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**MIGRATION, ADAPTATION AND SOCIO-CULTURAL
CHANGE: THE CASE OF THE THAKALIS IN POKHARA*** 1

Ram Bahadur Chhetri

Introduction

The purpose of the present paper is to discuss adaptation, cultural continuity, and change among the immigrant Thakalis in Pokhara, Nepal. The Thakali community has attracted considerable attention in recent years (Bhattachan 1980, Chhetri 1980, Furer-Haimendrof 1966, 1981; Gauchan and Vinding 1977; Iijima 1963; Manzardo and Sharma 1975; Messerschmidt 1975; Vinding 1984). However, studies dealing specifically with adaptation and change among the migrant Thakali groups in various parts of Nepal are lacking². Migration is not a new phenomenon for the Thakalis. In the past most of them were involved in a process which may be characterized as cyclic or circulatory migration³. This brought them into contact with other communities in the lowland villages, towns, and cities of Nepal, and thereby initiated among them a process of social and cultural change and adaptation.

Some important arguments emerge from the discussion that follows which may be pointed out in the beginning. First it is argued that adaptation is a two way process, i.e., it involves an interaction between the immigrants and the host society. In this process both parties undergo adaptational changes, although one of them may change more than the other, which leads many of us to view the process of adaptation from the migrant's point of view only. Second, the process of adaptation may not necessarily lead to the assimilation of the in-migrants in the host culture and society. This becomes more true when the host society itself is multi-ethnic in character (as is Pokhara) and also when in-migrants in question mostly share the same social, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds (as in the case of the Thakalis in Pokhara) and originate from the same geographical

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region. Therefore, even though social and cultural changes may be observed in culture-contact situations, this does not necessarily lead to the creation of a fully homogeneous social and cultural setting in the place in question. This tells us why the "breakdown hypothesis" (Nair 1978:3) and the "melting pot" ideas do not hold well as viable theoretical concepts in discussing social change.

Instead, what may be observed is adjustment, or adaptation, which may be defined as a process whereby a group's or community's social, cultural and economic life is modified to suit the needs of the new setting. In the discussion below, an attempt is made to answer two main questions: (a) To what extent have changes taken place in the socio-cultural institutions, values, and norms of the migrant Thakalis in Pokhara? and (b) In what respects are the migrants adapted or adjusted? In the process of answering these questions, it will be shown that the "integration" of the migrants into the urban setting is mainly on the basis of their common economic interests while, at the same time, maintaining their distinct identity in terms of social and cultural life.

A third line of enquiry is: How does adaptational change among the migrant Thakalis affect the Thakali community at large in their native habitat? This question is relevant because the migrant Thakalis have maintained close and continuous contact with their kinsfolk in Thak Khola. Another question is: How does the migrant Thakali society evolve over generations? And a final question, basically related to the ones above, is: How do the Thakalis in Thak and outside (in the Hills and in the Tarai) differ from each other over time? This paper, based on two field expeditions among the Thakalis in Pokhara and Thak Khola, attempts to answer these questions.

The Thakalis are culturally a Tibetan group of people⁴. They are divided into four exogamous and patrilineal clans: *Gauchan*, *Tulachan*, *Sherchan* and *Bhattachan*. Their mother tongue, known as "*Tamhaang Kura*", is a dialect of the Tibeto-Burman language family. The Thakalis are of course also fluent in Nepali which is the official/national language of Nepal.

Originally, Thakalis belonged to a small area known as Thak Khola or Thak Satsae (Thak in Short) surrounding the Kali Gandaki river in the district of Mustang in Dhaulagiri zone in west Nepal (See Map). In Thak, the Thakalis had a mixed economy consisting of agriculture, pastoralism and trade.

However, they were not highly dependent on agriculture and pastoralism although these were very important parts of their economy. The location of Thak in one of the important trade routes across the Himalayas, on the other hand, "led the Thakali to specialize in long-distance trade" (Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon 1982:150). The conferring of the title of *Subbas* on some prominent Thakalis by the Nepal government in 1869 (Messerschmidt and Gurung 1974:201), and then the granting of customs contracts, increased Thakali control over the then important salt and wool trade between Tibet, Nepal and India. Their trade relations with Tibet helped them to attain a relatively high standard of living which otherwise would not have been possible through agriculture and animal husbandry alone. In the past, the Thakalis were, in fact, acting as a link in the barter trade between Nepal and Tibet -- bringing in salt and wool from Tibet in exchange for cereals. This trade later closed down for two reasons: (1) the availability of less expensive salt from India, and (2) political changes in Tibet, resulting from its Chinese takeover in the early 1950s⁴.

The years between the abolishment of the customs contract system and the political change in Tibet presumably provided the Thakalis with the much needed time for adaptation to the new economic realities -- and the search for a new economic niche in the Hill and the Tarai region to the south. The migrations of the Thakalis in the beginning could be characterized as exploratory. It was purely circulatory and/or seasonal. In the second stage, however, it became a semi-permanent move: still seasonal but many of them now had some kind of "winter living place" in the lowlands. In this stage many Thakalis established "*Bhattis*" (inns and restaurants) along the trails during the winter months and many of them are seen going through this transitional stage even today. In the third stage, many Thakalis moved out of Thak permanently. This time, they also had kinsmen already settled in the lowland towns and cities, who presumably were not only the motivators but also the ones who provided the newcomers with necessary help in the beginning to get settled down.

Iijima (1963) gives an anecdote which sheds light on the views of the Thakalis in the past with regard to migrating southwards, especially to the plains:

"around 1930 Anangman Sherchan, a member of a prominent Thakali family, was appointed Treasury Officer of the central

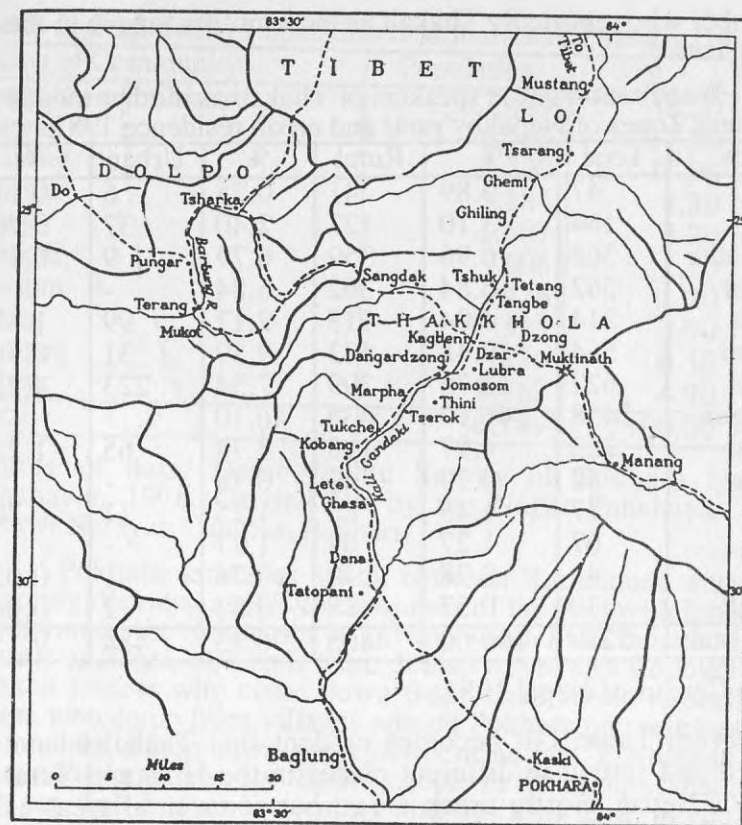
government and assigned to the Tarai, the 'Land of Awal' (the land of malaria fever) in southern Nepal. His family members and other Thakalis bid him a tearful farewell, certain that they would never see him again if he went to this 'fearful land'. Contrary to their expectations, Anangman Sherchan returned to Thakkhola safely."

(1963:46)

Implicit in Iijima's description is the questionable point that Thakalis had not traveled to the south before this date. Nevertheless, the anecdote corroborates the fact that the Thakalis (as did other hill people) in the past used to think that moving south was not a safe thing to do. But once the southward move started, the Thakalis seem to have migrated in streams, often leaving the villages in Thak almost deserted.

Furer-Haimendorf, who had visited Thak in 1962, visited the area again after fourteen years and observed "The majority of the Thakalis of Tukche [a one time important village in Thak] had moved to Pokhara and other places in the middle ranges, and Tukche had the appearance of a dying town" (1981:177). The situation is not as grave as depicted by Furer-Haimendorf, but the fact remains that Thakalis (who once were reluctant even to visit the southern plains as suggested by Iijima's anecdote⁶) are proliferating to all corners of Nepal.

A look at the 1981 census reveals that today Thakalis are found all over Nepal. It should be cautioned, however, that census figures (see Table 1) do not give us the total Thakali population in Nepal. They only show Thakalis who in the 1981 census reported Thakali as their mother tongue. This is important for the discussion of adaptation and socio-cultural change and, therefore, will be taken up later. At this point, however, I want to emphasize the fact that Thakalis are seen as a very mobile community. Of the total Thakali speakers in Nepal only 46% are registered in Dhaulagiri Zone, their native homeland. This figure could decline further if the exact number of Thakalis were known, which may be approximately ten thousand. The fact that Gauchan (1980:20-27) gives the number of Thakalis living in only 14 districts as 5,330 in 1978 is an indication of the reality. Also, the 1978 demographic survey of Pokhara Town Panchayat showed 606 Thakalis in the town while the 1981 census showed only 223 Thakali speakers. Thus we have sufficient reason to believe that the actual number of Thakalis in Nepal is more than



Thak Khola (from Furer-Haimendorf, 1975)

the number who reportedly Thakali as their mother tongue in the 1981 census.

Table 1: Distribution of the speakers of Thakali as mother tongue in different Zones of Nepal by rural and urban residence 1981.

Zones	Total	%	Rural	%	Urban	%
Mechi	47	0.89	41	0.78	6	0.11
Koshi	164	3.10	127	2.40	37	0.70
Sagarmatha	368	6.96	359	6.79	9	0.17
Janakpur	362	6.84	362	6.84	-	-
Bagmati	214	4.04	115	2.17	99	1.87
Narayani	554	10.48	523	9.89	31	0.59
Gandaki	622	11.76	399	7.54	223	4.22
Dhaulagiri	2438	46.10	2438	46.10	-	-
Lumbini	263	4.97	198	3.74	65	1.23
Rapti	42	0.79	42	0.79	-	-
Bheri	77	1.45	66	1.25	11	0.20
Karnali	67	1.27	67	1.27	-	-
Seti	41	0.78	40	0.76	1	0.02
Mahakali	30	0.57	28	0.53	2	0.04
Total:	5289	100.00	4805	90.85	484	9.15

Source: Census of Nepal 1981.

From Table 1 it becomes evident that Thakalis have migrated and settled in different places in the Hills and Tarai region of Nepal: mostly urban areas, but some rural areas as well. Pokhara is one such place where their number is gradually increasing. Pokhara is the administrative center of the Western Development Region as well as the Zonal and District headquarters of Gandaki Zone and Kaski district, respectively. Pokhara is also a municipality in its own right. Besides the various government offices, there are a number of banks, modern hotels, small scale industries, educational institutions, hospitals, and various other modern institutions. The heterogeneous population of the city is comprised of people from a number of castes and communities, such as Brahman, Chhetri, Newar, Gurung, Thakali, Magar and many others including recently resettled Tibetan refugees (Table 2).

Table 2: Community Population Distribution of Pokhara (1978).

Name of Community	Population	%
Brahman and Chhetri	17,489	48.30
Newar	6,386	17.60
Gurung	4,320	11.90
Pariyar	3,184	8.80
Magar	1,507	4.20
Thakali	606	1.70
Muslim	426	1.20
Lama	325	0.90
Tamang	176	0.50
Others	1,767	4.90
Total	36,189	100.00

Source of data: Demographic Survey of Pokhara Nagar Panchayat, 1978. Carried out by the Nagar Panchayat and Prithwi Narayan Campus, Pokhara.

Pokhara serves as a link between Kathmandu and the adjoining districts, as it is the terminus of the Prithwi Highway. Furthermore, the Siddhartha Highway, which links India and the interior of Nepal, also ends there. It also serves as a stopover for Thakali traders who come down from Thak Khola as well as others who come from villages around Pokhara on their way to Kathmandu, Bhairahawa, and elsewhere. In fact, Pokhara is the nearest market center for the hill people in the region. Thakalis, who are well known for trading and business skill, have thus found Pokhara one of the better places to resettle.

Migration and Adaptation: Background

As the process of migration comes into prominence, studies of diffusion of cultures, acculturation, assimilation, integration, adjustment, adaptation, etc., in relation to migrants begin to draw more and more attention. Talking about the rapid increase in migration studies by anthropologists during the second half of the 20th century, Graves and Graves state that "a wealth of descriptive material from all over the world is now available, providing a comparative perspective on the adaptive strategies which the actors in this modern drama display" (Graves and Graves: 1974: 117). Migrations are not isolated events and are generally associated with some kind of economic, social and cultural change to which people make an adjustment and/or

adaptation. Migration brings together at the destination populations with different social and cultural background, thus initiating a process of change in the social, economic, religious and cultural lives of the people in question in order to make adaptations and/or adjustments vis-à-vis each other.

Pokhara, where the present study was made, has been one of the fastest growing towns in Nepal. This becomes evident if we look at the population figures for the town over the years (Table 3). In a period of about 30 years the absolute increase in the town's population was 42,887, or a growth of 1142%. The rapid growth of Pokhara could be attributed partly to the reclassification of the town area (i.e., annexation) and partly to natural growth. But by looking closely at the way this urban center has been expanding, it becomes evident that in-migration substantially contributes to the growth of population in the town. Between 1961 and 1981 there were some annexations. The city increased from 11 wards in 1961 to 18 wards in 1981. But most of the annexed wards also had immigrants, settled in different localities, giving birth to a number of *bazaars*. Thus the argument here is that unless there was a continuous inflow of migrants into the area the city would not have grown to the present size. The figures in Table 4 also support this argument. The number of Thakali families settling in Pokhara has been increasing during recent years. The in-migrants, however, belong to various communities, and the Thakalis are just one of them.

Table 3: Population Change (growth) in Pokhara, 1961-1981.

Census/Survey	Population	Absolute Change	% Change
1952-54	3755	---	---
1961	5413	1658	44.15
1971	20611	15198	280.77
1978*	36189	15578	75.58
1981	46642	26031	126.29

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Pocketbook.

* Demographic Survey of Pokhara Town Panchayat jointly conducted by P.N. Campus and the Nagar Panchayat.

Table 4: Migration Stream of Thakalis to Pokhara (Until 1980)

Period	# families leaving Thak	# families settled in Pokhara
Before 1943	6	4
1944 - 1952	10	6
1953 - 1962	16	13
1963 - 1972	16	18
1980 - present	2	9

Source: Field survey 1980. Fifty household heads were interviewed in the field survey.

The main reasons for migration in Nepal seem to be the economic disparity between regions created by a rapidly changing man-land ratio, the low productivity of soils, the lack of alternative employment opportunities in the hills, and the perceived economic and social advantages in the lowlands by the migrants. Migration in Nepal is not a new phenomenon. Rana and Thapa state aptly that it is "practically as old as the history of its [Nepal's] colonization by people from the north as well as the south" (1975:45). However, most of the internal migratory movements in the past, at least from the Himalayas, were seasonal, cyclical, or circulatory. The people from the Himalayan region migrated down to the south during the winter months to escape from the harsh weather and went back to their homes once the winter snow started melting. This kind of circulatory movement is not typical of the Thakalis only. Similar seasonal movements have been noted for the Sherpas of Nepal (Furer-Haimendorf 1981), the various Bhotiya (Himalayan) people of India (Bhandari 1981: 213-214) and several other groups of people in Nepal.

Thus, various push and pull factors have been responsible in gearing the process of migration in the country (Shrestha 1979). The various reasons given for migration by the Thakalis in Pokhara have been summarized in Table 5.

Besides the reasons summarized above some families also expressed their subjective judgment toward the social life in Thak. They believe that the society in Thak was "backward".

With respect to the causes of migration and the process of adaptation, we can also talk of the role of family and kinship, frequency of visits to the destination before finally settling down, and also whether the move was direct or in phases (Table 6).

*Table 5: Reasons for migration

Factors	Number of responses*
<u>Stated reasons for moving out of Thak</u>	
Environment (severe winters)	11
Lack of cultivable land	4
Lack of occupation	33
Lack of medical facilities	23
Lack of educational facilities	19
Lack of transportation facilities	7
<u>Stated reasons for moving to Pokhara</u>	
A center for trade and business	33
Presence of relatives	10
Nearer to Thak	12
Modern amenities (education, medicine, etc.)	27
Employment	2

*Source: Field survey 1980. N=50. Some people gave more than one reason. Thus the total adds up to more than 50.

The role of the family and relatives is seen to be important in the process of migration as well as adaptation. Generally, the migrant families living in an urban area tend to motivate their relatives to move to the place of their new settlement. This is more true in a situation where relatives from the origin keep visiting the migrant relatives in the urban center and vice versa. It is the case in Pokhara, where 88% of the Thakali migrants acknowledged visits of relatives from Thak. It was also found that most of the Thakali families had come directly to Pokhara after leaving Thak. Seventy-eight percent of the families said that they migrated directly to Pokhara, while only 22% stated that they had lived either in Baglung, Syangja or Butwal after leaving Thak before they finally migrated to Pokhara.

Table 6: Steps of move by units and decision

Variables	By step	%	Not by	Step %
<u>Frequency of earlier visits</u>				
None	2	4	4	8
At least twice	-	-	5	10
Several times	9	18	30	60
<u>Unit of move</u>				
Alone	2	4	8	16
with family	9	18	31	62
<u>Decision -making</u>				
Self	3	6	24	48
Parent/Grandparents	8	16	15	30

Source: Field Survey 1980. N = 50.

Frequency of visits is taken as a proxy for assessing the level of information. The assumption is that the greater the number of visits the more information a person will have. A close look at the migratory process (see Table 6) then helps us assume that many of the Thakali families had a fairly high level of information about Pokhara before settling down there. Even among those Thakalis who moved in phases, 18% had visited Pokhara more than twice before they came to live there permanently. Because of the better information they had about the destination, most of them (78% in this case) must have selected Pokhara for settlement right in their first move. This must have helped the Thakalis in the process of their adaptation in the urban setting.

Adaptation and Cultural Continuity and Change

Given the motivation for migration to Pokhara, how are the Thakalis there adapted to urban life? The Thakali community is a dynamic community, actively interacting with the host society rather than passively submitting to the socio-cultural forces of change in the urban life. The notion of adaptation as used here would be in line with

“a growing consensus among anthropologists that the nature of man is best described as neither totally active nor passive but interactive. Operating within the many constraints which his physical and social environments impose, he seeks to overcome the problems confronting him by choosing among perceived available options”

(Graves and Graves 1974:117)

Any migrant community in an urban setting tends to form a group in itself. Viewed from the structural-functional perspective, it shows itself as a separate system, but at the same time forms a part of the whole urban system. Migrant communities may show marked differences in certain social and cultural patterns from the host society. But nonetheless, they are found to be involved in the process of adaptation, adjustment, integration, acculturation -- i.e., socio-cultural change in general.

Adaptations of migrants in an urban setting might be discussed by using different sets of indices and/or variables, such as residential settlement, housing, occupational adaptation, occupational mobility, family life-cycle change, social adaptation, cultural adaptation and attachment to the origin (Lee and Kim 1981:233). I use the following indices to deal with the adaptation of the Thakalis in Pokhara: (1) Occupational mobility, (2) Participation in Association, (3) Extent of contact with other communities, (4) Internalization of the culture of the host society, (5) Preference for neighbourhood, and (6) Exposure vs. enclosure of the community. Let us now discuss each index in the context of the migrant Thakali families in Pokhara.

Occupation: Originally, the Thakalis in Thak were an agropastoral community (Manzardo and Sharma 1975; Furer-Haimendorf 1966, 1974). They were also involved in the salt, wool, and grain barter trade, but this was not the primary occupation for a majority of the Thakalis now in Pokhara. More than 91% of the migrants said that their primary occupation before migration was agriculture, while less than 9% had business or trade as their primary occupation. However, today 80% of the migrant Thakali families in Pokhara have taken to business as their primary occupation. Business in the case of the Thakalis includes running hotels and restaurants, retail business

in clothes, food items and other sundry goods, and working as contractors for various governmental and non-governmental building and construction works. Only 12% have continued with agriculture and the other 8% have taken to government service or jobs.

When asked about a change in occupation, most of the migrants pointed out that business as an occupation was much easier and also more profitable than agriculture. They were also questioned whether they faced any problems due to the change in occupation in the new urban setting. Only 34% gave a positive answer while 66% of them said that they had no problems right from the beginning. For those who reported having faced problems, the nature of the problems were financial, which were solved with relative ease (as reported) with the help of relatives or other Thakalis in Pokhara. The help was mostly in the form of *Dhikurs*, which is a form of rotating credit⁷. It is thus seen that the Thakalis adapted with relative ease to the new economic structure of the urban setting partly due to help from their community members.

It may be noted that the Thakalis are a close knit and very cohesive group of people. They help their fellow Thakalis in times of need. Another characteristic of this community is that even in adopting some kind of social mobility/change, they do it at the group level. Some have called this “contest mobility” (Schermerhorn, 1978:54). Among the Thakalis “there seems to be not only a willingness to accept social reform, but a desire to embrace it as a community, rather than as individuals” (Manzardo and Sharma, 1975). This kind of group mobility has presumably helped them to adapt rather easily to the new urban setting.

Participation in Associations: Participation in the socio-economic and political associations and/or institutions at the group level as well as at the societal level may also be an index of the level of adaptation or adjustment reached by a migrant community in the urban setting. The Thakalis in Pokhara are all members of the *Pokhara Thakali Samaj Sudhar Samiti* (PTSSS)⁸ or Pokhara Thakali Social Reform Committee, which is an institution parallel to the “13 Mukhiya” system back in Thak. The PTSSS is a socio-political organization representing only the

Thakalis in Pokhara confederated with the feeling of collectivity and co-fraternity (PTSSS Constitution, 1971, my translation from the Nepali text). Similar Thakali Samaj Sudhar Samitis exist in other urban centers like Kathmandu and Bhairahawa also. The associational clustering of the Thakalis through this institution has enabled them to perpetuate the culture of their place of origin and at the same time it has also made it possible for them to adapt to the new ways of life. This is done by introducing reforms in the socio-cultural practices in accordance with the exigencies of the new situations. Important reforms introduced by the PTSSS are the banning of "marriage by capture" (which according to elderly informants used to be a common form in Thak, which is also reflected in the proceedings of the Lha Phewa festival), consumption of yak-meat, and the shortening of the death-mourning period from 49 to 13 days. This has made the Thakalis acceptable to the Hindu society and also helped them to adapt in Pokhara.

Besides, the Thakalis also become members of the various *dhikurs* (rotating credit associations.) These help the Thakalis to sort out their social as well as economic problems and thereby make it easier for economic adaptation. This association, though a continuity of the *dhikurs* in Thak, has also been subject to adaptational change. The traditional *dhikuri* system had a welfare motive -- to provide economic support to needy Thakalis. This rotating credit association (Messerschmidt, 1978: 141-165) used to function on the basis of the principle of a lottery while today, in urban areas, it is run by the written tender system wherein the highest bidder of interest on the *dhikuri* amounts gets it. It then serves the interest of businessmen rather than the poor and needy ones. Thus we see an instance of the continuation of a traditional institution with changes in its principles and motives as demanded by new urban situations. It is also an example of an institution (a cultural element in general) given to the host society by an in-migrant group. Membership in the Thakali *dhikuris* used to be open only to Thakalis in the past. But now by opening up the membership to others, the Thakalis have been able to establish economic ties with people from other communities in the urban center. This again is a timely step towards adaptation

made by the Thakalis to widen their economic relations and networks.

Besides participating in the in-group organizations and/or associations, Thakalis are also participating in other social, political, economic and educational institutions in Pokhara. Within a short period, some Thakalis have even gained the status of social workers and politicians in Pokhara. Their extremely resilient and adaptive stance has also given Thakalis a considerable political advantage. This is exemplified by the fact that recently a Thakali was elected as the *Pradhan Pancha* (Mayor) of Pokhara Town. More interesting is the fact that one of two representatives in the Rastriya Panchayat (National Legislature) from Kaski district (1981 - 1985) was a Thakali, who even became an Assistant Minister for Communication in the National Cabinet for some time. Baglung, another district where the Thakalis first came as migrants, also has a Thakali as one of its representatives in the national legislature. These instances reflect not only the adaptive nature of Thakali social life in Nepal generally but also the confidence of people in the host society far more easily than many other people.

Interaction within the group and outside the group: To ascertain the extent of contact or interaction of Thakalis within the community as well as with the outsiders, respondents were asked how often they had participated in such activities as picnics, visiting each other for meals, visiting friends, pujas and other religious occasions, weaning, sacred thread ceremonies, marriages, mourning and meetings during the past year. Table 7 summarizes the findings. The in-group interaction is more frequent for the migrant Thakalis with regard to most of the indices except the sacred thread ceremony. The Thakalis do not have a sacred thread ceremony (an initiation rite of high Hindu castes) in their culture and thus the in-group participation in this context is zero.

With regard to their participation in activities with people from other communities, a different picture emerges. Except for such activities as visiting friends, attending marriages, and meetings, their out-group participation is relatively less frequent. This indicates that the Thakalis are socially well-adapted in the host society.

Table 7: Extent of Group Interaction for the Thakalis by Socio-cultural Activities during 1987.

Activities	None		Once		Twice		More than Twice	
<u>Within the Thakali Community</u>								
Picnics	5	(10)	5	(10)	21	(42)	19	(38)
Visits for meals	2	(4)	2	(4)	13	(26)	33	(66)
Visiting friends	3	(6)	3	(6)	6	(12)	38	(76)
Poojas	1	(2)	3	(6)	14	(28)	32	(64)
Religious festivals	1	(2)	3	(6)	14	(28)	32	(64)
Weaning Ceremonies	7	(14)	2	(4)	4	(8)	37	(74)
Sacred thread	50	(100)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marriages	6	(12)	5	(10)	5	(10)	34	(68)
Death mourning	9	(18)	4	(8)	4	(8)	33	(66)
Social meetings	8	(16)	4	(8)	7	(14)	31	(62)
<u>Outside the Community</u>								
Picnics	30	(60)	3	(6)	7	(14)	10	(20)
Visits for meals	29	(58)	1	(2)	8	(16)	12	(24)
Visiting friends	15	(30)	2	(4)	9	(18)	24	(48)
Poojas	20	(40)	5	(10)	9	(18)	16	(32)
Religious festivals	26	(52)	2	(4)	6	(12)	16	(32)
Weaning Ceremonies	23	(46)	4	(8)	3	(6)	20	(40)
Sacred thread	21	(42)	7	(14)	6	(12)	16	(32)
Marriages	14	(28)	4	(8)	4	(8)	28	(56)
Death mourning	39	(78)	-	-	2	(4)	9	(18)
Social meetings	22	(44)	2	(4)	5	(10)	21	(42)

Source: Field survey 1980, (Figures in the parentheses are percentages.)

Internalization of the culture of the host society:

Generally, a migrant community tends to face a situation of conflict between its traditional values and norms and those presented by the host society. In the course of adjusting or adapting, what results is "continuity as well as change", i.e., while some norms and values continue to persist others get replaced by new ones. For example, the Thakalis gave up dressing in Tibetan fashion because this tended to replace them with the Bhote community, generally regarded as inferior by caste Hindus. They have now adapted the Nepali dress pattern as well as the "Western" patterns (cf. Furer-Haimendorf 1966).

Two more important changes are summarized by Furer-Haimendorf: "Just as at the end of the 19th century Yak eating was proscribed, so in more recent years the custom of marriage

by capture was formally banned by the headmen of the Thak Satsae" (Furer-Haimendorf 1966:148). The Thakalis adopted the "Kanyadan" (formal giving away of the daughters) form of marriage which is common among the caste Hindus. In the course of adapting to the urban setting by internalizing the culture of the host society, the Thakalis have "Hinduized" to the extent of claiming the status of *Thakuri* (a ruling caste) in the traditional caste hierarchy of the Hindus.

Another important change among the Thakalis has been in terms of the mourning period observed after death. This change was again effected by a resolution of the PTSSS. By reducing the number of days for observing mourning after death from 49 days to 13, they not only reduced the cost of performing various rites (because fewer days means fewer rites), but also have moved towards Hinduizing it. However, differences still exist. Among orthodox Hindus in Nepal, mourning and pollution-avoidance are observed by agnate kinsmen of the deceased for 13 days whereas among the Thakalis even "brothers observe but one day's mourning" (Furer-Haimendorf 1966:150).

Thakalis in Pokhara also have learned the languages of the dominant linguistic group in their locality index of internalization of the culture of the host society by the migrants. It is interesting to note that 58% of the migrant Thakalis said that they speak Newari or Gurung or both in addition to their own mother tongue and the Nepali language which of course is spoken by all. This shows how easily Thakalis adjust to other groups of people in the heterogeneous urban society of Pokhara and elsewhere.

Performance for Neighbourhood: Migrants in urban centers generally tend to prefer living in a locality where they have people belonging to their own community or culture (Nair 1978, Puneekar 1974). But in the case of the Pokhara Thakalis in Pokhara, a different tendency is observed.

They live in "mixed settlements" distributed in different areas of the town. Table 8 shows the distribution of Thakalis in different wards of Pokhara. In some of the wards the predominant caste or community is that of Newars while in others it is either the Brahmans, Chhetris, Gurungs or Magars. But the Thakalis seem to be happy in whatever locality they live. This becomes clear from the negative answers given by most of them to the question - "Have you ever thought of leaving this

locality?" Again on being asked about their preference for the type of neighbourhood, 84% of them asserted that they preferred a neighbourhood of mixed settlement, i.e. where there are people belonging to different communities. Only 10% of the families said that they prefer to live only among the Thakalis, and the remaining 6% said that they were in between the two extremes.

The reasons given for their preferences were equally interesting. More than 60% of the families pointed out that a mixed settlement was congenial for the exchange of ideas and cultures, for business and for a better understanding of each others way of life. Some of them (22%) were of the view that people belonging to different castes and communities have different roles to play in the social, economic and cultural life and therefore it is desirable to live among people belonging to different castes and communities.

Table 8: Distribution of Thakalis in Pokhara by Ward, 1980

Wards	Thakali Population	Total Population	Percent of Thakalis
1	122	3545	3.44
2	66	1723	3.83
3	13	2044	0.63
4	41	1567	2.61
5	-	1603	0.00
6	13	2475	0.52
7	64	3975	1.61
8	31	1864	1.66
9	148	2133	6.93
10	28	1760	1.59
11	13	1758	0.73
12	3	1915	0.15
13	11	1818	0.60
14	-	1843	0.00
15	1	2428	0.04
16	52	3712	1.40
Total	606	36189	1.70

Source: Demographic survey of Pokhara Nagar Panchayat 1978, jointly conducted by the Nagar Panchayat and Prithwi Narayan Campus, Pokhara.

Enclosure and Exposure: Total enclosure and exposure are two extreme states to which no known community exactly corresponds. We may, however, talk in terms of the degree of enclosure and exposure of a community. A particular society or community may exhibit the characteristics of an open or exposed society in certain aspects and an enclosed one in others. Enclosure and exposure of a community in relation to others may be analyzed by the use of various indicators such as endogamy and exogamy, ecological concentration, associational clustering, rigidity, clarity of group definition, etc.

In terms of marriage practice, the Thakalis practice clan exogamy and community endogamy. In Pokhara it was found that 96% of marriages were within the same community. Further, it was also found that 50% of the Thakali males had wives from Thak Khola, 34% from Pokhara, and the remaining 16% had wives from Kathmandu, Bhairahawa or Baglung (other places having substantial number of Thakali migrants).

As mentioned above, community exogamy is not socially sanctioned among the Thakalis. A few boys and girls who violated the rule of endogamy have found it difficult to get the relation socially sanctioned. Thus we see that from the point of view of endogamy or exogamy the migrant Thakalis are more of an enclosed group. Strict adherence to the principle of community endogamy among the older generation of Thakalis expresses their inherent feeling towards maintaining group homogeneity in terms of culture, language, etc. But whether the rule of community endogamy can be maintained strictly for long is a pertinent question in this case. A change already on the way is the preference for exogamous marriages among some of the younger generation of Thakalis. In the survey on Thakali youth, only 55% of them reported that endogamy should be maintained. A difference of opinion with regard to upholding a traditional cultural practice is clearly visible here.

With regard to the index of ecological concentration, we saw above (Table 8) that Thakalis prefer to live among people from different communities. They are dispersed in different wards of the town. The nature of their primary occupation also

demands this, and the Thakalis seem to be happy in whatever locality they are living.

Associational clustering: Thakali migrants do not have many clubs or societies of their own in Pokhara. The only community level institution, as mentioned already, is the PTSSS, in which membership is restricted to the people from the four Thakali clans, viz. *Chyoki* (Gauchan), *Salki* (Tulachan), *Dhimten* (Sherchan) and *Bhurki* (Bhattachan). Another institution is a revolving-credit organization known as Dhikur. These institutions have provided group support for Thakali migrants in times of need and thereby helped them to adapt.

Group definition: The Thakali claim of a Thakuri origin is popular, showing that they have a desire to assimilate themselves into the caste Hindu social structure (Bista, 1967; Furer-Haimendorf 1974). This is, however, not the whole truth. The group definition among the Thakalis is very distinct. They have a "we" concept for themselves as against "they" feelings for non-Thakalis. The way the Thakalis define their own group is worth noting here. They refer to themselves as *Tamhaang*, which is defined as a socially accepted child of a man belonging to one of the four patrilineal clans (Gauchan and Vinding, 1977:97).

One interesting question which arose from the survey among the Thakali⁹ youth asks: To what extent will the Thakali identity be maintained in the future? Many young and educated Thakalis are gradually giving up learning their mother tongue. The survey on the youths showed that only 25% could speak Thakali fluently. This indicates that the census data on the Thakali community is not reliable¹⁰. Besides, and this is the important point, it indicates that the group boundary among the Thakalis may blur over time.

Another point to be noted here is the terms and conditions set forth for membership in the PTSSS, which is not open to outsiders or non-Thakalis. When asked "Is membership open to others besides Thakalis?" all the migrants gave a negative answer. When further asked to give reasons for the restrictions, most of them invariably pointed out that "they" do not belong to the Thakali community and have different customs and traditions.

To get an idea of the rigidity of their group definition, migrants were also asked to give their opinions on similarities and differences of food habits, dress, life-cycle ceremonies, festivals, religious ceremonies and place and method of worship between themselves and the non-Thakalis in Pokhara. Except for dress and food habits, more than 85% of the migrants pointed out that they had marked differences with people from other communities. In spite of the perceived differences, however, the Thakalis feel adapted to the urban setting in general.

Summary and Implications

From the above discussion we see that the Thakalis are an enclosed community in terms of the indices of endogamy vs. exogamy and their "group" definition. As far as the cultural and religious aspects are concerned, the Thakalis tend to show an enclosed and isolated character. But when the socio-economic matters come to the front, they tend to be open and showing a desire to adapt to socio-economic life in the urban center. It may further be added that the Thakali migrants in Pokhara culturally form a close knit society whereas socio-economically they form a part of the total urban society.

We also see that migrant Thakalis are preserving some aspects of their indigenous culture with some adaptational changes. This has been made possible by such institutions as the PTSSS and the Dhikuri, which have themselves continued to exist with some modifications in the urban setting. Moreover, their integration into the urban setting has been made possible because of their positive attitude towards changes. Most of the Thakalis were explicit in stating that necessary changes in the traditional cultural norms and practices should be made from time to time to meet the challenges of the new setting. Whereas the structure of Thakali culture has been maintained, many of the functions of their social institutions have changed.

The process of adaptation and socio-cultural change as discussed above is occurring in various aspects of Thakali life, while culturally Thakalis continue as a separate group. With the passage of time and generations, this situation might change. Already the younger generation of Thakalis born outside Thak Khola, i.e., in the towns and cities of Nepal, show a tendency to

give up learning their mother tongue. In the course of time, the Thakali community in the urban centers might become less distinctive than it is today from other communities living in the same socio-economic and cultural setting. And it would not be surprising if in the future we find marked differences in terms of culture, language and religion between the Thakalis in Thak and those who have moved out from their original homeland.

The discussions above have two major implications: one for the Thakali community and the other for the theories of migration and adaptation in general. As for the Thakalis, there are practical implications. The above discussion of how the Thakalis persist and change as a result of migration shows the direction they are heading towards, knowledge of which might help them plan their future strategies.

With regards to theories of migration and adaptation, this paper points out the need for a two-way approach to adaptation. Most studies on migration, adaptation and socio-cultural change tend to look at adaptation of migrants as a one-way process. They show how far the migrants have undergone changes to adapt to their new setting. This is a valid approach but is inadequate. There is a need to look at the process of adaptation as a two way process wherein the migrants are not only undergoing changes but are at the same time introducing some changes in the total cultural system at the site of their settlement. In the case of the Thakalis, the migrants have contributed an economic organization to the host society by introducing the Dhikuri credit system. There is a need in the study of migration to take a closer look at the bilateral character of the process of migrant adaptation: the changes occurring not only to the migrants as they adapt to a new setting but also the changes taking place within the society of destination effected by the new settlers. This paper has demonstrated the heuristic value of adaptational studies of migrants, which might enable us to have a better understanding of the process in general.

NOTES

1. This paper is based on field work carried out between 1980 and 1984. The initial research was carried out in early 1980 for an M.A. Thesis at the University of Pune. More data was collected later (November 1980-February 1981) while conducting field work as a Research Assistant at the Research Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Tribhuvan University. The information was updated in 1983-1984 while on deputation at CNAS as a Researcher working for the Mustang Integrated Research Program. I am thankful to CNAS for the research opportunities given to me.
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2. For a socio-economic study of migrant Thakalis in Pokhara, see Bhattachan (1980) while for an ethnographic study among the same people, see Chhetri (1980). Manzardo and Sharma (1975) discuss the role of the PTSSS in social reforms among the Thakali community. Studies from other urban centers have yet to appear.
3. There is an extensive body of theoretical and empirical literature on circulation, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to review them here. For an updated treatment of the conceptual and analytical distinctions between circulation and migration, refer to the recent works by Chapman and Prothero (1985) and Prothero and Chapman (1985).
4. For a comprehensive introduction of the Thakalis, see Bista (1967), Iijima (1960) and Gauchan and Vinding (1977). The definition of the "Thakali" is provided by Gauchan and Vinding only.

5. Details on the abolition of the customs contract system are given in Furer-Haimendorf (1975) and Messerschmidt and Gurung (1974).
6. In a recent article Vinding (1984) reports that his informants in 1977 recalled a total of 270 Thakali families having left the Thak Khola region since 1960. Where they go is not reported. He cautions that this figure might be low because of the possibility of recall errors among his informants.
7. The term *dhikuri* is a derivative of the original term *Dhukor*, 'Dhu' meaning wheat or cereal and 'Kor' meaning to rotate or to circulate. For the definition and details on *dhikuri* see Messerschmidt (1978) and Chhetri (1980).
8. For details on the structure and functioning of the PTSSS and for its relationship with the '13 *Mukhiya*' system, see Manzardo and Sharma (1975) and Chhetri (1980). The 13 *Mukhiyas* refers to 13 headmen from 13 different villages in the Thak region. The institution is still active, and becomes conspicuous during important religious or social occasions and/or ceremonies.
9. A survey on the impact of urban and modern schooling, etc., on the attitudes of the Thakali youths was done in 1981. Twenty five youths between ages 15 and 30 were interviewed.
10. The census of Nepal does not collect information on community or caste affiliation in the strict sense of the terms. It only provides population distribution by mother tongue, which is certainly not a reliable indication of the size of the communities or groups of people.

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