

The Concept of Economy in a Peasant Society: A Case Study of the Athpahariya Rais in East Nepal

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Introduction

Anthropologists have long recognized that even the simple economies not only fulfil biological needs but also contribute to the social needs as determined by socially prescribed forms of kinship, hospitality rules, moral values, prestige requirements, etc. In fact, the economic system and the society are so much interrelated that it is not possible to comprehend fully an economic system without reference to the total culture of which is a part (Malinowski, 1922; Herskovits, 1952; Firth, 1946; Polanyi, 1957; Bohannan and Dalton, 1962). On the other hand, there is a great debate regarding the subject matter of economic anthropology (see LeClair & Schneider, 1968). This debate has given two schools of thought in economic anthropology—the substantivists and the formalists. Each school of thought has its own views to justify for the adequacy of its theory and to explain the economy of primitive and peasant societies. This paper has two basic objectives: i) to analyze the concepts of economics as they apply to a group of people living in East Nepal and (ii) to synthesize the substantivist and the formalist theories and to perceive them as being complementary rather than in opposition.

The particular ethnic group I have studied is the Athpahariya Rais,¹ an Indo-Mongoloid group living in the Dhankuta district, East Nepal.² The Athpahariyas are a small group of a Tibeto-Burman language speaking people, about 4,000 in number, who are distributed in four village panchayats³ in Dhankuta district, East Nepal. They live in the highland Hill region about 4,500-5,000 feet above sea level with relatively poor soil and little rainfall. They practice a shamanistic tradition as their religion.

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Subsistence Economy

As in most Nepali villages, the main source of livelihood among the Athpahariyas is agriculture supplemented locally by animal husbandry, small trade, and wage labour. A major portion of the agricultural lands consists of dry fields or pakho where the potential for irrigation is minimal. The irrigable land or khet is limited and lies mostly around the river basins in small strips and patches. The principal crops grown in the dry uplands are maize, millet, wheat, buckwheat, lentils and a variety of beans, and, in the low lands, basically rice and wheat.

The agricultural calendar begins in March-April and ends in November-December covering about nine months. During this nine months period there are at least three growing seasons: the rainy season, the autumn season and the winter season. During the rainy season, the local variety of maize, rice and tomatoes, chillies, pumpkins, cucumber and a few other vegetables are grown. In the autumn, millet, improved variety of maize, buckwheat, lentils, soyabeans, groundnuts, tobacco, tomatoes and raddishes are grown. In the winter, however, only wheat and a limited quantity of improved variety of rice (as this variety of rice needs plenty of water) are grown, supplemented by some vegetables such as potatoes, onions, and tomatoes. The crops of the rainy season are cultivated during and after the monsoon, i.e. between March and April and harvested during July and August. Autumn crops are started in the third week of September and the harvest is ready in the last week of November. The two main winter season crops are cultivated in the last week of December and January and harvested up until the last week of March.

The staple crop is maize. The subsidiary crops are millet, rice, wheat and several varieties of lentils and beans. Millet is used for preparation of enka (home made beer) and umaling (country liquor) as well as for food. However, a good deal of millet is grown for beer brewing. Millet beer is not only a nutritionally valuable drink but also the drink which they offer to guests, to household and village divinities and is indispensable for any ritual or festive occasion. It is also a common drink when labour has to be mobilized during special occasions like marriage or death rituals, house construction, and also during the peak agricultural season. Rice is mostly consumed on special occasions or at festivals. In other words, rice is a prestigious food. On the other side, the Athpahariyas consider maize as better food for heavy work which they have to do every day. So in terms of choice, an Athpahariya prefers to eat maize rather than rice and places heavy emphasis on maize cultivation. Moreover, they use maize in a number of ways:

first, it is the staple food. Second, the maize husk is used as fodder for pigs, fowls and for milk-cows. Even spoiled grains are utilized. Third, bread prepared from maize flour is used for snacks, and in times of food shortage, it is eaten as a meal by itself. The Athpahariyas say that if there is maize in the house the whole family survives. But due to influence of neighbouring Hindu groups such as Brahmins and Newars for whom rice is both the staple and prestigious food, the Athpahariyas are slowly changing their values and are placing emphasis on irrigated lands where rice can be grown.

Almost every family or household has its own land, own grain stores and a separate family budget for the whole year. A "family" means all members of a household who eat at the same hearth and share in all household affairs. In other words, the family is the unit of residence, worship, land ownership and use and production and consumption.

Agricultural work is done by a family as a group. Excluding children below five years, old people and the physically disabled, all household members participate in economic production. There is an average of 3.6 adults (between 15 and 65 years of age) in an Athpahariya household. Thus, in many cases, the family members handle all activities from ploughing the field to harrowing the clods, weeding the maize and transplanting millet and paddy seedlings. Though adults of both sexes share work in many cases, the men plough fields, thatch roofs and construct houses and cowsheds. Moreover, the role of leadership is always played by the senior adult male in the family. He makes decision in economic matters and supervises family affairs.

In the active agricultural season, particularly during the planting and harvesting, help from other hands is sometimes needed. People help each other on a reciprocal basis or employ labourers on daily wages. Usually the exchange of reciprocal labour among the Athpahariyas is based on specialisation. Normally a woman's labour is repaid by a woman and man's labour by a man. There is usually competition among families as to who will cultivate the land first. So those families which have enough manpower of their own mobilize their own internal labour and cultivate the land. Cooperation in such situation is also organized along the lines of consanguinity and affinity.

Animal husbandry is considered as important as agriculture by the Athpahariyas. Cows, oxen, buffaloes, goats, fowls and especially pigs are of importance. Pork is not only health-giving and tasty but the sacrifice of pigs is necessary in all kinds of religious activities, pig's meat is considered pure

and pleasing to the divinities. Pigs also figure prominently in the marriage payments that follow a wedding ceremony. It is to be noted that the number of pigs raised by Athpahariyas is proportionately equal with the number of festivals and rituals they are going to perform in a year. Normally an Athpahariya household raises at least three pigs annually as there are three big festivals to be celebrated each year and as many pigs as they assume they will need for other socio-religious activities. Additional pigs may be raised as they can bring cash to the Athpahariyas when needed. So the pigs raised are a form of stored wealth.

Land Tenure

Up to 1968 the pattern of land-holding which existed traditionally among the Athpahariyas was the kipat system (see Regmi, 1963: 29-30). An Athpahariya Rai obtained right of ownership to kipat land by virtue of his membership in a clan group and especially in the localized clan group. There are twelve clans⁴ among the Athpahariyas. Long long ago (no body knows the exact date) each clan was given a fixed area of kipat land within their territory. So the land-holding of an Athpahariya Rai today depends on how much his clan or lineage members have been segmented. If there is less segmentation in a particular clan or lineage group, bigger is the land-holding in that particular clan or lineage group. In other words, a particular household may hold a certain amount of land depending upon the segmentation of its lineage members. In the past, at the time of family fission, every male member of a family had a right to an equal share of land as well as to other household belongings owned by his father. The land was equally divided among sons leaving a similarly sized portion for the parents to maintain themselves in their old age. Supposing there are three sons, each son would get a quarter of land and the remaining quarter went to the parents. Finally, when the parents die, their share of land is also given to the son who looked them in their old age. It was the way the segmentation of kin followed in each generation and thus land was fragmented each time. However, land and people are both important for wealth and prestige and power within the Athpahariya society. So when there was surplus of land, some clan members even invited people from outside of their community, gave land to them to maintain their group size. For example, one Yakha Rai (out side of their community) is said to have come in Chuliban (in my field area) more than a century ago. Later, he was integrated into the Athpahariya society by the Hombarak clan and given a share of their kipat land. Now this solitary Yakha's descendents comprise five families, and the kipat is shared equally among the five brothers. On the other side, the

two families of two other ethnic groups, the Dungbali Rais and Limbus, who were also integrated into the Athpahariya Rai society, were not given the share of kipat land in the same area. It was mainly because they were in the Athpahariya territory just four decades ago, and that time, there was practically no cultivable land to offer them.

Today, there is no kipat system as such and the Athpahariya Rais maintain their kipat land as Raika.⁵ But when one works the traditional kipat holdings of the Athpahariyas, these kipat holdings have also been maximally fragmented due to an increase of population, as well as sales and mortgage. Those Athpahariyas who hold a minimal amount of land and who also cannot afford money to purchase land elsewhere, also cultivate others' land on a share-crop basis (equal share of entire crop) or on a rental basis (a fixed rent is paid). However, those Athpahariyas, who still hold larger amounts of land in their name and who have enough members to support their own group, hold power as well as status in the society.

Cash Economy and Market Exchange

It is noted among the Athpahariyas that during the rainy season when there is high demand for labour there is also acute shortage of grain. So in this period there are very few people who are willing to work in the fields for cash. So those people who need extra hands must have extra grains to mobilize labour. In some Athpahariya houses there is a good stock of stored grain and this grain is utilized to mobilize labour in such a period. So money loses its function as a medium of payment in the peak agricultural season. In this period grain can easily mobilize labour and this is a highly liquid form of capital. A labourer knows that he can buy grain out of cash but it takes time for him to go to the market and to convert cash into grain. Paradoxically, there is another reason why a labourer prefers grain to cash. That is to say cash is too widely useful as a medium of payment in the long run. If he goes to market with cash he might spend it on luxury items such as cigarettes, soaps, tea, etc, or he might buy a few glasses of millet beer or country liquor. At the same time he is also worried that if he has cash in hand, his neighbours will be able to borrow money more easily. So he feels that if he gets grain he will utilize it for the whole family and hence derive maximum satisfaction. So money is not always used as a measurement of value or a good medium of payment. In other words, money in some circumstances is prevented from being "all purpose money" because it has low liquidity in the short term and is too liquid in the long run (also note Polanyi, 1958, and Dalton, 1961).

On the other side, most of the products of the Athpahariyas are for their own consumption. As the Athpahariya Rais' territory is a grain deficit area, grains are not cash crops for them. However, vegetables like tomatoes, chillies, potatoes and other seasonal crops like sweet potato and tobacco are partly for their own consumption and partly for sale. The weekly market place is available to transform these products into cash. However, of all seasonal crops, tomatoes are the most important cash crops among the Athpahariyas. It is the only cash crop in the area which provides income throughout the year. Surplus tomatoes are sold mostly in the Dhankuta bazar area or the weekly market area (located 2-5 miles away from the Athpahariya settlements) and sometimes in the bigger market towns like Dharan bazar (about 20 miles away from the Athpahariya settlements) as well and sold at even at higher prices. In the field area, some of the Athpahariya households used to earn more than 1,000 to 1,500 rupees (100 to 150 dollars; one American dollar was equivalent to 10 Nepali rupees when I was in the field) per annum from the sale of tomatoes alone. It was one of the strategies of Athpahariyas to relieve land pressure by growing a high value cash crops, like tomatoes in the area.

Athpahariyas's economy is not a marketless economy and is closer to an economy with "peripheral markets" as Bohannan and Dalton define them in Markets in Africa (1962). However, the money in the market situation is "all purpose money" among the Athpahariyas. On the other hand, their economy is not fully governed by the market principle of Western society. They never produce anything looking forward to the market situation and only the surplus products come to the market. My use of the term "surplus" here has the simple meaning which refers to an excess of domestic and agricultural products in relation to the needs of a particular Athpahariya Rai household. Sometimes surplus are simply distributed to neighbours and relatives. So the value placed on goods or services is not necessarily determined by the supply of any good or service and relative demand for it. Moreover, both social as well as economic factors come forward in the market concept of the Athpahariyas and the market not only fulfils economic needs but also conserves social functions (see below).

The term "market" refers among the Athpahariyas to the institutionalized locus of exchange, the market place with its booth and traders. However, to run small shops at home does not fulfil the notion of an institutionalized form of market though this type of shop runs on the clear notion of profit.

The Athpahariyas sell their local products mostly in the weekly market which takes place in a fixed location near the Dhankuta bazar area. On every Thursday about 1,500 to 2,000 people of the surrounding villages assemble at this weekly market and provide a substantial numbers of customers for the petty traders who set up their shops in the different corners of the area. This weekly market plays an important role in providing the daily necessities of the surrounding villages.

Three main types of activity occur in this weekly market: i. the sale of local products (green vegetables, grains, clarified butter, honey, etc), ii. the sale of goods that are brought from the outside (kerosene, mustard oil, soap, spices, blankets, etc), and iii. the sale of livestock and meat. One of the interesting things noted here is that there is a relation between the commodity and the walking distance of the seller. Farmers selling their own products come from villages within a few miles distance to half day's walk but the sellers of blankets, handicrafts and other items imported from outside come from 2-3 days walking distance. The cash earned from the sale of local products is again utilized to obtain a variety of consumer goods like mustard oil, kerosene, grain matches, soaps, spices, and other such commodities from the market. This type of economy is clearly a peasant economy which resembles the pattern of mixed subsistence and cash crop economy as described by Fredrik Barth in his study of Darfur (1967).

The author also noted that this weekly market had some effects on the life of the Athpahariyas and a socio-economic change which was taking place among them. These effects were:

- i. The most important effect or the function of the market was the increase in the use and the circulation of money. The urban economy reaches out to the village in many ways. Things like cigarettes, kerosene, cooking oil, sugar, spices have entered the Athpahariyas' life. An Athpahariya who never takes tea at home, drinks a cup of tea when he goes to the weekly market. The people have more choices in their buying. Lower prices and greater selection encourage villagers to compare the prices of many items in different shops. In other words, the more money circulates and people can be more efficient in profit maximization, with the wider contact with the supply and demand.
- ii. The market as a meeting place for relatives and friends helps the Athpahariyas to hear news of their relatives and neighbours. Sometimes this gives Athpahariyas a neutral ground for mediating disputes among them. The market is

also one of the places where young Athpahariya boys and girls meet each other, sometimes dance together the whole night, clandestine sexual relations occur which eventually leads to marriage. On the other hand, the tendency to spend money on drink in a public place often leads to arguments, which leads to further disputes. Finally, market is the place where they come into contact with other ethnic groups easily which sometimes brings new economic opportunities (when I was in the field a Newar trader opened up a lime-factory where a lot of Athpahariyas were employed; sometimes they also get monetary loans from other ethnic groups), and probably for new chances for conflict (e.g., when they cannot repay their loan back in time).

Considering the theoretical issue, Bohannan's and Dalton's (1962, pp. 1-26) two spheres of economy: non-cash sphere and cash market sphere can also be noted while dealing with the concept of economy of the Athpahariyas. In the non-cash sphere their production is internally controlled and is not subject to market fluctuations. In other words, fluctuations in prices affect neither the value of the productive factors nor the level of production. So by isolating oneself from the market principle, an individual might forego some occasional gain when the price is high. But, in compensation, he reduces the risk of loss when the price is down. Second, an Athpahariya puts priority on meeting social obligations to fellow villager's moral value of distributing surplus to his neighbours and relatives as opposed to maximization of profit for individual family. In other words, giving priority to social obligations prevents the drain on resources which would manifest itself were the individual to sell for profit in the larger market.

The cash sphere was restricted as long as the villagers had low demand for things bought with ease, so the boundary between non-cash and cash was traditionally easy to maintain. Now with more demand on consumer goods from the cash sphere, the boundary is breaking down. We see the fear of this break down in the fact that people worry about their own tendency to spend on luxury goods if they have cash in hand when they go to market. In the traditional system, cash in fact did not have great liquidity because most things were provided within the village economy. As demand for things brought in, the market grows cash crops and threatens to impinge on the non-cash sphere economy.

Form of Reciprocity

Reciprocity, according to Polanyi (1957), involves exchange of goods between people who are bound in non-market, non-

hierarchical relationship to each other. In other words, to Polanyi, reciprocity between individuals integrates the economy only if symmetrical organized structures, such as a system of kinship groups are given. Sahlins (1965) distinguishes three forms of reciprocity: Generalized, Balanced, and Negative and proposes a type of correlation between type of reciprocity and social relationship, the latter being the unsociable extreme. Mauss's *The Gift* (1954) is another classic study of reciprocity where he sees gift exchange as fundamental to the relationships of individuals and groups linked by kinship ties and social obligations. However, the gift giving or the form of reciprocity among the Athpahariyas operates in a slightly different pattern from what Polanyi, Sahlins, and Mauss illustrate. Although gift giving is always morally and socially embedded among the Athpahariyas, it is not necessary that it should operate in the symmetrical order of kinship. There is no such rigidity in their societal norm that a refusal to give some gift is a refusal of friendship itself.

Among the Athpahariyas, gift-giving operates during festivals, marriage, and death rituals. Gift-giving is the prescribed form of social value when a person is morally and socially obligated to give some gift in terms of cash or kind. In such a situation, the close degree of kinship may hold good, but sometimes a distant relative can even invest more capital or goods in the form of gift to his immediate neighbour or host family. There is no such obligation that a maternal uncle must pay a certain amount of gift when his sister's son or daughter is getting married. In all the three fields: obligation to give, obligation to receive, and obligation to return, there are significant areas of choice and uncertainty and many gifts are sanctions of economic (if a person steals somebody's wife, he must give some gift to the headman or Subba excluding a certain amount of compensation to the cuckold), some gifts involve social status (see below) and some gifts are sanctions of religious beliefs and rituals (the son-in-law must give some gift to his wife's parents whenever he goes there or during certain rituals, Subba or the headman must be given some gift excluding certain items needed to please divinities). Among the Athpahariyas gift-giving takes place between individuals and not between groups.

During marriage and death, gifts, or "donations" are always recorded among the Athpahariyas. If a guest donates one rupee to his relative's or neighbour's son's or daughter's marriage, the person (the host) has to repay double the amount when his guest arranges the marriage to his son or daughter. So the form of gift-giving is not reciprocal here. The author recorded that the total value of these gifts accounted for about 19 to 25 percent of the total cost of marriage. In addition, if the daughter

of the headman of the village is going to get married, the Athpahariyas are obligated to give more gift than they give normally to other members of the society on such occasions. Similar situations prevail when death takes place among the Athpahariyas. So indirectly gift-giving on such occasions is a form of capital investment and a person who invests capital expects the return gift to be double the amount. Time is not the most important factor because a person can expect the return of his gift even after 15 years. It seems to me that the underlying principle in the "gift-giving" here is that of the interest-bearing investment of property.

On the other hand, gift-giving is seen in the perspective of social values by the Athpahariyas. They feel that they are helping a person who is in need. For them it is a social and not a monetary transactions.

Concept of Monetary Profit, Maximization and Social Values

A contrasting relationship of wealth and social values exists side by side among the Athpahariyas. In some situation, monetary profit is the primary goal.

To give an example, one finds one to four liquor shops in every Athpahariya Rai village which function illegally. The liquor shops are run mostly by the Athpahariya women. Women distill two kinds of liquor: home made enka or beer and umaling or country-liquor. There is a clear notion of monetary profit in this type of liquor shop. The author observed one liquor shop in detail in the village he was studying. This liquor shop was run by "Maili", the wife of the secretary of the village panchayat.

Maili did not utilize her own millet grown in the field for preparing millet beer. She knew that the extra millet stored at her house could be utilized to mobilize labour during the peak agricultural season. She used to buy about 20 to 25 kilograms of millet a week from the weekly market. It used to cost her about twenty-five rupees. Firewood, yeast for fermenting liquor and her own labour when put together it was valued roughly ten rupees to convert that millet into millet beer. She then could distill from one kilogram of millet to about two and half kilograms of millet beer.

One kilogram of millet beer used to cost about Rs. 1.20 (one rupee and twenty paise). Out of the millet she used to distill about 62 to 65 kilograms of millet beer. So from this business she used to make 100 percent profit or saved about 50

rupees a week. At the same time she used to buy about 25 to 30 bottles of local country-liquor, (as she had no time to prepare country-liquor at home) a week from a local Magar woman of the same village. One bottle of country-liquor used to cost her four rupees and she used to sell it six rupees per bottle for the retail customers. So again this business gave about 60 rupees income per week. So by selling millet beer and country-liquor she used to earn about 100 to 125 rupees a week which was enough to maintain 4-5 members of her family.

Sometimes, Athpahariyas also make long trips almost walking the whole day to sell their surplus products. These people have the clear notion of profit and do not sell their products in the local market area even if they get the same price in the bigger market. It is because the cash which they earn after making a long trip can be utilized immediately to purchase necessary consumer goods which are usually cheaper in the bigger market area. Moreover, he has some fixed places from where he gets goods on credit after paying a certain amount of cash or just delivering the goods he has carried all the way. But if one calculates the human labour in such a case, an Athpahariya is definitely losing money in the sense of monetary profit. He, however, feels that while carrying his own goods, his labour should not be taken into consideration. This is rational since there is no profitable alternative for labour. The opportunity costs are low.

In other dimension, social values are strongly embedded with wealth and prestige among the Athpahariyas. For example, marriage is an expensive affair among them and especially for the boy's family. In a normal situation, when an Athpahariya boy proposes to marry an Athpahariya girl, he has to pay the girl's parents a minimum of five pigs and about 160 kilograms of rice (excluding other items) as the bride price. This looks a mere economic transaction but for them girls are not the products to be purchased or sold. They consider such items as parts of a ritual and social and moral obligations. On the other side, when the status of a girl is high or she belongs to the daughter of the headman, the person proposes to marry her has to pay a higher bride price more than in the normal situation. So here the balance of social relationships is maintained through material gifts or money. Leach (1961: 116) has also demonstrated that among the Kachins the amount of bride price paid for a girl varies not only with the value of a woman as a wife but also with her social status value, so that where a man's wife is of higher status than he, he pays extra for that.

Another, contrasting relationship of moral values and wealth also exists among the Athpahariyas. This takes place when a

person dies unnatural death⁶ among them. It is believed that when unnatural death takes place such a person cannot go to heaven and creates troubles within the family or his close relatives. Just to get rid of such a dead spirit, there is an economic sanction. So when such death takes place, most of his belongings are buried with him. It is believed that things used or touched by the deceased in the house are contagious to members of the family. His belongings (even gold and silver) may no longer be used for any purpose or must be destroyed. At the same time, the house used by the dead should be left and the members of the family have to then build a new house for themselves. Even their own society members cannot purchase or utilize those abandoned goods due to socio-psychological fears of the dead cult. So they are forced to sell those abandoned goods only to those members who are willing to purchase them. Here the concept of wealth or the storage of wealth is not important. The Athpahariyas here maximize social values rather than economic gain.

Choice and Decision Making

In anthropology, "choice" or "decision" refers to the selection of a mode of action which can be considered, on the basis of one's evidence, as cognitively distinct from another mode of action (Howard, 1963: 434). Within this framework of definition, I find choice and decision-making, to certain extent, always operate among the Athpahariyas. To understand just the pattern of choice in agriculture, the farming pattern of the Athpahariyas is important. The range of choice of farming system, though it is complex, follows the certain prescribed form of the cropping patterns of the Athpahariyas. There are sequences of cropping patterns, following, cultivation and so on. Moreover, there is a clear prediction of the holding of the size of land and crops grown in relation to the size of their family.

The Athpahariyas hardly make any such decision that instead of planting maize they will plant millet for the sense of profit. An Athpahariya knows that maize would normally give better yield than millet even though commercially millet would be more profitable. He knows that by cultivating maize his whole family or even the livestock would survive. Moreover, he knows that where water is plentiful, paddy cultivation would give any alternative decision to change the crop patterns unless there is very high external stimuli for economic gain. He knows that if the cash crops do not give good yield also he does not have to struggle for survival. But if the subsistence crops fail or do not yield good, he has to face famine almost throughout the year.

On the other hand, Athpahariyas know that quite small changes in cropping patterns, or the time of operations, may effect other related activities such as house building, visits to market, ceremonies and so on. Moreover, complexity may arise because of the existence of uncertainties caused by variations in weather, incidence of pests, etc, if he changes the crop patterns. He knows that when he does not plant certain crops in time where he has good knowledge, there will be tremendous amounts of weed to be taken out from the field for which he needs more labour. Again a farmer knows that at certain periods it is easier to plough the fields than in certain other seasons. So when they have to make decision for alternative crops they note down all these variables and do not take risks. In addition, though he has to make quick decision which crop has to be planted or harvested first, there is however not a rigid or tight program in the operation of all crops as mentioned above.

As Sutti Ortiz (1967) notes, "the significance of the outcome of the farmer does not depend on the product itself but on the number of wants it may satisfy." (p. 173). The clear example of this type is the maize cultivation among the Athpahariyas. Though millet cultivation may give them more cash, maize satisfies the maximum number of their needs. Therefore, when discussing the rationality of decision making, "it is more significant to consider outcomes in terms of utility than in terms of quantity (Ortiz, 1967: 193). However, there is not so much individual variation in terms of choice and decision making regarding the cropping patterns among the Athpahariyas.

However, sometimes, decision for certain economic transactions is immediately made without considering any number of alternative variables. For example, many Athpahariyas need money or grain during their basic or contingency expenses such as food shortages in certain seasons or death or marriage that occurs. In such situation an Athpahariya has no alternative choice except that he has to meet these requirements immediately. His decision may not be "economical" as he borrows money or grain even in a high interest without bothering to calculate the ultimate economic loss. He scales his preferences here in terms of need. So Howard and Ortiz (1971: 218) are right to say that "it is imperative to specify the conditions under which a decision may suitably be labelled "rational" and forward that minimal conditions for rational decisions are that choices must be perceived by the decision maker as mutually exclusive; that the individual must be able to rank outcomes according to scale of preferences, etc."

Conclusion

The economy of the Athpahariyas clearly fits Firth's definition of peasant economies (1951, 87-88),

"... a system of small-scale producers, with a simple technology and equipment, often relying primarily for their subsistence on what they themselves produce. ... Such a small-scale productive organization, built upon a use of or a close relation to primary resources, has its own concomitant systems of capital accumulation and indebtedness, of marketing and distribution."

Among the Athpahariyas profit maximizing is certainly not a necessary postulate for the analysis of a producer's behaviour. Athpahariyas do not calculate the total cost of goods produced in a year by simply totalling the hours of labour and the price of resources that have gone into them. The value of a product is not always calculated in terms of profit at market prices. Fulfilling family and social needs is commonly more important than maximizing profit in cash. They give money and food for festivals, marriage and death rituals, etc. Women are never considered a commodity though a man pays to obtain a wife. In this respect, the Athpahariyas' economy is morally and socially deeply embedded.

On the other hand, while money in some situations is "all purpose money" in other situations it has only limited utility. Nonetheless, the Athpahariyas now live in the monetarized world. So a carefully reasoned strategy for maximizing social or economic benefits takes account of monetary consideration and even in gift giving there is a latent desire to get the maximum possible returns or benefits. There is a powerful motive to accumulate wealth, for success brings prestige and power.

It is not my intention here to enter into the debate between the Substantivists' and the Formalists' concerning what is "economics" itself, however my material on the Athpahariya Rais relates to these issues. Formalists are right to say that people maximize utility but I think they are wrong to say that the economic principles of the market are universally true. For example, the Athpahariyas do not maximize material or monetary goals during death rituals and particularly when a person dies unnatural death. In death rituals, the Athpahariyas are more concerned to fulfil their moral obligations than to maximize their material gains. In other words, we should know a great deal more about those properties of an economic system that are universal in character. Substantivists are right to say that primitive and peasant economies are socially and morally embedded and they do

not always look for monetary or material profit. But they are wrong to say that primitive economies do not at times maximize material and monetary goals. Moreover, their argument that economic theory is built only for a specific kind of economy - that is the market economy which is based on the analysis of price (Dalton, 1961, Bohannan and Dalton, 1962) and can only be used to analyze such economies is not supported by the case of Athpahariyas. The economic structure of the Athpahariyas clearly shows that their economy encompasses both a market and a non-market sphere. They often maximize material goals and have a clear notion of profit and loss and are wary about their possessions. On the other hand they also often are concerned to maximize social utility not material profit. So while analyzing the concept of economics among the Athpahariyas I feel that the Substantivists' and Formalists' views of economics need to be fused with each other.

My position in this paper is, however, with the third group, Economic Anthropologists like Firth (1946, 1951), Herskovits (1952), and Dewey (1962) who think that the two views of economics are complementary and that Formalist theory at the most general level can be reduced to non-market societies. My materials clearly show that Athpahariyas want to reconcile both worlds: on the one hand they want to maximize material rewards and on the other hand they want to satisfy their moral and social values without considering ultimate material economic gain. In this way the Athpahariya Rais try to make a balance of social and economic relationships.

In this paper, I have tried to synthesize Formalist and Substantivist theory seeing them as complementary rather than as in opposition. From Substantivist theory comes an awareness of the importance of social and cultural values in determining a people's economic goals; the embeddedness of the economy. From Formalist theory comes the idea of maximizing.

Formalist theory has most commonly been applied to market economics and is directly applicable to the behaviour of the Athpahariyas when they operate in the market sphere. In the non-market, socially most embedded aspects of their economy operate. They are allocating material goods in order to maximize social and moral values. Formal theory is applicable to this analysis as long as it is remembered that "utility" need not be measured in material terms and that people can strive to satisfy social as well as material needs. This description of the economy of the Athpahariyas demonstrates the analytical power of both schools of economics. Each contributed to the total picture rather than yielding conflicting pictures of the economy.

NOTES

1. The term "Rai" does not signify one particular ethnic group, rather ten to eighteen ethnic groups are called Rai. Groups like the Athpahariya, Bantawa, Chamling, Thulung, Kulung and so on each with their own distinct language and culture are treated as if they were a single group.
2. Materials on the Athpahariya Rais were collected from the periods between November, 1973 to April, 1974. The study on the Athpahariya Rais was made possible from the grant of Research Center for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, Nepal, where I work as a staff member of the Center.
3. A panchayat refers an administrative unit, divided into nine wards, a unit of taxation of the Revenue Department and panchayat boundaries are clearly fixed. In Nepal, the population of a village panchayat is usually more than one thousand and less than ten thousand.
4. These twelve clan names are: Hombarak, Chara, Pansung, Mangbung, Fhokim, Khawaduk, Lenksuwa, Chilinge, Kimdang, Charingme, Chongden, and Patre.
5. Land which the State retains under its ownership and taxes the private individuals who operate it. (Regmi, 1963).
6. There are two types of death among the Athpahariyas: Natural death, and Unnatural death. Natural death is called an ordinary death where a person dies without injury. Unnatural death occurs in various ways: suicide, falling out of a rock or house, drowning in a river, or death in flood or landslide, child birth or murder.

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