how the local people generate their ideas of comparing with other classes.

Today, class position is becoming increasingly distinct idiom of social life. Newars are consumers in an emerging commoditized of value that presents an alternative to the old caste-based basis of accumulation of material and social capital. People's imaginations have been colonized by commercially mediated consumer ideas grounded on local-global nexus (Rankin 2004). Modern commodities, modern clothes, electronic gadgets, and well-furnished houses became the class measurement in Kathmandu (Liechty 2010). Modern commodities, new houses, and vehicles can be displayed, unlike land and crops. This social imitation of class maintenance through consumption became the measurement of class as a process. In order to maintain social status, land was converted into cash, which was used for construction of buildings, buying vehicles and electronic gadgets, arranging parties, sending their children to private schools and colleges, and maintaining their class. The old status that was derived form land have now shifted to modern buildings and commodity consumption. It was found that in order to maintain their class, peasants started selling their fertile land and maintained their buildings, vehicles and commodities. Consumption and again consumption of modern commodities is one of the salient features of neo-liberal competitive market.

Real peasants or pseudo-peasants?

In common parlance, peasant is a person who owns or rents a small piece of land, keeps animals, and produces crops. In the Nepali context, peasant is understood as the one who has a low income, very little education, and a low social position. It was found during my field work that though the peasant had already sold his land to others, the very land was still cultivated by the same former peasant. The new landowner had given the land to him for cultivating instead of leaving the land barren. For the common viewers, no land was sold in this locality since

same peasants were producing the crops in the same paddy field, but in reality it was found that a large portion of land had already been sold to outsiders. The majority of them were pseudo-peasants. After selling the land and becoming landless, they still were producing the cereal crops in their previous land. Chandra Maharjan was digging the field while I approached him. He told me that he had already sold this land to others who used to stay in Patan. His present landowner suggested him not to leave his land barren as it was the government policy to not to leave any land barren. Chandra had sold his land nearly four years back to the present landowner while he was in need of money. According to him, it was not necessary to give the agricultural yields to the present landowners, though he used to give one sack of paddy rice for beaten rice (chiura khane dhan) as the quantity he liked. It was found that the large portion (nearly 70 percent) of terrace land near *doh phant* had already been sold to outsiders, though the peasants were farming in that sold land. There was no larger volume of land transaction till 2000. Migrants used to go up to Bhainsepati residential area for their housing purpose and as far as up to Chhyasikot Civil Homes. While this area became dense and expensive relative to Khokana periphery, the flow of migrants shifted into this area. This shifting was the main purpose for land selling as the price of land nearly four years back was up to six lakhs per ana. The price of land went very high after 2005, which attracted the peasants. Based on his narrative, the main boom period existed from 2004 to 2014 for land transaction. Though there was land transaction even before that period, the intensity was very slow.

A key informant who was one of the main land brokers in the locality told me that nearly 70 percent of fertile land has already been sold to outsiders. Krishna Dangol, in reality a pseudo-peasant like tenant (*jagga kamaune*), was plowing his sold field by tractor: "I sold this land in a good amount nearly four years back, in total eight farmers to sold this plot of land, which comprised nearly 32 *ropanis* to the city people who wanted to build anengineering college in the near future, and all of us

except one family are still farming. So far, they have given us for farming. For it, we need not pay any tainy, neither money nor half crops; it is our profit." His statement further made me understand that though they were still pursuing their traditional agricultural occupation, nonetheless, but they were cultivating the land which he had sold to others. The present landowners invested their amount for business and residential purposes. The speed of construction was low; hence, the pseudo-peasants were able to cultivate the land for production.

Marrige, *bhoj, bhyen*, *janku, guthi*, and *nakha* : Festivities turned into modern parties

Hindu marriage is a sacred bond between bride and bridegroom. It is a union between a male and a female. It was found that marriage is arranged within endogamous group. In order to get married according to their system, a large amount of money was required. Gold, clothes, gifts, and other necessary goods and services are to be managed according to class and ritual practices. Majority of them were subsistence level farmers. In order to buy gold, suitable clothes, arranging parties, maintaining and protecting social respect between and among the groups they need to have large sums of money in such public ceremony. For fulfilling such necessities, either they need to take loan from the banks or sell resources. Among Newars, marriage symbolizes *ijjat* economy. *Ijjat* economy fuels the system of social investment and is recognized as a most significant currency in the Newar market place of value (Rankin 2004).

Feast (*bhyen*[12]) is a social fashion among Newars. Feasts are distinguishing feature among the Newars; they are the primary means for acquiring *ijjat* because they punctuate most important social obligations. Occasions for feasting come around with remarkable frequency and impose no small burden on household budget. First, there are life cycle rituals: depending on one's caste, religious affiliation and

12 Local feast which are celebrated in their locality according to their Calendrical order

gender, up to seven rituals associated with birth, two initiation rituals, marriage, three old age initiations to the status of gods, and 13-45 day intensive series of mortuary rites (Nepali 1967). Each of these entails not only requisite feast, but also elaborate, costly and time-consuming preparations for ritual itself, involving both the prescribed configuration of kin and entourage of ritual specialists. The ancestors, too, must be worshipped—fed, clothed, housed and comforted as integral members of the social group—through mortuary rites performed regularly by the living (Nepali 1967). These occasions for worship also require the preparation of a feast to which the appropriate kin and ritual specialists must be invited in their customs. It directly and indirectly makes the situation to either generate economy from new occupation by themselves or to sell the parental land for cash expenses. In order to manage the standard party (bhyen), they require money again. Either by social force or by family force, they need to give a good party to others that eventually create the situation to sell some plot of land from where the cash money comes. Feast content is thoroughly prescribed, entailing several meats, vegetable, lentil or bean dishes, *baji* (beaten rice), fruits, sweets, curd and plenty of home-distilled alcohol, all of which, as any host will bemoan, amount to no small expense of money and labor time. Feasting patterns provide a trace on the social geography of the town as well as its links with neighboring towns and cities of Kathmandu Valley (Rankin 2004). It was found that many peasants sold land for their wedding, party, local feast and festivals in order to protect their *ijjat* in their locality**.** Besides marriage and household rituals, they were having a number of local feasts like *Shikali bhoj*, *Indrayeni Guthi bhoj*, crop harvesting *bhoj* and other *tole-wise* feasts, which was playing the role in selling the parental land. In Nepali vernacular, there is a proverb "Newars have been ruined because of feast and festivals, Chhetris have been ruined because of entertainment" (*Newar bigreyo bhojle, Chhetry bigreyo mojle*[13]). In order to manage small-scale and

13 Nepali proverb, feasting has ruined the Newar and entertainment has ruined Chhetry.

large-scale feasts and festivals, they invest a large amount of money for their honor and symbolic capital. One of the respondents told me that most of the households cannot carry off the event without recourse to *sapati*[14], small loans from friends and relatives. In general, however, the internal objective is to display as much financial capacity and material wealth as possible.

Janku is a very important ritual among the Newar. It is a ritual in which the senior member of the family is worshipped by all the family members along with their kins. In this ceremony, when a person becomes seventy-seven years old, then she/he is ritually worshipped. Festivals are celebrated with material and special kind that requires large sum of money (Nepali 1967). It is a practice among the Newar in which the same moment of birth (*pala*[15]), same month, same day, same location if possible and other cultural aspects are to be favorable for this senior worshipping ceremony. One gold ring is worn after this senior member ceremony (*jankhu*[16]). If a next ritual is held, then again one gold ring is offered to him. There is a party in such rituals. All the consanguine and affinal in collectively gather to celebrate this ritual. These types of rituals also increase the economic burden on the family, though, it is a very good custom to pay respect to their senior family member. Besides these, *mha* puja (worshipping soul), *kija pooja* (brother worship), *digu syaye-gu* (goat sacrifice) and other lineage based rituals are carried out throughout the year. In order to manage such financial expenses, it was found that they were selling their land.

14 Borrowing some amount for a time being with close friends and relatives without interest and record.

15 same moment, exact time duration.

16 A family ritual in which the senior member of a family after crossing seventy seven years plus is worshiped with honor.

Conclusion

Conventional theories and approaches are insufficient and inadequate in order to understand the peasantry transformation in a country like Nepal. Based on findings of research scholars, it is generally understood that industrialization, despotic regime of government agencies, and urbanization bring changes to the general system of peasantry, but my studies do not support the previous researchers and their findings. Unlike their argument, my studies show that without industrialization process and without any complete urbanization, peasantry can also change. Wolf (1967) came up with the conclusion that industrialization shifted peasant economy based on their traditional farming to modern commodity production in industries. Unlike Wolf's claim, peasantry transformation is possible without being industrialized, in a country like Nepal. For Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon (1979), more imposition of tax, despotic corvée labors, domination of peasants, disparity between center and periphery, indifferent attitude of the state towards agricultural productivity, and lack of arable fertile land to the real peasants compelled peasants to leave their traditional occupation and change to urban proletariats in the market. Their research on peasants and their transformation is viewed through dependency model. They tried to analyze the peasantry transformation through Marxism and modernism perspective to see its shifting into urban proletariats, but they could not anticipate the impact of neo-liberal economy on peasant society of today. Robert Rhodes (1986) used farmer-back-to-farmer model to analyze how farmers are returning to their indigenous skills in harvesting the crops, which was not the case in my research. On the contrary, my research showed that, the peasants of Khokana were leaving their traditional occupation. Unlike their research, my research deals with internal constraints (lack of helping hands, scarcity of water, breaking down of traditional labor institution, higher investment in agriculture rather than agricultural yields) in particular and external forces (launching of development projects like fast track and proposed second ring road, town planning, flow of migration, availability of occupational alternatives in neoliberal

market) are the powerful driving forces for peasantry transformation. Their articulation is based on their own interpretation, unlike my emic approach of interpretation narrated by peasants themselves. Hence, in this competitive open market policies grounded on neoliberal practices, will peasants be able to compete with others? Leaving their traditional and indigenous skills in their own resources, will their development be sustainable? Or at a deep level, are they embarking towards poverty in the long run as they will have no control on their own resources? It entails further investigation in the days to come.

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