

Recent Economic Changes in a Newar Village

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The Kathmandu Valley which has always been a center in the history of Nepal has also been a place where most development efforts have been concentrated.¹ And it is to be expected that considerable economic and social changes have taken place in recent years not only in urban areas but also in rural areas linked to the major cities in the valley.

This article analyzes recent economic changes in a Newar village (here fictitiously called "Satepa") situated about seven kilometers west of Kathmandu. The data were collected at two points in time, first in 1970-71 and later in 1978.

Satepa is a village with a population over one thousand. Except for "temporary residents", all the residents are Newars divided into eight castes. Formerly, agriculture was the people's main source of livelihood but many other occupations have been taken up in recent years. In agriculture as well, there have been changes in production and the organization of labour. Before going into these economic changes, I will briefly discuss some changes in population and landholdings.

Population and Landholding

By the end of 1970, there were 194 households of eight Newar castes as shown below:

<u>Caste Name</u>		<u>Number of Households</u>
<u>(Newari)</u>	<u>(Nepali)</u>	
Barmhu	(Brāhman)	1
Syesya	(Śhreṣṭha)	63
Jyāpu	(Maharjan)	100
Duin	(Putuwār)	10
Kau	(Nakarmi)	1
Sāymi	(Mānandhar)	1
Nāy	(Kasain)	17
Jugi	(Kusle)	1

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(The castes here are listed in the order of caste ranking with Barmhu at the top. Duin, Kau and Saymi can be considered as having the same rank).

In seven and a half years, or by the end of August 1978, the total number of households increased to 217, or 11 percent, and the "village population"² increased from 1121 in 1970 to 1371 in 1978, or 22.3 percent.

The members of most of the additional 23 households were related to the original residents through kinship ties. Their residence in independent households followed their remigration into the village or was due to the partition of households. In 1978, there were cases of new in-migrant residents totally unrelated to anyone living in Satepa in 1970, such as single "Bāḍa", "Śreṣṭha", "Kusle" and "Sannyāsi"³ households. These were all "temporary residents" in that they had lived less than half a year before August 1978 and expected to leave the village within half a year.

Though population movement increased to some extent, natural increase was more responsible for the population increase than immigration, as 51 people out-migrated⁴ and 42 people (including "temporary residents") in-migrated within these seven and a half years.

The average number of household members was 6.3 persons per household in 1978 whereas it was 5.8 in 1970. Thus many of the households as well as the village as a whole became congested in these years.

The population and the household increase easily leads us to anticipate a decrease in the size of the landholding per household, given that there was little change in the total amount of the land held by the villagers.

There are various forms of land tenure such as Raikar,⁵ Guthi,⁶ and Bhogbandaki (mortgaging),⁷ tenancy etc. But in this article all the lands, except those cultivated under tenancy, are defined as "held".⁸ So defined, the total amount of land "held" by the Satepa villagers amounted to 1430 ropani in 1970 and 1405 ropani in 1978⁹ showing no significant change in the total amount. But with an increase in the number of households, the average amount of the land per household decreased within these years. It was 7.4 ropani in 1970 but 6.5 ropani in 1978.¹⁰

The distribution of the size of landholdings is shown in Table 1. In this table, I make six divisions in the size of the holdings, namely: no land; 0-5 ropani (not including 5); 5-10; 10-20; 20-30; and 30 and above. The numbers of households which fall in each category are listed caste-wise, with figures for 1970 listed above and those for 1978 listed below in each block.

Table 1: Landholding Distribution by Castes in 1970 and 1978

Area in Ropani	Year	Barmhu	Syesya	Jyapu	Duin	Kau	Saymi	Nay	Jugi	Temporary Residents	Total
0	1970	1	6	11	3	1	-	10	-	-	32
	1978	1	3	10	4	1	-	10	-	3	32
0-5	1970	-	14	35	3	-	1	7	1	-	61
	1978	-	27	48	1	-	-	7	1	1	85
5-10	1970	-	24	29	3	-	-	-	-	-	56
	1978	-	17	34	2	-	1	-	-	-	54
10-20	1970	-	12	19	1	-	-	-	-	-	32
	1978	-	15	19	1	-	-	-	-	-	35
20-30	1970	-	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
	1978	-	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
30-	1970	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
	1978	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Total	1970	1	63	100	10	1	1	17	1	-	194
	1978	1	68	116	8	1	1	17	1	4	217

If we compare the differences in terms of caste, it is clear that households holding more land are most often of higher caste, except Barmhu such as Syesya and Jyapu, even though there are considerable differences of holding within each caste. Among the castes except for Syesya and Jyapu, there was no household which held more than 12 ropani in both 1970 and 1978. Even among the Syesya and Jyapu, many households were found to hold 0 to 5 ropani, i.e., 5 to 10 ropani. In 1978, there were altogether 11 households which had more than 20 ropani or 1 hectare. This is only 5 percent of the total number of households. Only two Syesya households earned rent from leased lands and made it their main source of income in 1970. The number reduced to one household in 1978.¹¹

The overall smallness of the size of landholding is remarkable. In both 1970 and 1978, more than two thirds of the total households held less than 10 ropani (0.5 hectare). 48 percent in 1970 and 54 percent in 1978 held less than 5 ropani (0.25 ha.).

The smallness of holdings was not much compensated for through tenancy. The number of the tenants decreased from 69 in 1970 to 53 in 1978. The total land cultivated under tenancy was slightly more than 200 ropani in 1970 and was slightly less than 200 ropani in 1978. The average areas per tenant were 3.3 ropani and 3.5 ropani respectively. Thus in these years the size of the landholdings changed from "small" to "smaller" while the average household size increased. It is also clear that the lands under tenancy did not add much to the lands already held by the tenants.

In this kind of situation, how did the people manage their subsistence? This was accomplished in two ways:

- (1) through the increase in agricultural production;
- (2) by getting non-agricultural jobs.

Introduction of Improved Seeds

The main crops in this area are paddy, in the monsoon season, and wheat, in the dry season. In the dry season, pulses (bakulā and kaygu) and potatoes are also planted in about a quarter of the cultivated lands. Vegetables are also grown, but not in enough quantity to meet the villagers' needs.

The regular planting of improved crop seeds in this village began in 1965 for wheat and in 1966 for paddy, both with success. In the beginning, both were planted in 2 to 3 percent of the land. The main agency introducing the seeds was the District Agricultural Development Office. With the help of some of the cooperative farmers, JTAs (Junior Technical Assistants) did experimental planting for both paddy and wheat in 1964. In addition, some of the villagers were already using a small amount of improved varieties which they had obtained from farmers in other villages. (This kind of giving and talking or selling and buying of seeds later became very common). Although many kinds of seeds were initially tried, those successfully used were Lerma-52 and Lerma roho (rojo)-64 for wheat, and Taichun-176 for paddy.

In 1970, it was estimated that 60 percent of the total wheat sown was Lerma-52 and 30-35 percent Lerma roho-64.¹² In 1978, there were 62 percent Lerma-64, 29 percent Lerma-52 and 9 percent RR-21. This last was first brought to the village in 1976.¹³

For paddy, Taichun was estimated to occupy 70 percent of the paddy land in 1970 and 84 percent in 1978. In the case of paddy, there remained some traditional "Nepali" varieties because of the following technological as well as cultural reasons. In 1978, there were several traditional kinds, such as Thaptini, Durāj etc. (Thaptini occupied 13 percent of the total paddy in 1978). Customarily, the farmers drain the paddy fields ten to fifteen days before the harvest to dry them up and make them workable. In order to facilitate this procedure (called tiku choyegu) they plant Thaptini or Duraj on the edge of the paddy field of Taichun to make a belt of traditional paddy about one meter wide. As these traditional varieties of paddy ripe earlier, they cut it before the harvest of Taichun and dig a ditch in the belt and let water flow out. Among the traditional kinds of paddy, about two thirds were planted this way. But there were also some people who planted these varieties so that they could plant a kind of horsebean (bakulā), immediately after the harvest of rice.

Difference in the "taste" of various kinds of rice was another reason why some people retained traditional varieties. It was claimed that a flavourful variety called Masino was the most delicious and that Duraj and Mārsi came next. But as the productivity difference was great, and the villagers' taste accordingly changed in favour of Taichun,¹⁴ traditional varieties (except for Thaptini) were only planted by some farmers and these amounted to one percent of the total paddy in 1978. The taste of the recently introduced Pokhara (Pokhrelī) Masino¹⁵ was also regarded as good but as its productivity was not as high as Taichun, it only amounted to two percent of the total paddy in 1978.

The increase in the production of wheat and paddy was drastic. Earlier, the production of wheat in good lands was around 1.5 muri per ropani.¹⁶ By 1978, it more than doubled, increasing to 3 or 4 muri per ropani. The production of the traditional kinds of paddy in well-irrigated fields had been around 4 muri per ropani whereas it became about 7 muri with improved seeds. Thus some of the villagers said that people who had not been able to produce enough to eat were now able to produce enough to sell.

The introduction of improved seeds made the use of chemical fertilizers indispensable. The fertilizers were mainly sold to the farmers through a cooperative society. The use of the fertilizers by Satepa villagers increased from about 40 bags in 1965 (for wheat only) and 90 bags in 1966 (for both wheat and paddy) to 750 bags in 1978 (for wheat, paddy, and potatoes) (1 bag contained 50 kg. of fertilizer).

As the use of these fertilizers increased, the villagers worried that the yield per area had gradually decreased and would still decrease. It was also said that the soil became harder as they put more fertilizer into it, and more labour became necessary for tilling the soil of the same acreage. When they saw decrease in the yield, however, they tended to put more chemical fertilizer instead of putting compost, because, as we see in the next chapter, more people were engaged in non-agricultural jobs at this time, and thus had less time for agriculture.

The influence of the chemical fertilizers was also felt in the use of kō and manure. kō is a fertile soil dug out from underground four to five meters deep and spread out in the field. It was still used in 1970, though only to a limited extent, and had disappeared completely by 1978. The work of extracting kō was done mainly through a type of exchange labour, called bolā. With the termination of the use of kō, bolā exchange in this kind of work came to an end. In other agricultural work also, the decline of bolā exchange was notable. But as this requires a detailed analysis, I deal with it later.

Traditionally, manure was formerly used as one of the ways to enhance the fertility of the soil, but its use has also greatly declined.

With the introduction of the chemical fertilizers arose the necessity for more cash. Now that they could afford to do so, many farmers began to sell a portion of their crops. Those who were unwilling or unable to sell their crops began to look for some other source of cash income in non-agricultural sectors.

The need for cash was also induced by other factors. Formerly it had been possible to thresh traditional paddy by simply pounding a bundle of it against the ground. The improved paddy, however, could only be threshed by using a machine. Thus a threshing machine with a pedal run by foot was introduced. Usually these were made in Kathmandu or in India and brought to the village but some of the more skilful villagers made them themselves. The price of such a machine was around 200 to 400 rupees in 1970 but exceeded Rs. 600.00 in 1978. In 1966, there were only two of these threshing machines in Satepa; in 1970 there were 17 and by 1978 the number increased to 47. Some of these machines were owned privately but some were owned by two to four people in common. Still, as late as 1978, there were many people who did not own any threshing machine. In such a case, a farmer had to borrow a machine at about one or two rupees an hour during a busy season.¹⁷

Further changes took place in agriculture. One was the introduction of a hand-tractor which was bought by one of the Jyapu farmers who got a loan from the Agricultural Development Bank. He not only used it for his own work but also lent it out to others at about 30 rupees per ropani.¹⁸ Besides paddy and wheat, new seeds, such as improved maize in 1967 and improved soyabean in 1975, were introduced. However, the area planted with these seeds was quite limited.

Non-Agricultural Jobs

Even with all the increase in crop yields, it was still not possible to sustain the growing population of the village solely by agriculture. Hence the necessity for non-agricultural jobs arose. As this village is situated close to the road leading from Kathmandu to India, and as it takes only half an hour to reach the capital by bus, most of the jobs were sought and obtained in and around Kathmandu.

These non-agricultural jobs can be roughly divided into the following categories:

- 1) construction work
- 2) commerce and trade
- 3) salaried work
- 4) other.

The kinds of work under each of the above categories, and the number of people engaged in them both in 1970 and 1978, are shown in Table 2.¹⁹

Weaving and animal husbandry also brought a considerable income to a number of households, but I will discuss this separately.

In both years (1970 and 1978), construction work attracted the most people; commerce and trade came next and salaried work third.

The number of people engaged in construction work increased from 77 in 1970 to 101 in 1978, or by 30 percent, which exceeded the rate of population increase in these years.

Most of those who worked in trade or commerce combined these jobs with agriculture. The most remarkable change in this category took place in the number of middlemen handling grain. In 1970, there were ten such grain dealers and their number more than doubled in less than eight years. As the sphere of the purchasing of grain was restricted to a small area around the middlemen's own village, the increase in their number can be attributed to the increase in local agricultural production.

Flour and rice mill was first set up in this village in 1971. Though it was largely motivated by the introduction of electricity in the summer of 1971, it was also related to production increase. By 1978, there were two local rice and flour mills, a baji [chiurā] (in Nepali): flattened rice mill and a mill -for all of these three purposes.²⁰ Consequently, most of the middlemen who had had their grain processed in Kathmandu began to use these local mills since they had to carry less of a load to Kathmandu if they did the processing within the village.

These mills also alleviated the daily labour of women who used to grind wheat and pound rice by themselves. But at the same time, the need for cash increased.

Under the title "salaried workers" are included those people who are employed on a permanent basis with fixed wages. These people mainly worked in Kathmandu though a few people found work around the village.

In both 1970 and 1978, more people were employed in government- al or semi-governmental offices²¹ than in private enterprises.²² Among the former, many were clerks of lower rank or office peons. Those with technical skills were scarce (two persons in 1970 and five in 1978).

Table 2: Non-Agricultural Jobs in 1970 and 1978

Job Category	Job	Number of Workers		
		1970	1978	
Construction work	Nayo (leaders), contractors	2	3	
	Carpenters	14	21	
	Bricksmiths	28	33	
	Employees } bricksmiths	6	9	-77
	in NCCN } coolie labourers	*	12	-101
	Coolie labourers	27	23	
Trade and Commerce	Shops (grocer shops, tea shops, meat-shops) tailor-shops, smithy	11 ⁺	18 ⁺	
	Middlemen of grain	10	21	
	Middlemen of milk	3	7	-54
	Middlemen of buffaloes	4	1	-63
	Middlemen of firewood	13	13	
	Manufacturer-sellers of curd	13	3	
Salaried work	Employees in governmental & semi-governmental offices	11	24	
	Employees in Nepal Transportation -clerks	4	4	
	Corporation and Salt Trading -coolie labour-)	15	7	-42
	Corporation ers	2	2	-62
	Teachers	1	2	
	Soldier	1	2	
	Employees in private shops, factories etc.	6	19	
	Gardeners	3	2	
Drivers, conductors		4		
Others	Mill owners	2 [@]	10	
	Hindu priest	1	1	-4
	Music teacher (private)	1	1	-12
	Travel guide		1	
Total		177	238	

* I did not make a distinction between the "coolie labourers" and "coolie labourers employed in NCCN (National Construction Company of Nepal)" in 1970. Among the 27 coolie labourers in 1970, there might have been some who were employed in NCCN.

@Mills in 1970 were run by water and were located outside the village though they were owned by Satepa villagers.

+These figures are the numbers of household heads who owned shops and were Satepa residents. Such people who owned shops in Satepa but were not Satepa residents, e.g., two tailors who commuted from outside, are not included in the table.

Among the three main work categories, the rate of increase of the workers was the highest among the wage earners. Most of the salaried jobs were new opportunities to the villagers. Jobs in the Electric Corporation, cooperatives, health projects or panchayats were only recently available since those offices themselves had been created not so long ago. In 1970, two thirds of the salaried workers and four fifths of the government or semi-government employees had had their jobs less than ten years.

The rapid increase in salaried employment continued in the 1970's and the number of the salaried workers increased by fifty percent from 1970 to 1978. This increase mainly occurred among the lower ranking white collar workers, though there was some increase in the number of workers in private shops and in the number of drivers. On the other hand, there was a slight decrease in the number of coolie labourers.

The overall increase in the number of the wage earners was undoubtedly due to the increasing demand for labour in public and private enterprises. On the villagers' side, the small landholding size motivated some people to look for opportunities from outside jobs. At the same time, some people were receiving formal education which later helped them to qualify for certain kinds of employment.

Animal Husbandry and Weaving

The non-agricultural jobs discussed above were mainly sought in and around Kathmandu by men. On the other hand, animal husbandry and weaving were mostly done inside the village by both men and women.

Animal Husbandry

The main domestic animals in this village are water-buffaloes, cows, sheep, goats and fowls. Besides these, a few people raised hogs, geese or rabbits. Buffaloes and cows are mainly raised for their milk. It is well-known that the Newars do not usually use the plough for cultivating the soil, but a few households keep oxen for ploughing. Other animals are kept for meat, eggs or wool.

The seasonal fluctuation in the number of domestic animals is considerable since there are many festivals and other rituals accompanied by feasts in which certain animals are sacrificed or killed for eating.

The approximate numbers of the major domestic animals are shown in Table 3.23. Among all households, about 85 percent in 1970 and 78 percent in 1978 were raising some kind of domestic animals. But this high percentage is mainly due to the large number of house-

Table 3: Number of Domestic Animals and Weaving Machines in 1970 and 1978

Caste	Year	Buffaloes	Cattle	Sheep	Goats	Fowls	Hogs	Weaving Machines
Barmhu	$\frac{1970}{1978}$							
Syesya	$\frac{1970}{1978}$	$\frac{11}{17}$	$\frac{18}{13}$	$\frac{36}{32}$	$\frac{6}{11}$	$\frac{300}{133}$	-	$\frac{26}{54+(3)*}$
Jyapu	$\frac{1970}{1978}$	$\frac{34}{52}$	$\frac{19}{24}$	$\frac{104}{102}$	$\frac{16}{23}$	$\frac{360}{396}$	-	$\frac{45}{70+(2)*}$
Duin	$\frac{1970}{1978}$	$\frac{4}{2}$	$\frac{2}{3}$	$\frac{9}{5}$	-	$\frac{35}{9}$	-	$\frac{1}{2}$
Kau	$\frac{1970}{1978}$	-	-	-	-	$\frac{10}{1}$	-	-
Saymi	$\frac{1970}{1978}$	-	-	-	-	$\frac{2}{1}$	-	-
Nay	$\frac{1970}{1978}$	$\frac{6}{1}$	-	$\frac{7}{19}$	$\frac{4}{1}$	$\frac{35}{29}$	$\frac{5}{22}$	$\frac{6}{4}$
Jugi	$\frac{1970}{1978}$	-	-	-	$\frac{2}{1}$	$\frac{9}{1}$	-	-
Others	$\frac{1970}{1978}$	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	$\frac{1970}{1978}$	$\frac{49}{77}$	$\frac{39}{40}$	$\frac{156}{158}$	$\frac{28}{34}$	$\frac{751}{569}$	$\frac{5}{22}$	$\frac{78}{130+(5)*}$

* Figures in parentheses indicate the number of electric weaving machines.

holds raising domestic fowls. The number of households raising large animals was not great in either year.

There is little difference in the number of livestock per household. In 1978, the maximum number of buffaloes in one household was 4 and among the total of 57 households raising buffaloes, 42 (74 percent) raised only one buffalo. This was also the case for most of the other animals.

However in 1978 one Jyapu household began an extensive poultry raising programme with 150 chickens. As bank loans became available, other people began similar projects in 1978. But in spite of this, there was an overall decrease in the total number of fowls.

In the case of other animals, a slight increase can be seen in the total number. This increase, however, did not exceed the rate of increase in the human population except in the case of buffaloes. Buying buffaloes has been recently encouraged by the loans offered for this purpose by the Agricultural Development Bank.

In all, however, there was a slight decline in animal husbandry between 1970-78.²⁴

Weaving

In contrast to animal husbandry, weaving has been gaining importance in this village. Formerly, it was done on a handloom called bātāngā or chetāngā on which the woof was put through by hand and the warp was moved up and down by stepping on the pedals. As stronger cloth could be woven on the bātāngā, it was still used by some women despite its slow weaving speed. These women were mostly of the Jyapu caste because the bātāngā was good for weaving hākugu parsi (women's waist-cloth with a red hem) worn mostly by Jyapu women.

A loom with a flying shuttle was introduced around 1940, and it rapidly replaced the bātāngā.²⁵ The new loom is called tān and has a speed fifteen to twenty times faster than a bātāngā. The tān made it possible for people to weave more cloth than was needed in their household. It was estimated that the number of tān was about 10 in 1960 and 20 in 1965. It increased to 78 by 1970 and 130 by 1978.

Though two thirds of the households owning tān used to sell some cloth from time to time, few made weaving their major source of income in 1970. But weaving grew to be one of the important sources of income, and in 1978, 19 households were depending on weaving as a secondary source of income.

Weaving machines run by electricity were introduced from 1977, and five households were using them in 1978. These machines were four or five times faster than the common tān and after their introduction, many young men began to engage in weaving even in the busy agricultural seasons.

Another newly introduced technique was the weaving of dhākā (a cloth with minute patterns made by the use of multi-coloured threads woven in one woof line). This technique was brought to this village in 1975 by a widow who returned to this village from Tansen (a town in Palpa district). Though the weaving of dhākā is time-consuming, it gradually spread among the villagers since it could be woven on an ordinary tān and sold at a good price. By 1978, six people (four girls and two boys) had learned how to make dhākā and some were weaving it everyday.

Thus, through the introduction and increase of the tān and electric weaving machines and with the spread of the technique for making dhākā, it became possible for a considerable number of people to earn a good income within the village.

Combination of Jobs

So far, we have looked at agricultural and non-agricultural jobs separately. However, these two were combined in many households. It was common for men to leave light agricultural labour to women and old people in order to work in Kathmandu. But in these cases the men would take leave from their work for several days so that they could conduct agriculture in busy seasons.

Table 4 shows how agricultural and non-agricultural jobs were combined in each caste in 1970 and 1978. In this table, weaving and animal husbandry, though extensively done, are omitted from "non-agricultural jobs." But if we include them in the non-agricultural work, the number of households combining the two increases.

From Table 4, it is clear that the number of households which depended solely on non-agricultural jobs is few despite the large number of non-agricultural workers shown in Table 2.

Among the non-agricultural households are included two that earned their living solely by their traditional caste specific services e.g. a Barmhu (Hindu priest) and a Kau (blacksmith).

It is notable that the number of non-agricultural households is smaller than the number of households with no land. This is explained by the fact that someone with no land could make agriculture his main source of income by renting-in lands or by working as a daily-paid agricultural labourer on another's land.

Table 4: Caste-wise Occupational Distribution in 1970 & 1978

Caste	Number of Agricultural Households		Number of Households Combining Agriculture and Other Jobs		Number of Non-Agricultural Households	
	1970	1978	1970	1978	1970	1978
Barmhu					1	1
Syesya	15	15	44	49	4	4
Jyapu	35	27	63	86	2	3
Duin	2	2	7	6	1	-
Kau	-	-	-	-	1	1
Saymi	-	-	1	1	-	-
Nay	-	1	13	15	4	1
Jugi	1	1	-	-	-	-
Temporary Residents	-	-	-	1	-	3
Total	53	46	128	158	13	13

The importance of agriculture has remained great as over 90 percent of the total households were more or less engaged in agriculture in both 1970 and 1978. Nevertheless, "pure" agricultural households became fewer in number than those combining agriculture with other jobs. In 1978, 73 percent of all the households combined both, whereas in 1970, only 66 percent did so. These figures also reflect an increase both in the number and in the proportion of households with combined occupations.

Changes in Agricultural Labour Recruitment

Three Types of Labour Recruitment

In this society, there are three systems for recruiting agricultural labour from outside one's own household. These are bolā, gwāli and jyāmi.

Traditionally, bolā was the most popular way of recruiting labour. It is a system of labour exchange in which a certain amount of labour is reciprocated by the equivalent amount of labour. There are two kinds of bolā. One is here called "group bolā" and another "unstructured bolā."

In a group bolā, a group of people (sometimes up to 10 or even more are organized. The members of a bolā group (bolā khala) rotate work in each member's field. Until the work is finished, no one is allowed to work in non-members' field. If members remain on good terms, they can continue the group longer than one farming season.

Members of bolā groups are usually male, but in the rice planting season many women are also included. However, women are only loosely attached to the bolā group and the female labour is only counted as half that of males.²⁶

Most commonly only one person from one household is in a bolā group. But if two men from one household join the group, the group members work for a double number of days in their field.

If a bolā member fails to come for work in another member's field, he has to pay a cash compensation equal to the payment to a hired agricultural labourer. These calculations are done at the end of each main agricultural season. At the end of the rice harvest, a feast called Bolākhu bhwe is held by each bolā group. The date of this feast is fixed by village elders for the entire village and the bolā members not only enjoy the feast but clear all their accounts on the same day. In other seasons no date is fixed for the calculations of bolā.²⁷

In contrast to the "group bolā", no on-going group is formed in the case of "unstructured bolā". Here two or more persons merely agree to exchange their labour. The work is done on agreed days, and in between the participants can work freely in other people's fields. The bolā relation in this case can be multilateral. For example, a person A may practice bolā with a person B and B with another person C. But it is not necessary for A to have any bolā relationship with C whereas in the case of the group bolā, all of A, B and C compose one group.

Those who come into a bolā relationship are usually neighbours. As the bolā members have to work in each other's field day by day, it is not convenient to have a person living far from the village in a group. Often a core of a bolā group is organized by patrilineal kinsmen who may call in a few neighbours and friends. But it is not obligatory for patrilineal kin to practice bolā together.

Labour can also be recruited through gwali. The word "gwali" means "help" in various contexts. In relation to labour recruitment, it is used to denote an offer of labour in return for which no direct compensation is expected. Though bolā is practiced mainly in agricultural work, gwali is given not only in agricultural work but also in work such as the pounding of baji (flattened rice), manufacture of liquor and the drying of grains, all of which are usually done by women. The number of people working as gwali labourers in a farm at one time is quite small compared to other types of labourers.

In contrast to the bolā which is ordinarily exchanged within a village, the gwali is often practiced among affines living in different villages. Moreover, the gwali is more frequently given by married out daughters, accompanied by their husbands and children, when she visits her parents' household. Gwali is also practiced among fictive kin, twāy (mit in Nepali), e.g. friends or neighbours, but this is limited to minor domestic work.

The third type of labour recruitment is gyāmi. Literally, "jyami" means "a worker (or workers)". But the villagers' concept of gyāmi includes only two kinds of workers. One is a daily paid coolie labourer who works in the construction of roads, houses, etc. The other is an agricultural labourer hired on a daily basis. The latter might be called "agricultural gyāmi", but as I am dealing only with agricultural workers here, I will use the word "jyāmi" to refer exclusively to them.

Jyāmi are recruited both from inside and outside the village, although formerly they were mainly sought within the village. Not only the landless people but also members of some well-to-do households are recruited as gyāmi. However, those who depend most heavily on the income from gyāmi work are those who have little or no land.

In 1978, about a half of all the households in the village had some members who had worked as gyāmi in the preceding year, and in nearly half of these cases, household members had worked as gyāmi only very rarely.

Change in the Labour Situation

In recent years, the means of recruiting agricultural labour has changed considerably, mainly because of an inflow of seasonal agricultural labourers from the hills west of the Kathmandu Valley. This inflow was stimulated by the opening of a bus service following the completion of the road (Prithvi Rāj Mārga) connecting Pokhara with Kathmandu in 1973. Those people who had to walk one or two days from their homes in the hills can now come to Kathmandu in one to three hours by bus. Moreover, busy agricultural seasons

in the hills differ from those in the Kathmandu Valley. Thus it has become easy for those hill people in need of more income to come to the valley for work at a time when they have less work at home.

In 1978, the period of their stay varied from a few days to a few months. Almost all of those who came for work were males of various jāt (ethnic groups and castes) such as Tamang, Gurung, Magar, Newar and Chhetri. They would come with minimum personal belongings and stay in some of the public shelters, phalchā (pāti in Nepali), or in the house of the landlord who hired them. If such person was hired he was fed three times, including baji (a heavy snack taken around noon in the field), and paid about six rupees a day in the busy season in 1978. In the case of a jyāmi who had his own home in or nearby village, he was paid twelve rupees because he ate at his home twice and had to be fed by the landlord only once.²⁸ The amount of the payment fluctuated from season to season or even within one season. In the beginning of a season when there was less demand for labour, the daily wage even went down to half that of the peak labour period. Women were paid half the amount given to men.

Though there were several jāt among those agricultural labourers coming from outside the valley, the villagers generally referred to them as sē. The Newari word "sē" is usually translated as "bhotē" in Nepali. In the villager's use of the word "sē", however, not only the Tibetans but also other Mongoloid groups in Nepal (except for the Newar themselves) are included, although when I asked some of the villagers what particular jāt the sē were, the most common answer was that they were Tamang. This may be due to the fact that the Tamang have been the most numerous group among the sē around the Kathmandu Valley and therefore were in frequent contact with the villagers here. But when I asked some of the jyāmi themselves about their jāt, names of several other jāt such as Magar, Gurung or even Chhetri were also given. Thus, it is clear that Satepa villagers used these terms not actually knowing the jāt of all the jyāmi. In fact, the villagers' interest was not in the jāt of the jyāmi but in their role as labourers.²⁹

In 1970, when the Kathmandu-Pokhara road was not yet completed, there was no substantial source of jyāmi in the hills to the west of the valley. There was only the Kathmandu-Birgunj road along which only a few large settlements could be found. Therefore, even in the busiest season in 1970 or in 1971, I found only a few jyāmi from outside working around Satepa.

In 1978, out of 190 farming households in this village, only 4 percent had been using jyāmi from outside the valley for more than ten years. 66 percent said that they began using them in their fields within the previous ten years (most commonly within

five to six years). Even in 1978, 31 percent of the farming households were not hiring them at all.

On 18th October, 1978, I counted 95 jyāmi from outside the valley working in the fields of Satepa villagers for the rice harvest. The total population of those who came to Satepa as jyāmi from outside the valley in one season likely exceeded one hundred.

In the evenings of the busy season in 1978, the village squares and lanes grew crowded with the agricultural labourers coming back from the fields. They would curiously look into the houses of those who were weaving or would gather together around the image of Buddha or in tea shops, which sometimes turned into labour markets for people looking for the next day's work and the villagers in search of labourers.

As discussed, there were a considerable number of people who did not hire any jyāmi from outside. There were various reasons for this. If the size of the landholdings was small or if one had enough household members to meet the need for labour in one's own field, it was not necessary to hire any jyāmi, or if one practiced bolā, he might not need them. But along with these alternatives, dislike of sē was one of the reasons why some of the people did not hire jyāmi from outside. Even those who depended on sē claimed that the sē were lacking in agricultural skills by Newar standards. In particular they were not used to using the ku (kodāli in Nepali), a short handled hoe popular among the Newar. Sometimes landlords had to teach the sē how to handle the ku properly.

On the other hand, the jyāmi recruited within the village were usually considered to be more reliable. One woman told me that if she hired sē, she could not leave them unsupervised because the work might not get finished, whereas if she hired jyāmi from her village, she could expect better work.

Despite these attitudes, jyāmi from outside were widely resorted to around 1978 because by hiring them landlords could have their field work completed much more quickly. Formerly, when they were dependent on bolā, and a limited number of jyāmi within the village, farmers had to wait for some days before the bolā group came to their fields. Often this led to a delay in certain important tasks which again caused a delay in the next agricultural process. This problem was solved by the inflow of the large number of labourers from outside. Thus by 1978, one person even commented that one might lose his dignity (ijjat wani) if he failed to get his field work done quickly. Besides, many of the villagers were already willing to accept jyāmi from outside because they had their own non-agricultural jobs. Before, the landowners who commuted to Kathmandu had to take leave from their work in the busy agricultural

seasons in order to take care of their own farms as well as to cooperate in bolā. But after the labour inflow, villagers were more apt to go back to their work in the city than to remain in the village for agricultural work.

Thus the number of people practicing bolā decreased considerably. In 1978, among 190 farming households, 60 percent said that the number of the bolā labourers in their fields had decreased, especially since the inflow of sē. Among the rest, 15 percent said that they had rarely practiced bolā anyway.³⁰ Twenty-five percent were heavily dependent on bolā in busy seasons though they might supplement this labour by hiring a few jyāmi.

It should be noted that the type of bolā found in 1978 was mainly an "unstructured bolā." In 1971, I found more than twenty bolā groups (bolā khala) in which the members worked together and held feasts at the end of the season. But I could only find one bolā khala in the rice-planting season as well as in the harvest in 1978.

In the rice-planting season, less labour change was observed. As it was only women who planted rice seedlings, and as women in this village did not have jobs in Kathmandu, women's work was done by "unstructured bolā" as it had been in the former days.

The number of Satepa villagers who worked as jyāmi also decreased between 1970-1978. The number of households that relied on jyāmi work as their primary source of income decreased from seven to four from 1970 to 1978.

Conclusion

The Kathmandu Valley is one of the places in Nepal where the introduction of improved seeds has been successful. But as seen here, it took place in a context where the average landholding size per household was small and the rate of population increased high. Because of these factors, it became increasingly necessary for people to seek some sources of income in non-agricultural sectors even given the increase in agricultural production. People in the village discussed here were favoured by the closeness to the capital as it offered them outside job opportunities. Still, many of their jobs were temporary and could be easily withdrawn if the economic condition of the capital were to decline. In this sense, the village economy became more dependent on the economic condition of the nation or even beyond and hence vulnerable to change in the outside world.

Agriculture also became vulnerable to external conditions. As the improved varieties of crops cannot be satisfactorily grown without using imported chemical fertilizers, any decline in their

import will have a disastrous effect on production. The situation is difficult for Nepal as she suffers a lack of marketable export goods and has to depend heavily on foreign aid.

The involvement in the cash economy is an irreducible trend. It was brought about both through the increase in agricultural production and in the employment in the non-agricultural sectors which made cash more accessible and at the same time more necessary. The use of fertilizers made payment in cash indispensable and the contact with the city required more cash as it created new incentives for consumption. More and more radios, tape-recorders, or fashionable clothes can be seen in the village, especially among the younger generation.

As for population movement, it is noteworthy that not only the city of Kathmandu but also the surrounding rural area attracted many people from outside. Out of the sample survey of the in-migration pattern in Kathmandu urban areas, Thapa and Tiwari (1977) concluded that most of the in-migrants were literate, being either students or working in non-agricultural sectors such as government and private services, business, etc.³¹ Combining their study with ours, we can point out three kinds of centripetal human flow in and around the Kathmandu Valley. The first is the inflow of a literate population from all over Nepal to Kathmandu, which Thapa and Tiwari discuss. The second is the commuting population from rural areas in the valley to urban areas. Among them, both literate and illiterate people are found. The third pattern is the temporary inflow of mainly uneducated labourers from outside to rural areas in the valley. They filled the deficiency of the rural labour force caused by the population commuting to the city for work.

Change in the rural labour recruitment system was inevitable under these circumstances. In effect, bolā was largely replaced by iyāmi because of the labour inflow facilitated by the road construction. However, it would not have been possible for the incoming labour force to be employed if it were not for the favourable economic conditions of those who employed them. At the moment, the demand and supply of the labour force seems to be fairly well balanced. Thus in this area of Satepa, by the time the agricultural labourers came in mass, villagers had cash in hand and were short of labour. They were able as well as compelled to hire more iyāmi to maintain their agricultural activities. The decline of the bolā system was thus a direct consequence of the recent economic and demographic changes in the area.

In this paper, I did not deal with the social consequences of the economic changes in this village. But with the decline of the bolā system, which in itself is a part of the weakening of intra-village cooperation, there have been significant social

repercussions. But these kinds of changes should be dealt with elsewhere in detail.³²

Notes

1. Pant, 1975:17.
2. I calculated the population as of December 31, 1970 and August 1, 1978. Criteria of "village population" are as follows:
 - i) In the cases of households with some of their family members living outside as students, government employees or other kinds of workers, I have included in the "village population" only those outside residents who were either unmarried or who had wives remaining in Satepa.
 - ii) Temporary residents have also been included in the "village population."
 - iii) Two health-post employees staying in Satepa in 1978 who were of Syesya and Po(Poḍe) castes who were unmarried and unrelated to other villagers have been excluded.
3. The names to which I have put quotation marks were given by temporary residents themselves. But Satepa villagers doubted the real caste status of "Bada" and "Srestha" and said that they might be "sē". (About sē, see the section on labour recruitment).
4. Among those who out-migrated are included those married males with their nuclear families who were still considered to be the same family members of some village residents. At the time of out-migration, these people numbered twenty.
5. Raikar lands are the "lands on which taxes are collected from individual landowners, traditionally regarded as state-owned." (Regmi, 1976: 234).
6. Guthi lands are the lands endowed "for any religious or philanthropic purpose." (Ibid., 234).
7. Bhogbandaki is a system under which creditors cultivate the mortgaged lands instead of taking interest.
8. The same measure was adopted in Ishii, 1978: 509. Raikar lands, Guthi lands, lands taken in mortgage and leased lands are considered as "held". A very small amount of land was still listed as Birtā in the land record, but I consider the cultivators of these Birtā lands as "holders" of them.

9. 1 ropani = 0.05 hectare. This slight change was due to the selling and buying of lands, losing of lands in litigation and in- and out-migration of some of the landholders.
10. I include all the households in the village in the calculation of these average figures whether they were holders of land or not.
11. There were 23 households in 1970 and 18 in 1978 which let out a part of their lands. But in most of them the rent from those lands constituted a smaller portion of their income.
12. I made the estimate for 1970 by asking a score of villagers, village panchayat's secretary, officers in the district agricultural development office and officers in the cooperative society. In 1978, I got the figures of the areas sown or planted to each crop from every household in the village.
13. Lerma-64, 52 were brought from Mexico, Taichun from Taiwan and RR-21 from USSR.
14. People said that they were getting more and more fond of Taichun because they became used to it.
15. It was first brought to this village in 1973 by some of the villagers from a nearby village.
16. 1 muri = 90.9 liters. Among the improved wheat, RR-21 yielded most, Lerma-64 came second and Lerma-52 third.
17. The rate depended upon the size of the machine. Some people did not count by hours but took the amount equal to one day's wage for a male per day. The rate also changed in the lapse of years: it was a half rupee to one rupee per hour in 1970 and around two rupees in 1978.
18. The rate fluctuated from season to season or even within a season. The rent given here is the rate in the rice planting season in 1978.
19. The figures given for the total in this table for 1970 partly differ from what I had given in another article (Ishii, 1978) mainly because I included in the present table the manufacturers and sellers of milk products such as dhau (dahi in Nepali: curd) in non-agricultural work.
20. In 1978, two rice and flour mills were owned by two Syesya and five Jyāpu respectively. One flour-rice-ciura mill was owned by two Syesya and one ciura mill by one Syesya.

21. Some villagers worked in some of the government offices such as tax offices or village panchayts. A considerable number of people were employed in the offices related to health projects such as leprocy control.

Semi-governmental jobs were those in the Electric Corporation, schools, hospitals, university offices, cooperative societies, the Nepal Transportation Corporation and the Salt Trading Corporation. In Table 2, I list the latter two Corporations in a different column because besides white collar workers, there were many people in these Corporations who worked as coolie labourers. The numbers of these are listed separately.

22. All the private enterprises in which Satepa villagers were working were very small in size. They were: tea shops, milk shops, grocer shops, a welding factory, a carpet factory, and rice-flour mills.
23. It took more than a month to collect the figures on domestic animals but no correction was made for giving the figures at one point of time.
24. This statement could not be negated even if the seasonal fluctuation of livestocks were taken into account as the counting was done around December (a season after big festivals when animals were expected to be fewer) in 1970 and around May-June (a season before big festivals) in 1978.
25. A tān could either be purchased in Kathmandu or made by some of the skilful carpenters within the village. It was 200 to 300 rupees around 1970 and about 600 rupees in 1978.
26. This makes a clear contrast to the Parbate system of parma in which female labour and male labour are counted equally.
27. At the end of the rice planting season, a date is fixed for holding a feast called Jhārkha bhwe. This feast is held in each household and it is not necessary to clear the bolā account of the season on this day.
28. This was a rate for a male jyāmi in 1978. In 1970, it was five rupees a day for a male recruited within the village.
29. If villagers found that a jyāmi is a Chhetri, they ceased to refer to him as sē. Instead, they used the word "khay."
30. The main reasons were: the smallness of household, small landholding size and outside jobs.

31. Thapa and Tiwari, 1977: 41-45, 68-71, 91-96.
32. In another paper (Ishii, 1978) I analyzed an aspect of the decline of the inter-caste relationships which took place before 1971.

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